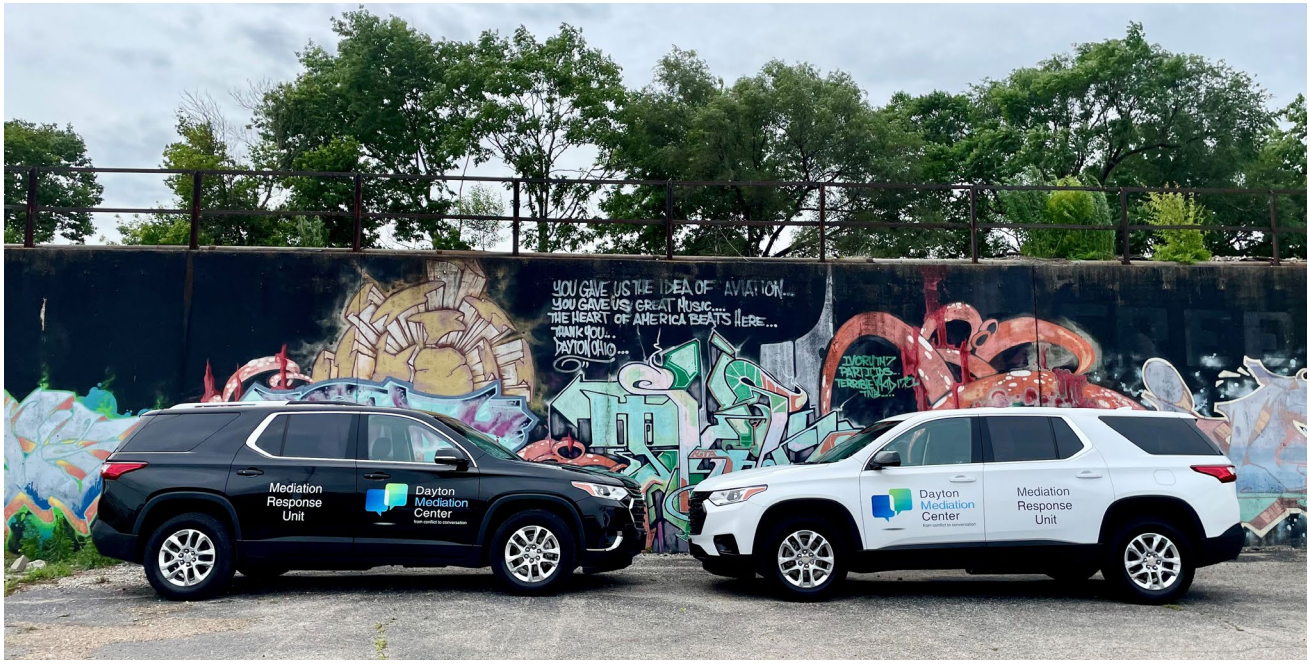
Field Mediation Launch Toolkit

How to build a field mediation response to 911 calls in your city or county

Promote | Design | Implement | Launch



Inspired by the Dayton Mediation Response Unit (MRU) Experience

May 2025

Dignity
Best Practices

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Introduction

Inspiration: Dayton's Mediation Response Unit

In May of 2022 something extraordinary happened in Dayton, Ohio.

Ordinary people who felt unable to cope with a conflict they were having with a neighbor, a family member, a customer, a tenant or landlord, or a stranger, called 911. That was not the extraordinary part – that part happens more than once every day, in every American city. What was unusual was what happened next.

Rather than a police response, they received a knock on their door, or an outdoor greeting, from two of a diverse group of five friendly people, unarmed and wearing polo shirts with the city logo and the word "Mediator." They said something like "Are you [name?] I understand you called 911. Your call was determined to be a good fit for a mediation response. I'm [name]. We're Dayton's Mediation Response Unit, and we're here to help you with your conflict. What has been hard today?"

And help they did - so much so that less than five percent of those callers insisted on getting a police response instead (that number is now down to less than two percent). And within a few months, the team was also getting calls on their radios. "This is police unit# at address such-and-such – I think this is a good call for MRU100, is that unit available?" "Copy that, we are 14 minutes away." In their first 10 weeks, the nation's first Field Mediation Team took almost a call an hour, with zero injuries or lawsuits, multiple thank-you cards, and even some thank-you baked goods dropped off at their office.

Nearly three years later, that experiment is still going strong. The Mediation Response Unit (MRU) has taken 2,770 calls during 2,340 hours of being on-duty in 2024, with a strong track record indicating that this promising practice is ready to be adapted by other cities and counties.

These consistently positive results were the fruit of years of prior work by many people – one year of a community-led police reform commission that issued its recommendations for a novel form of alternative response, and a second year of design and implementation through a cross-agency working group. The nonprofit organization Dignity Best Practices had the privilege of being Dayton's implementation consulting partner during this planning year, facilitating that working group.

Toolkit goals

With this toolkit, and with the support of the Dayton Mediation Center, we aim to pull back the curtain on the critical launch preparation work that precedes a successful new 911 field mediation response effort. We strive to capture the preparatory steps in a way that makes the process replicable for other cities and counties who want to launch a field mediation response.

This toolkit provides a self-guided version of the same consulting support that Dignity provided to Dayton for about a year and a half (depending on the scope of your project, and obstacles faced, it may take more or less time than this to launch and get early results). It is written to be widely available free of charge, as a resource for people who are curious, contemplating, or committed to building a better response to low-level conflicts.

Your journey will not look identical to Dayton's, and we encourage all users of this toolkit to adapt the content found here to their own needs.

Recognizing that it may be prohibitively resource-intensive for many local governments to launch a completely new 911 response team, we have also written this toolkit to serve two possible implementation modes:

1. Cross-training an existing team (such as a behavioral health mobile response team) to develop a professional field mediation capability

and be able to expand their call types to take a range of 911 calls related to interpersonal conflict, such as disturbances and neighbor, noise, and pet complaints.

2. Launching a new dedicated team, similar to Dayton's Mediation Response Unit.

And please, if you embark on this journey – let us know! We would love to learn from your stories, and update this toolkit based on your own insights and experiences.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is not intended to be read cover to cover. Rather, it is meant to be used one piece at a time, when relevant for the stage of work that is being done. This toolkit contains:

- Process guidance and advice about what to prioritize and how to achieve strong results at each stage of the zero-to-launch process
- Editable tools and templates that can be adapted for local use, intended to illuminate and accelerate similar work done by other cities and counties
- A brief list of related resources in each chapter introduction, and remarks on some of the limitations of the content provided.

Its contents are divided into four phases:

We write this for four roles in particular, all local practitioners:

1. **Champions:** These are visionary and dedicated advocates who help build local support and political will for launching a field mediation capability. An effective champion could be a manager of an existing field response team (e.g., mobile crisis, police, EMS), a senior administrator such as a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, or a member of the community that feels a new kind of 911 response would provide better service and build better trust. Ideally, there is a coalition of champions representing all three of these viewpoints – first responders, administrators, community members.
    - The "Promote" section of this toolkit is written for Champions.
2. **Project Manager:** Once the project is approved, this is the person assigned to guide the design and planning work, determining what the policy, budget, hiring (if needed) and training for the program will look like.
    - The "Design" and "Implement" sections of this toolkit are written for Project Managers.
3. **Cross-Agency Working Group Members:** We recommend that the Project Manager convene and co-design the new program along with, rather than just informing other organizations relevant to the 911 ecosystem. Working group members are dedicated delegates from the program's host agency, a community advisory board, 911, police, EMS, and the city or county executive's office. They will be asked not just to advise, but to participate in the planning and launch process.
    - The "Design" and "Implement" sections of this toolkit are useful points of reference for working group members. We recommend sharing one chapter at a time, as the work progresses, to help avoid overwhelm.

4. **Field Mediation Team Supervisor:** This will either be a new hire (if building a new team), or is the team leader or deputy leader of the existing mobile team that is being cross-trained in field mediation. Once appointed, this person will take the lead on any remaining hiring, and the training and launch processes.
    - The "Implement" and "Launch" sections of this toolkit will be helpful companions for the Field Mediation Team lead.

While a practitioner may be primarily focused on doing the work in one of these phases, they may also find it useful to glance ahead to the next phase, for planning and expectation-setting purposes with stakeholders around what lies ahead.

Toolkit Design Process

This toolkit was primarily authored by Dignity Best Practices, with content support from Dayton Mediation Center and primary funding from the AAA-ICDR Foundation. Dignity drew on its experiences and artifacts in 2021-2022 as the implementation consultant for Dayton's Mediation Response Unit. Many other people and organizations also provided support for which we are grateful. See the Acknowledgements chapter for more detailed appreciation for contributors.

Summary of Key Insights

These are the main points from each chapter in this Field Mediation Launch Toolkit. (Read the full chapters for guidance and tools on how to implement these insights.)

I. Promote (for Champions)

1. Understand the Heart of the Practice

- **A merger of two traditions:** Field mediation is a rapid, on-scene response to a distressing (yet non-violent) interpersonal conflict. It has its roots in two traditions: community mediation (empowering participants through voice and choice) and behavioral health mobile response (rapid response, unarmed de-escalation, immediate practical support, and referrals for people in crisis)
- **Skillfully supports people in conflict:** Effective field mediators are excellent at rapidly building rapport and holding a warm, neutral, calm, creative, empowering space in the midst of chaos and conflict. Their listening and coaching helps participants shift towards a more empowered and relational way of navigating conflict.
- **Effective and safe as a 911 first response:** Dayton's Mediation Response Unit (MRU) has paved the way for other cities and counties to add this capability locally, by demonstrating that field mediators can frequently and safely provide a best fit response to many 911 calls.

2. Make the Case for Field Mediation

- **A better fit response for everyone:** A compelling pitch to a city or county to build a field mediation capability includes benefits for all – people in conflict, their disrupted neighbors, local community mediation centers, and the traditional responders.
- **A very promising opportunity:** Approximately 10% of 911 calls nationally could be eligible for transfer to field mediation. In Dayton in 2024, 2,770 911 calls were field mediation responses, with less than 2% of these routed back to police.
- **Requires determined champions:** Advocacy for a new program takes persistence. It's important to build momentum with stakeholders and partner with a senior agency leader to navigate the local budget cycle.

3. Orient the Project with a Zero-to-Launch Timeline

- **Pivot from momentum to action:** The timeline provides the pivot point between the work of a Champion to secure approval to begin the project, and the Project Manager who must carry it forward with its many details.
- **Outline core planning activities:** Any launch of a field mediation capability will require determining eligible call types, crafting dispatch routing and field protocol, and building and delivering training for field responders.
- **Set timeframe expectations:** If a current mobile response team is being cross-trained as field mediators, the project may take approximately 6-12 months from approval to active in the field. If a new dedicated team is being built, there will be a more extensive building, hiring, and training process which may take approximately 12-24 months. These design and implementation processes are complex and involve many actors, so expect at least one major timeline revision after the process is started.

II. Design (for Project Manager and Working Group)

4. Convene a Cross-Agency Working Group

- **Cultivate trust among decision makers:** Co-designing with partner agencies builds trust and ensures the program works within local operational constraints. The working group must include decision-makers who can act – or escalate – on behalf of their agency.
- **Craft a shared vision:** A clear vision and shared definition of success will keep the group aligned through tough decisions.
- **Accelerate progress with two key roles:** The Project Champion plays a crucial role in unblocking bureaucracy and securing key approvals, while the Project Manager sets meeting agendas, guides the process, and helps ensure everyone is following through on monthly commitments.

5. Invest in Community Engagement

- **Partner:** Community engagement is all about working with people – not just for them – on the issues that impact their lives.
- **Be transparent:** Be intentional and honest about how deeply you will engage community perspectives (consider the six-point spectrum: Ignore, Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower). Do not misrepresent your level of engagement. Avoid "consulting" with community members on decisions that are already set in stone.
- **Focus on impacted people and places:** Be creative and methodical around different avenues for engagement, prioritize voices with relevant lived experience, and work to co-host discussions with trusted representatives from the invited groups.

6. Select Call Types and Quantify the Opportunity

- **Start simple, then layer in the field picture:** First attempt a plain-language description of the types of calls you generally would and would not consider eligible for field mediation. Then review full lists of 911 call types, with informed commentary from responders on how often these call types involve disputes that are non-violent.
- **911 call types are usually too broad – time permitting, use CAD notes to create sub-categories for a nuanced view:** For the call types in question it can also be very useful to download and review a sample of 6-8 weeks of actual 911 computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data, using the notes on each call to make a nuanced, countable sub-categorization of calls according to likely fit for mediation.
- **Use this data for operational needs:** Use this analysis to help inform the density distribution of likely calls by time of day and day of week, to build the team's shift schedule and availability, and for 911 to build updated call transfer training for 911 call takers.

7. Develop Field Protocol

- **Enable consistent performance:** Good written protocol helps Field Mediation Teams respond professionally, safely, and consistently, helps clarify expectations, forms a backbone for training, and provides guidance for special circumstances.
- **Set guardrails while still allowing for personality:** There is a balancing act between providing clear guidance and still allowing team members the opportunity to bring themselves authentically into their work. For example, it is recommended that all team members be expected to introduce

themselves clearly and warmly at the beginning of an interaction, but it is not recommended that there be a specific script to follow for making an introduction.

- **Develop as the team learns:** A Field Protocol is a living document and should be updated as team supervisors learn what needs clarification or adjustment.

8. Determine Dispatch Routing and Technology

- **Self-dispatch can get the team going quickly:** The ability to self-dispatch in the 911 CAD system can significantly increase call volume for a Field Mediation Team compared to the other possibilities in its first year. While the long-term goal for new 911 services is to be frequently and directly dispatched, just like police, fire, and EMS, it can take awhile for 911 call takers and other actors to become accustomed to having a partner that takes calls that used to go to police.
- **Call volume is important for team sustainability:** Having a meaningful call volume reach the team really matters – both to justify the investment in its existence, and to fulfill its mission to redirect some calls away from enforcement when they can be handled as well or better by an unarmed responder.

9. Prepare to Measure What Matters

- **Goals cascade to key performance indicators:** A good performance system starts with alignment on goals, not just data points.
- **Some important indicators aren't metrics:** Not every indicator has to be a number – milestones and signals matter, too.
- **Your program phase determines what you evaluate:** Indicators should span different levels. First track what you are building (implementation), then how it is working (service success), and finally what is changing as a result (impact).
- **Plan ahead with your data strategy:** Selectively collecting important data points now can enable answering critical questions later that help make the case for program sustainability or growth.

10. Secure Budgeted Resources

- **Personnel costs are the primary budget line for launching a dedicated team:** A minimally viable team is two full-time employees, but the recommended launch size is five: one supervisor and four responders (with two vehicles).
- **For adding a capability to an existing team, training and 911 CAD integration costs may be primary budget items:** The resourcing complexity of cross-training a behavioral health mobile response team to also be a Field Mediation Team depends in part on whether that team is already CAD-integrated.

III. Implement (for Project Manager and Team Supervisor)

11. Hire a Capable Team

- **Seek abilities more than credentials:** Look for broad experience with unstructured environments and demonstrated competence in role-playing, more than school-based degrees or specific careers.
- **Offer mediation training and certification to new hires:** While prior mediation experience is a positive, do not require it as a prerequisite for these positions.
- **Include a ride-along during the hiring process:** This can help the team and the candidates to assess whether they are a good fit for first responder work.

12. Train through Scenarios

- **Sequence the training thoughtfully:** Train on field mediation practices before layering in other topics like safety. This anchors trainees in their core practice of offering empowering support.
- **Connect with the ecosystem:** Throughout the training, meet and join the ecosystem of other responders, service providers, and community organizations. We are most helpful when we can connect with other forms of help.
- **Practice at each stage:** The primary training mechanism is role playing scenarios with feedback. It is not enough to understand what good work looks like – it has to become a habit. Even when training is formally over, coaching and feedback from team leadership will shape team professionalism and ongoing improvement in the field.

13. Reach Out to Referral Partners

- **Cultivate both inbound and outbound:** Referral partners include both those who can be encouraged to call the team and those who the team recommends during response.
- **Keep ongoing contact:** Outreach starts during training, continues through early implementation, and is refreshed periodically thereafter.
- **Maintain consent and transparency:** All referrals must be voluntary. Programs should clarify reponders' responsibilities around mandated reporting.

IV. Launch (for Team Supervisor)

14. Prepare to Go Live

- **Focus on operational readiness, not a splashy headline:** A strong launch doesn't begin with a press release; it begins with quiet clarity and operational readiness.
- **Encourage and answer staff questions prior to launch:** The entire team (staff, supervisors, dispatchers, and referral partners) needs to be aligned on how the work will unfold day to day, before the launch begins.
- **Start with a "soft launch," and set clear expectations during the public launch:** Allow the team a quiet period (between three weeks and two months) to work out kinks once they begin taking calls. Carefully craft the public launch announcement to set reasonable expectations.

15. Build Credibility through Reporting and Continuous Improvement

- **Sustain a coaching and feedback culture:** A team that's operating in real-time, unstructured environments has to rely on judgment. That judgment improves with regular reflection and that reflection only works when the team feels safe giving and receiving feedback.
- **Set weekly, monthly, and quarterly reflection rhythms:** It is far too easy for busy teams to give themselves a pass on regular reflection unless something has gone badly wrong. High-performing team leaders build reflection into their rhythms.
- **Release an Early Experiences Report:** Once launched, many people will be eagerly anticipating word on how field mediation is going. Rather than wait a year, release early findings, such as through a first three months report, in order to keep generating goodwill while also reiterating reasonable expectations.

I. Promote
(for Champions)

1. Understand the Heart of the Practice

An introduction to field mediation

Purpose

This chapter introduces the concept and key principles of "field mediation," especially as a response to 911 calls related to interpersonal conflict. It provides an overview of the practice, including definitions, goals, skills required, common situations, and key influences. It also offers helpful context for anyone interested in starting or supporting a local field mediation program.

Key Insights

- **A merger of two traditions:** Field mediation is a rapid, on-scene response to a distressing (yet non-violent) interpersonal conflict. It has its roots in two traditions: community mediation (empowering participants through voice and choice) and behavioral health mobile response (rapid response, unarmed de-escalation, immediate practical support, and referrals for people in crisis).
- **Skillfully supports people in conflict:** Effective field mediators are excellent at rapidly building rapport and holding a warm, neutral, calm, creative, empowering space in the midst of chaos and conflict. Their listening and coaching helps participants shift towards a more empowered and relational way of navigating conflict.
- **Effective and safe as a 911 first response:** Dayton's Mediation Response Unit (MRU) has paved the way for other cities and counties to add this capability locally, by demonstrating that field mediators can frequently and safely provide a best fit response to many 911 calls.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Field Mediation Fundamentals	Discover key definitions related to field mediation and how this emerging practice blends elements of community mediation and mobile crisis response.
Core Skills of Field Mediators	Identify the skills required to facilitate a warm, neutral, calm, creative, empowering space in the midst of chaos and conflict, and how this skillset relates to those offered by other field-based responders. **Download Core Skills of Field Mediators**
FAQs: Field Mediation as First Response	Answers nuts-and-bolts questions related to 911-dispatched field mediation in practice, such as how do calls come in, who responds, and how do they stay safe?
About Community Mediation, and Dayton's story	An overview of community mediation, a nationwide practice and tradition that undergirds field mediation, and Dayton's pioneering Mediation Response Unit.

1. Understand the Heart of the Practice

An introduction to field mediation

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Illustrative examples of field mediation in practice.** For a step-by-step walkthrough of field mediation in practice, see **chapter 7**. For specific scenarios appropriate for field mediation, see **chapter 12**.
- **Analysis of benefits and costs of launching a Field Mediation Team**. For data-driven estimates of the need for 911-dispatched field mediation, see **chapter 2**).
- **Collaboration with experienced mediation professionals in your community is strongly encouraged.** This section does not prescribe a specific mediation tradition to train your field responders, although it is recommended to comply with **national model standards**, especially self determination and impartiality. For more information, consult your local community mediation center or the **National Association for Community Mediation**.

Field Mediation Fundamentals

What is field mediation?

Field mediation is a rapid, unarmed, on-scene, neutral third party response to an interpersonal conflict. It is emerging as a first response service option, alongside police, fire, EMS, and behavioral health mobile response. Pioneered in Dayton, Ohio in 2022, a Field Mediation Team (FMT) can be an appropriate response to 911 calls such as non-violent neighbor disputes, roommate and family disputes, noise complaints, and pet complaints.

Field mediation is rooted in the traditions of community mediation (prioritizing low cost, accessible dispute support), and specifically in Dayton's case the related tradition of transformative mediation (prioritizing voice and choice). It is also rooted in the experiences of other unarmed mobile crisis response teams that Dignity Best Practices has worked with or learned from (prioritizing service that is rapid, safe, least coercive and intrusive, most empowering and connecting).

What is a field mediator's main objective?

The goal of a field mediator is to defuse heightening conflict into productive discussion, thereby avoiding violence or the need for enforcement, while supporting participants' empowerment to safely address their own needs.

What does a real example look like in action?

Here is one true story among many: A mom called 911 after she had tried to discipline her daughter by taking her phone away, and the daughter forcefully snatched it back.

Dayton's field mediation team saw the call waiting on the list of 911 police calls available on the data terminal in their vehicle. It was categorized as a low-level call that police would eventually respond to, although it would take awhile based on other higher-priority calls. The team read the notes, pressed the "self-dispatch" button on the terminal, and called the woman back to say the call sounded like a good fit for the Mediation Response Unit, and they would be happy to come provide support.

The mom initially said "who are you guys, I want the police!" Yet, after three minutes of the mediator patiently and caringly listening on the phone, she changed her mind and said "why aren't you coming, I need you!"

The pair of mediators drove to the home. They helped the mom and the daughter to come down from their heightened emotional state and listen to one another. The daughter was able to better understand her mom's fears, and the mom was able to better understand what the phone meant to her daughter. For the daughter, feeling like she had a voice created a significant shift. They were able to work out a path forward together, hugged, and went on to have a great weekend (as revealed by a follow-up call).

While it can be surprising to many people that this should have been a 911 call in the first place, such interpersonal dispute 911 calls (both inside and outside of family dynamics) are very common. Most 911 call centers are committed to providing some kind of response to what callers consider an emergency, and 911 dispatchers have thus far not had an alternative to sending police.

What is at the heart of field mediation practice?

Field mediation is an empowering and facilitative practice, rather than an expert-assessment practice. The practitioner aims to help all sides of a dispute to feel that their voice is truly heard, and that they have choices (rather than feeling something is being done to them). Field mediators offer caring (yet side-neutral) listening, one-on-one conflict

coaching, and if the participants are ready, may facilitate a joint conversation. The mediator does not arbitrate (i.e., decide the rightness of someone's case, or the right next course of action) between them, instead helping participants describe their own options, and arrive at a way of engaging that can produce more sustainable choices and less coercive results compared to an enforcement action.

A field mediator supports people in emotional and relational distress to navigate an urgent moment of conflict, often heading off further escalation of tensions, while helping participants build the skills to better navigate future disputes. There is a tremendous need for such support in communities, as evidenced by the large number of 911 calls that the Dayton Mediation Response Unit (MRU) responds to (approximately 1 call per hour; over 3,000 calls per year), and the even larger number of calls in their community that could receive an MRU response (as much as 10% of police 911 calls). These calls are nonviolent, and usually not criminal in nature (or a minor infraction, such as non-threatening trespassing).

Conflict is viewed as a vehicle for growth, empowerment, and learning, and conflict transformation acknowledges that conflicts are often long-term and deep-seeded, stemming from complex and ever-changing interpersonal relationships.

At its heart, field mediation gives people an opportunity to navigate a conflict from a place of skill and agency instead of enforcement. The trained mediators who make up Field Mediation Teams have unique skills to support people in moving through conflict, prioritizing voice and choice, with the hope of ending in a place of greater connection. Navigating this complexity often takes time, and those who have received field mediation services often cite the time that the responders took to understand their concerns as a key benefit compared to a traditional police response[1].

Practically, this means that a field mediator is focused on helping elicit the perspectives of the person(s) in conflict ("voice") and supporting them in identifying their own goals and strategies ("choice") using a facilitative or transformative approach over a directive or evaluative approach[2].

How can field mediation be applied in a community?

Community members engage in variations of field mediation every day, whether as an intervening friend, a case worker, a coffee shop manager, or a violence interrupter. However in this toolkit, we discuss field mediation as a formal 911 first response service.

Field mediation: A standalone team or an added capability

Field mediation responders can be a standalone team, such as the pioneering MRU in Dayton, Ohio, or it can be a capability added to an existing mobile response team. Your community may decide to launch a dedicated unit as a new service provided by your community mediation center, a community-based service nonprofit, or government entity. Alternatively, your local behavioral health mobile response team may want to train and equip its staff to provide both crisis and conflict services.

The practice of field mediation can be summarized as "Voice, Choice, and Safety"

Voice

Field mediation responders help people feel heard when they believe no one is listening. They often begin by separating disputing people to allow each person to share their story without interruption. Responders listen with warmth and neutrality, focusing on the voices of those they serve rather than their own. Mediators also encourage participants to convey their message directly to the other person, when they are ready. Mediators aim to avoid becoming a message-carrier in between the participants.

Choice

After listening, mediators help each person explore their options for moving forward in separate conversations, known as conflict coaching. Since people are often still upset, they may not be ready for a joint mediated discussion but can identify next steps they can take on their own. They may also agree to a future conversation – either facilitated at their location, at a mediation center, or on their own.

Safety

Field mediators work in unpredictable and sometimes chaotic situations. They are trained to quickly build trust, stay aware of their surroundings, deescalate conflicts, ensure a safe exit, and call for help if needed. They are separate from law enforcement, providing a unique human service that should not be leveraged as 'police lite' or a pathway to enforcement.

[1]*From Dayton's Participant Perspectives interviewing, Jeanne Zimmer and Margo Kulkarni, 2025*

[2]*For a plain language description of different approaches to mediation, see Shonk, Katie, "Types of Mediation: Choose the Type Best Suited to Your Conflict," February 6, 2025. Available at* **https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/mediation/types-mediation-choose-type-best-suited-conflict/**

For an introduction to scholarship on different mediation approaches, see Leonard L. Riskin, Decisionmaking in Mediation: The New Old Grid and the New New Grid System, 79 Notre Dame L. Rev. 1 (2003). Available at: **http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndlr/vol79/iss1/1**

And, for some evidence in favor of the results of "eliciting" solutions over "offering" solutions, see Charkoudian, Lorig and Eisenberg, Deborah Thompson and Walter, Jamie, What Works in Alternative Dispute Resolution? The Impact of Third-Party Neutral Strategies in Small Claims Cases (October 4, 2019). Conflict Resolution Quarterly, U of Maryland Legal Studies Research Paper No. 2019-11. Available at **SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3464680**

EDITABLE

Core Skills of Field Mediators

People often are not at their best during a conflict. They may have an escalated stress response, a diminished ability to deal with tough issues, and struggle to engage well with others. In the midst of this, successful field mediators must have some natural talent towards, and training on: building rapport and then holding a warm, neutral, calm, creative, empowering space in the midst of chaos and conflict.

What are the primary skills responders need to develop for effective conflict mediation?

Other responders often have skills in these areas, but may need training to deepen one or more of the following habitual ways of being:

1. **Be comfortable with conflict**, including strong emotion and negative interaction patterns.
2. **Be present and patient with the parties**, focused on the process of their interaction.
3. **Be comfortable without full information**, with a limited understanding of the conflict.
4. **Set one's own perspective aside**: Respect others' actions, words, attitudes, choices, *even differing from the mediator*.
5. **Stay neutral AND warm**: Be sympathetic to the person speaking, *yet avoid signaling any taking of sides*.
6. **Be non-directive even while guiding**: Do not tell others what to do, yet offer interventions (paths) that support others in getting clearer and more open.
7. **Think on one's feet:** Be adaptable and creative in the moment (drawing out practical and relational options).
8. **Mix modes:** Be adept at frequent task and context switching (people, location, radio, reporting).

Ways of being can be harder to learn than something that can be taught from a book because it is not enough to know the right answer; it is something that has to be embodied and become a habit. This means that team leaders must not only know how to lead by example, but also how to teach others and provide regular feedback in ways that are received constructively.

Who is well suited to be a field mediator?

Since field mediation is still an emerging practice, it is unlikely to appear as a distinct qualification on a candidate's resume. Team leaders may look for individuals with relevant strengths in adjacent fields, such as community mediation, behavioral health response, peer support, or violence intervention. No matter their background or experience, all field mediators will need to be trained through hands-on scenario exercises with meaningful feedback. More details on building a strong Field Mediation Team can be found in the Hiring and Training chapters of this toolkit.

FAQs: Field Mediation as First Response

Who is the service for?	Field mediation is open to all people in conflict situations that have not become violent and do not have weapons involved. It may be one person or multiple people. When there are multiple people, a field response often involves approaching each party separately and offering to listen and support.
Process Overview	Unlike normal mediation activities that are scheduled and agreed upon by all participants in a conflict, field mediation is conducted in rapid response to a conflict, in unstructured environments (e.g., a porch, a park, a home) when one person calls for help, even though the other participant in the conflict may not have asked for a mediation response. Therefore field response has to be rapid, safety-conscious, and involves building trust and rapport with people in the midst of contextual uncertainty. Since this kind of mediation happens when feelings may still be raw and escalated, the initial response may involve more defusing of tensions and conflict coaching (1:1 support) for each participant who wants that support, rather than an immediate facilitated dialogue between the conflict participants. Facilitated dialogue (what is more typically thought of as a mediation) may happen during the same encounter, or may be planned as a later, second step.
Building Your Pitch	Non-violent disputes, including: • Noise, pet, and parking complaints • Neighbor, roommate, and family disputes • Conflicts involving youth • Business/customer disputes • Concerns about behavior in public spaces While this list focuses on calls traditionally routed to police, there is also an opportunity for field mediators to respond to calls that occupy the time of other overloaded local officials, such as fire marshalls (e.g.,open burning/ air quality disputes) and zoning disputes in mixed use areas. **Note:** Community mediation centers often already address these types of conflicts in scheduled, onsite contexts.

What is the goal of the interaction?	Support people in the moment of immediate conflict in mobilizing their internal strengths to decide on a path forward.
How is it accessed?	People call 911 for support for a non-violent conflict. People can also call a direct phone line for field mediation, which over time reduces the call burden on 911. In some contexts there may be multiple entry points, including a non-emergency line, like 211 or 311.
Who are the mediators?	Paid, trained mediation field responder who is a staff member of the Field Mediation Team (FMT). FMT units respond in pairs. We recommend that FMTs aim to center the communities they serve, and prioritize mediators and other involved stakeholders with connections to those communities, including socially, culturally and linguistically.
Are they uniformed?	Usually wear an official but clearly non-police uniform, such as a polo shirt with a city logo on it.
How rapid is the response?	In Dayton, responders typically arrive within 15-20 minutes of being called during operational hours. This means that responders may respond in a moment of active conflict but often respond immediately after. Calls outside of the program's operating hours are logged and responded to the next day.
What happens in the interaction?	Mediators practice supportive listening. There may not be a clear resolution of the conflict in the moment. Mediators may also provide people with snacks, water, other resources and/or referrals to other services.
What happens next?	Field mediation responders may follow up with participants via phone to share further resources or check in. Participants may also be referred to follow-up mediation at a mediation center.
Are police involved?	Infrequently. In Dayton, police have had to be involved in less than 2% of cases. Sometimes police will call for mediators to take over a scene where they feel mediation is a better fit. For the infrequent cases where mediation responders do not feel the scene is safe, responders may use radios or phones to call for support resulting in a rapid police presence.
How do responders stay safe?	Field mediators usually respond in pairs, and have an official but non-intimidating appearance. They are trained in diffusing tense situations. They are also encouraged to practice situational awareness and to leave a scene as soon as they judge it to be unsafe. We recommend field mediators carry radios, both to receive inbound referrals from police who see field mediation as a better fit response to a call they are on, but also to enable a rapid police presence on the rare occasion when they truly need it.

What kinds of outcomes can callers expect?	Field mediation response can have both short-term and long-term impacts. Dayton's 911 callers often express gratitude for the MRU response, including the time responders took to be with them and their concern. At the end of an interaction, you might see that: • The parties better understand their goals, emotional context, and options • The parties are able to hear and consider the interests on the other side, and to become aware of any legal context such as official quiet hours or parking regulations • A plan is made for a future constructive conversation between the parties at a time when they are not escalated, understanding that the root issue is often in how they relate • A practical shift is offered for addressing the issue (e.g., trash cans are placed elsewhere) • A relational shift occurs between the participants, from hostility to warmth (sometimes demonstrated by a spontaneous hug) • Connections are made to other helpful resources

Community Mediation: Understanding the Tradition

Field mediation has its roots in the tradition of community mediation, rather than its cousin, court-appointed mediation. People are often more familiar with the term "mediation" as a way of resolving a legal dispute by facilitating a negotiation or proposing a settlement solution. Community mediation, on the other hand, encourages participants to handle their issues together rather than relying on the judicial system and the coercion or fear of coercion it brings, which can be costly, traumatizing, or disempowering. Many cities and counties have a community mediation center that offers low- or no-cost services to the community to support disputes that occur prior to court involvement.

The tradition of community mediation goes back to indigenous practices, and in more recent history is part of a grassroots movement that was born out of the U.S. civil rights era of the 1960s, rooted in social justice, peacemaking[3], and active democracy at the local level[4]. The term "community mediation" refers more to the values that influence mediation's role in communities than the specific techniques used in practice.

Dayton's pioneering example: Mediation Response Unit

In 2022 Dayton, Ohio launched a novel program, known as a Mediation Response Unit (MRU). Based on recommendations from a community-level police reform working group, the MRU allows community members to access trained community mediators through 911 for non-violent conflict calls to common issues such as interpersonal disputes or noise complaints. Dayton field responders are trained in transformative mediation. To understand what the MRU does and the role that it plays in the crisis response continuum, it's helpful to understand the traditions and praxis from which it draws.

The Dayton Mediation Center, which operates the nation's first Field Mediation Team, practices **Transformative Conflict Theory**. In that tradition, mediation is not merely focused on resolving disputes, but also on conflict as a vehicle for personal and relational growth, empowerment, and learning.[5] There are different styles of practice within community mediation. This toolkit does not pick any favorites among them, so long as they adhere to the **Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators**, especially self determination (specifically, non-directive mediation) and impartiality.

Shared community mediation values are reflected in the below **9 Hallmarks of Community Mediation**, principles advanced by the National Association for Community Mediation, founded in 1993 as a network of community-based mediation programs across the U.S.[6] They include a commitment to providing services that are community-based, widely accessible, inclusive, timely to a moment of conflict and that provide alternatives to the judicial system.[7]

[3] *Jacobs, Becky L., (2011) Volunteers: The Power of Community Mediation (May 23, 2011). Nevada Law Review, Vol. 11, No. 2, Spring 2011, University of Tennessee Legal Studies Research Paper No. 161, Available at SSRN:* **https://ssrn.com/abstract=1915671**

[4] *Shonholtz, R. (1987). The citizens' role in justice: building a primary justice and prevention system at the neighborhood level. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 494(1), 42-53.*

[5] *Washington, Felicia; Mawn, D.G.; Shedd, Julie; (2019) State of Community Mediation Report*

[6] *Zimmer, Jeanne. (2019). Daily Uses of Conflict-Resolution Skills: A Study of Experienced Volunteer Community Mediators. Retrieved from the University Digital Conservancy, https://hdl.handle.net/11299/211828.*

[7] *https://www.nafcm.org/page/9Hallmarks*

The 9 Hallmarks of Community Mediation

Community-Based (1)	A private non-profit or public agency or program thereof, with mediators, staff and governing/advisory board representative of the diversity of the community served.
Open (2)	The use of trained community volunteers as providers of mediation services; the practice of mediation is open to all persons.
Accessible (3)	Providing direct access to the public through self-referral and striving to reduce barriers to service including physical, linguistic, cultural, programmatic and economic.
Low-Cost (4)	Providing service to clients regardless of their ability to pay.
Inclusive (5)	Providing service and hiring without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, disabilities, national origin, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, source of income.
Timely (6)	Providing a forum for dispute resolution at the earliest stage of conflict.
Innovative (7)	Providing an alternative to the judicial system at any stage of a conflict.
Outcome-Oriented (8)	Initiating, facilitating and educating for collaborative community relationships to effect positive systemic change.
Newsworthy (9)	Engaging in public awareness and educational activities about the values and practices of mediation.

[3]*Jacobs, Becky L., (2011) Volunteers: The Power of Community Mediation (May 23, 2011). Nevada Law Review, Vol. 11, No. 2, Spring 2011, University of Tennessee Legal Studies Research Paper No. 161, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1915671*

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[5]*Washington, Felicia; Mawn, D.G.; Shedd, Julie; (2019) State of Community Mediation Report*

[6]*Zimmer, Jeanne. (2019). Daily Uses of Conflict-Resolution Skills: A Study of Experienced Volunteer Community Mediators. Retrieved from the University Digital Conservancy, https://hdl.handle.net/11299/211828.*

[7]*https://www.nafcm.org/page/9Hallmarks*

2. Make the Case for Field Mediation

Building support in your community

Purpose

This chapter prepares champions (highly motivated advocates) with process guidance and evidence to build momentum towards launching a field mediation capability in their own city or county. It includes guidance to help secure policy, budget, partner, and community approvals before moving forward with full design and launch of such a program.

Key Insights

- **A better fit response for everyone:** A compelling pitch to a city or county to build a field mediation capability includes benefits for all – people in conflict, their disrupted neighbors, local community mediation centers, and the traditional responders.
- **A very promising opportunity:** Approximately 10% of 911 calls nationally could be eligible for transfer to field mediation. In Dayton in 2024 for example, 2,770 911 calls were field mediation responses, with less than 2% of these routed back to police.
- **Requires determined champions:** Advocacy for a new program takes persistence. It's important to build momentum with stakeholders and partner with a senior agency leader to navigate the local budget cycle.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Process Overview	Provides process guidance on making the case. Use this section to think through how to build momentum with key stakeholders to enable the project to be launched.
Building Your Pitch	Provides language for making the case. Use this section to build compelling scripting, adapted with local research. **Download Sample Elevator Pitch** **Download Sample Making the Case 2-Pager**
Navigating Budget and Timeline Issues	Provides orientation to how advocacy for a new local government service will need to fit into the local budget cycle. Use this section to time your advocacy to match that cycle, and set realistic expectations with advocates.
Handling Tough Questions	Provides language for preparing answers to questions that interested but cautious parties will reasonably ask. **Download "The Size of the Opportunity" 2-Pager**

2. Make the Case for Field Mediation

Building support in your community

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Sizing the opportunity.** The last section of this chapter includes a qualitative estimate of the national opportunity for 911 calls that are a best fit for a field mediation response. For guidance on assessing the size of the local opportunity for your city or county based on its 911 data, see **Chapter 6**.
- **How Dayton successfully built the political will for change.** For more information, visit **this CSG Justice Center profile**.
- **How can I speak with Dayton directly** about its experience? Contact the Dayton Mediation Center: **PNDMediationResponseUnit@daytonohio.gov**

Process Overview

Field mediation response to 911 calls is a promising, but new, practice. Therefore, it is only likely to be launched in a city or county with champions (or energetic advocates) who believe in its value and undertake a campaign to generate interest and support among key stakeholders in local government and in the community.

Who are the key stakeholders that need to say yes?

There are four key "yeses" that an advocate must seek when making the case:

1. **Local advocates and community representatives** on police-community relations, especially those representing vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged neighborhoods, Black and Brown people, the unhoused, youth, LGBTQ+, and migrant populations. These stakeholders can help demonstrate enthusiasm from local residents and business owners who see this as a trust-building improvement in public safety services.
2. **Leaders from at least one first response agency** (and eventually, most of them) who see the value in having field mediation as a partner capability in the 911 ecosystem. The three most crucial voices are often the leaders at the 911 dispatch center, law enforcement (police and/or sheriff's office), and the local behavioral health mobile response team (which could, optionally, host the new capability). Fire and EMS are also important partners to consult with, and in some cases, they may also receive calls that could be a better fit for field mediators.
3. **A community mediation center** (or another source of mediation training and guidance, ideally local) must be interested in supporting the project by devoting time to teach and mentor a team of civilian responders in community mediation techniques. (This group could, optionally, act as the host institution for a Field Mediation Team.)
4. **City or County Executive Office.** Depending on the location, roles such as the City Manager, City Administrator, Mayor, County Executive Officer, or Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, etc. must decide that they want to fund field mediation, publicly support it, and enable the cross-agency policy alignments, hiring, and procurement that will make it work.

Build momentum: An initial yes (or at least, "I'm interested") from any of the above will strengthen the advocate's position when seeking positive responses from the others. If one is not immediately interested, move on to find a warmer reception from other partners, then circle back again.

Know how everyone can benefit: Be ready to describe the benefits of field mediation to different parts of your local community.

Benefits to…

- People in conflict *(this is ultimately who this service is designed to help)*
  - Field mediation responders can spend more time supporting these callers than police will.
  - User experience research in Dayton suggests that most callers receiving a mediation response felt they were heard, and were given practical help.
- Surrounding neighbors
  - More peace and quiet - disputes are more likely to be sustainably settled through mediation than through one-off enforcement.
  - Less armed response - it can be unsettling to have an armed response in the area, even when there are no uses of force.
- Police, fire, and EMS
  - Higher availability, energy, and focus for the

most serious threats to public safety.

  - Less likely to have a minor episode escalate into a use of force or a lawsuit.
- 911 call takers
  - Can triage calls with greater confidence that dispute calls are being handled by dispute resolution professionals (and so long as the FMT is integrated with the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, can track the results of those calls).
- Local government
  - Demonstrates creativity and concern for local needs.
  - Better-long term results, including for repeat callers.
  - Lower public safety liability and associated costs.
  - In the longer run, it can be less expensive than a police response, or cost-neutral.

EDITABLE

Build Your Pitch

Effective advocates will want to write and practice their elevator pitch (to be delivered verbally) for why field mediation is a great idea. Here is a sample starting point:

Elevator Pitch for Local Field Mediation

Sample elevator pitch advocating for field mediation locally (verbal communication) (Main pitch in bold lines, supporting details below to fit into the conversation)

- **Lots of 911 calls that police go to…**
  - **A significant number of 911 police calls, around 10-20%**, *[adjust with local research]* are for "disturbances" and "family disputes" that are basically **non-violent, non-criminal** situations of **interpersonal conflict**? These include calls like neighbor disputes, roommate and family disputes, pet complaints, noise complaints, and complaints about youth behavior.
  - In most places, **police often respond** to these calls, but they cannot stay long and **often there is little they can** do to help (beyond encouraging someone to temporarily move along, or sometimes giving a fine).
- **…have a better option…**
  - Just as with mental health crisis calls, a better fit option is emerging! It is a response by unarmed **mediators trained as first responders**, who help equip the public to more sustainably resolve disputes.
  - The results are better for the people responded to, and also free up police to focus on more serious calls.
- **… it is called field mediation, and it is working in Dayton.**
  - **In Dayton, Ohio** their Mediation Response Unit (MRU) has safely taken about a call each hour (M-F day shift) **since May 2022**. These calls all used to receive a police response. Yet less than 2% of the **2,770 calls routed to MRU in 2024** were routed back to police, and the MRU receives frequent thank you notes for their support.
- **Let's consider building that here!**
  - Could you be interested in supporting launching this service in our community, or learning more? We already have [name of **local community mediation center**]*[requires local research]* which could be an effective partner in such an effort.

EDITABLE

Advocates may find many opportunities to distribute or attach **a printed 2-pager handout**. Here is a sample starting point that can be edited to fit this purpose:

Field Mediation Pitch Handout

[Your organization's logo here]

Making the Case for Field Mediation in [Our City/ County]

A new approach to conflict: Improving community safety through connection

The Dayton Story: A model for 911-dispatched mediation-based support.

A new 911 service: In 2022, Dayton, Ohio launched the nation's first Field Mediation Team, the Mediation Response Unit (MRU). The highly successful unarmed, professional civilian team responds to a significant subset of 911 calls, relieving police from taking approximately one call per hour. Dayton's MRU responds to conflict calls including neighbor conflicts; noise, parking, and party complaints; peace officer requests; panhandling, begging, and trespassing; non-violent juvenile calls; and more. In 2024 MRU took 2,770 calls, operating Monday - Friday. Fewer than 2% were routed back to police, and there were no injuries. The mediation team receives frequent thank you cards for their service.

Meeting public demand: Dayton launched the MRU in response to their community's request formore public response options beyond law enforcement. The city of Dayton implemented a year-long community engagement and data-driven design process to envision and launch the MRU. Read more about the Dayton story **profiled by the Council of State Governments** (CSG).

We in [name of your city or county] have the same need

Every day, our community members call 911 for concerns related to interpersonal conflict. Whether it is a parent who is frustrated their child won't go to school, roommates who cannot agree on household norms, or an elder frustrated about loud music in their neighborhood. Accounting for about 10 percent of all 911 calls for service, these conflict-based calls are not criminal in nature, yet do meaningfully impact residents' quality of life and overall well-being.

Police go, but are stretched thin: Striving to respond to other emergencies, traditional first responders such as police and EMS are often not able to address these types of calls in a timely manner. In the cases where police do respond, they are limited – in time, tools, or training – to meaningfully navigate a resident's crisis or connect them to resources that might ultimately address the root causes of the concerns. Left unaddressed, these conflicts will reoccur or, worse, escalate, leading to potentially more harmful or even violent situations.

Conflict as a site for connection: An opportunity to provide lasting help.

A Promising Practice: Trained Field Mediation Teams can arrive in under 30 minutes, and offer an exciting opportunity to better address these types of 911 calls with civilian responders who are specially trained to mediate conflict, and can help residents move through their immediate crises to find long-term solutions to their concerns.

Benefits for all: Implementing a field mediation capability can empower citizens to resolve conflicts within their community with a less invasive and more sustainable response.

- Offers community members an alternative to police response during non-criminal conflict situations that are distressing enough to seek out public service support.
- Empowers community members to not simply de-escalate conflicts between neighbors, families, and fellow residents, but actually move through the conflict and participate in finding the more sustainable solution.
- Provides a swift response to conflict situations, potentially resolving interpersonal disputes before they escalate to violence.
- Helps reduce repeat incidents of 911 calls by helping community members address the underlying sources of conflict.
- Equips 911 call takers with an option of mediation services for appropriate calls.
- Allows police to provide a faster and higher quality response to more serious calls.

While they share some similarities, field mediators have distinctly different training from a mental health or behavioral health crisis unit. Read more about the underlying philosophy and approach of a Field Mediation Team in Chapter 1 of the Field Mediation Launch Toolkit.

Interested in seeing a field mediation capability in our own city or county? Join our efforts!

- **Contact** [Champion's email address here] to express interest, ask questions, and find out how to help build momentum towards bringing this exciting 911-based service to [name of city/county]
- **Learn more:** Dayton and its partners are sharing their lessons learned. Visit **www.dignitybestpractices.org** for templates, resources, and/or technical assistance to help launch a similar unit, or to add mediation skills to an existing alternative response service.

How might I need to adjust the pitch based on my role?

Adjust the pitch to fit the speaker and the audience: Advocates will benefit from adjusting these pitches to fit their own voice, and may also benefit from modifying them slightly for different audiences.

For example, if the audience being addressed is already persuaded that behavioral health mobile response teams are a better fit response to about 10% of 911 calls, then the opportunity to create field mediation can be pitched as **the next 10%** of 911 calls that can receive a better fit option.

Add credibility with local research. Champions and their advocate partners can make a stronger case by doing local research. Consider examining these three areas:

1. How are the local city or county's **911 calls categorized**, and approximately what percent of them are "disturbance" calls or other forms of non-violent disputes? (See **chapter 6** for more orientation to the possibilities.) This information is sometimes found online, or questions can be directed to the local 911 center directly.
2. **Ask around for local stories about dispute calls.** Ask local residents, business owners, and police officers what their experiences have been like with police responding to calls such as neighbor and other interpersonal disputes. Are the problems solved, or do the callers often remain frustrated? Is a police response distressing for the people called-on? Do the calls sometimes escalate? Are some people hesitant to call for help because they don't want to involve the police? Do people wish there was another way?
3. **Find out whether there is a local community mediation center that could host or partner on building or training a field mediation capacity.** Many cities and counties have a community mediation center that offers low- or no-cost services to the community to support disputes that occur prior to court involvement. This is distinct from a mediation center that focuses mostly or exclusively on court-involved disputes such as lawsuits, divorces, and custody disputes. It is still possible to build a local field mediation capability without there being a local community mediation center, but in that case we recommend partnering with one elsewhere (consult **National Association for Community Mediation** to find one) to provide training support and guidance.

Be prepared. After the first pitch initially lands ("Okay, you have my attention"), advocates will need to be ready to answer deeper questions, addressed below:

- How expensive, for which agency to implement? (See chapters **4** and **10**)
- Does this really work, while keeping everyone safe? (See FAQ below)

Understanding the Local Budget Cycle

Any advocacy team trying to bring field mediation into existence locally must understand and be able to advocate from within the local budget process in the city or county that is being asked to launch the program. Practically, this means that if the advocate is not a senior level local government employee, they will need to gain someone with that status as their ally. Much of what is said below is relevant to any advocacy effort asking a local government to launch a pilot program.

Budget cycle elements to understand include:

- **The budget calendar.** This includes whether there are different seasons for the executive-proposed budget development

and the legislative-approved one. Budgetary consideration of cuts and enhancements to local operating funds for the next fiscal year often begins about half a year before the decisions are actually announced, which may itself be a few months before the new fiscal year begins.

- **Potential funding sources.** Local general fund (from the local tax base) is the most secure source of ongoing funding, if it can be obtained. But often pilot programs are funded through federal grants or even local philanthropic grants, and will only receive full local funding pledges once they have proven themselves.
- **The overall budget climate for this year.** Are tax revenues rising or shrinking? What about federal funds? Is this a spending expansion year or a contraction?
- **Which agencies might be impacted.** Which agency director might be willing to advocate for this program and its budget? Are there any other programs that have been less successful that could be sunsetted in favor of this one, for a more budget-neutral approach?

A Crucial Design and Budget Decision: New Team OR New Training for a Current Team?

There are two ways to build a local field mediation capability. Each will have a different budget estimate, so once conversations have gotten far enough to become concrete, a decision should be made about which is being advocated for:

- Option 1: **A dedicated Field Mediation Team.** This approach follows Dayton's example, creating a dedicated group of responders for dispute-related 911 calls.
  - Pros:
    - A dedicated purpose allows the team to cultivate **focused expertise**, without attention shared with behavioral health response duties.
    - A dedicated team may also be easier **for the public** to understand as a new resource, and may be **easier to evaluate** for effectiveness.
  - Cons:
    - A new team is **more expensive**. Dayton's 2022 budget for their new team was $754,400 for five new government employees, training, and equipment; training an existing team may cost 10% of that.
    - It may be **unclear where to house** the new program, as options include a local community mediation center, an non-governmental entity selected by an open RFP, or integration into a government agency.
- Option 2: **Adding a mediation capability** to a pre-existing alternative response team (usually, a behavioral health mobile team). This approach would require new training, but not the building of a whole new team, and it should expand the call types that 911 could consider transferring to this mobile team.
  - Pros:
    - An existing team can take advantage of **pre-existing infrastructure and relationships** to launch the mediation capability more quickly and with deeper ties already built in the community.
    - Training an existing team is considerably **more economical** (perhaps $25,000-$75,000 rather than ten times as much).
    - Note: These pros are **strongest if the local mobile team is already integrated into the 911 call system**, ideally with CAD and radios. If 911 partnership is not yet in place, Option 2 will have medium-high rather than

medium-low implementation complexity.

- Cons:
  - The resulting team will have a **dual mandate**. While there are skills in common, responders will still have to regularly mode-switch. The mobile team's leadership must be truly willing to take on this mandate for it to succeed.
  - If the local team is already understaffed compared to behavioral health crisis demand, adding new call types may not make sense (unless the team also receives a staffing augmentation).

Frequently Asked Tough Questions and Answers

1. **Aren't people who call 911 in the first place likely to insist on police enforcement rather than a mediation field response?**
   Interestingly, it turns out the answer is no. Over two years of experience in Dayton suggests that for 95% or more of 911 calls responded to by a Field Mediation Team, the callers are satisfied and do not insist on a police response. This may be surprising, but here are some likely explanations.
   - People in a conflict really want to feel heard and taken seriously. Field mediators often have more time to offer to each response, and their training in tone, intention, and attention addresses this need.
   - The Field Mediation Team carries some official legitimacy by being an agent of local government (often visualized by a formal logo on a responder's polo shirt uniform). This can help both parties feel safer, and can help prompt a perspectival shift from just "what do I want?" to "what would others find reasonable?" which can open a fresh approach.
   - Oftentimes responders discover that the parties to the conflict have not yet attempted a courteous conversation face-to-face, rather than yelling over a fence (or similar). The mediator can facilitate these paths.
   - While not their primary function, the mediator can sometimes help clarify the likely legal aspects of common disputes, such as when local quiet hours start and end, and what is required of dog owners.
   - While a police response is still a possible step if things escalate, it is often one which both parties seek to avoid, when offered a viable alternative.
2. **Is it really safe for unarmed people to be responding to 911 calls where people are engaged in heated arguments?**
   So far, the answer appears to be yes. After three years in the field responding to conflict calls, Dayton's MRU has not suffered any injuries. Several factors contribute to why.
   - **Screening:** These calls are screened ahead of time by the 911 call taker and/or the mediation responders themselves (in a call back to the caller) to avoid signs of actual violence or the involvement of weapons.
   - **Training:** Field mediators are trained in situational awareness and de-escalation techniques. Often they are able to defuse a tense situation, and whenever they feel they are no longer safe, they are trained to leave.
   - **A cooling off period:** Dayton's MRU typically responds to a call in 15-20 minutes. While this is a rapid response, it still provides some time in which the participants in a dispute often have cooled off some and stepped away from one another, making it easier for mediators to do their work than when they have to step into the middle of a "hot" dispute in

progress. Responders also phone en-route and speak with the initial caller, which begins the process of building trust, rapport, and defusing the situation.

- **Unarmed yet legitimate response:** Conflicts may escalate when a third party with no standing tries to intervene in the conflict, or when an armed party shows up and attempts to control the situation. Field mediators avoid both – they have legitimate standing to intervene, but they are not controlling and not armed, so they are less likely to provoke an escalation by showing up. Community social workers and mobile crisis teams have enjoyed these same advantages for many years, often engaging in tense situations without having them escalate further through their presence.
- **Radios:** Dayton's MRU carries radios which allow them to communicate very rapidly with police in the rare case when they are in need of assistance. We recommend this safety precaution for any Field Mediation Teams taking 911 calls.

3. **Does this really solve disputes? Won't they just call back again the next time they're arguing?**
Let's start by acknowledging that no 911 response (by any agency) is guaranteed to immediately permanently resolve an issue, especially when that issue has been building up as a dynamic across months or even years. That being said, field mediators do have several advantages that can help reduce reliance on emergency services over time and move towards sustainable resolutions.
   - **Conflict coaching is empowering:** Field mediators offer conflict coaching to all sides in a conflict, which helps equip the people in the dispute to learn how to be heard, to consider their options, and to consider how to improve their ability to navigate difficult relationships, making them less reliant on outside support.
   - **Treating conflict as a process, not a moment:** Mediators do not set false expectations – they know that navigating conflict is often a multi-step process. Acknowledging this often lays the groundwork for a more sustainable, communication-based resolution, compared to a single enforcement action.
   - **A direct number:** Field mediators provide their team's direct phone number, so that if someone wants further assistance they can get it quickly without calling 911 again and burdening the emergency response system.
   - **Follow up:** Field mediation teams conduct follow-up phone calls and/or visits to those they have served, to stay in touch and continue to build positive momentum towards capable resolution.
   - **Connection to the resources of the local community mediation center:** While Field mediation encounters often start out on someone's porch or in their backyard, the team can offer referrals to free or low-cost fully structured mediation sessions at the local community mediation center. These happen on a different day after more preparation with both sides of a dispute, and often have excellent outcomes.
4. **I already have an alternative response team in my community. Is this any different from what they do?**
Yes and no – and both are important. Most alternative response teams taking 911

calls as of this writing (2025) are focused on responding primarily to ***one person*** experiencing a mental health or substance use ***crisis***, rather than being trained to respond to ***two or more*** people in crisis due to their interpersonal ***conflict***.

Field mediators, in contrast, are trained in mediation and conflict coaching, and are more likely to be experienced in navigating a dispute warmly without taking sides. They are also oriented towards listening for and working on the root causes of disputes, rather than just defusing a current point of tension

Another adjacent response team type, community violence intervention (CVI) teams, often do have these dispute resolution skills (and are usually focused on reducing retaliatory gun violence), but are unlikely to be first responders to 911 calls.

That being said, these teams are not fully different, in the sense that many of the same core skills are required for good alternative responders regardless of the team's specifics. This includes being good at active listening, building rapport, situational awareness, de-escalation, and participatory planning towards the safety and well-being of the person or persons in crisis. Additionally, mental health crisis calls also involve adjacent disputes with loved ones, so alternative responders become accustomed to helping to partially navigate those disputes, even if that isn't their core training or focus.

Other alternative response teams can be fruitfully trained to add field mediation as a capability, which can then enable them to also take a broader set of 911 calls.

5. **Has Dayton's Mediation Response Unit had an external evaluation?** There is an evaluation in progress as of this writing. Meanwhile, locally reported statistics and results from 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 (in progress) have all been positive.
6. **How can we learn more about Dayton's experiences?**
   If you have a specific question, or may be interested in scheduling a visit, you may contact Dayton Mediation Center: **PNDMediationResponseUnit@daytonohio.gov**.
   If you have a group that is interested to learn more online, you can also schedule a webinar on how field response has worked well in Dayton through Dignity Best Practices (Dayton's implementation partner, and the authors of this toolkit) at **contact@dignitybestpractices.org**.
7. **Is it really worth creating a dedicated response to 10% of 911 calls?**
   Yes, absolutely. To put this in perspective, fire departments respond to about 30 million 911 calls annually in the U.S. Only about 4% of these calls (1.2 million per year, 3,388 per day on average) are for fires (the majority are for medical needs). Yet we don't question whether we really need a professional response infrastructure for these fires annually. In contrast, there are about 200 million 911 police calls per year. Ten percent of that is 20 million calls, or 54,794 a day, that could benefit from a professional mediation response. In at least half of U.S. cities and counties, this rate turns out to be enough to justify a team.
   See the 2-pager "Sizing the National Opportunity" below for a more detailed exposition of our quantitative case for this service.

Sizing the National Opportunity: Thousands of 911 Calls are Ready for a Better Fit

Members of the public are often surprised to hear what proportion of 911 calls currently routed to police are not for what most of us would consider an emergency.

While estimates vary, it is becoming more widely known that many 911 calls – **around 10%** – are mental health related, leading to the need for 911-dispatched mobile crisis services.

Our claim is that non-violent conflict calls are **the next 10% of police 911 calls that can receive a better fit** through field mediation, which more effectively, cost-effectively, and sustainably meets the public need.

Most studies agree that the majority of 911 police calls are not violent, not serious crimes, and not even events requiring an enforcement action. **Analysis by Center for American Progress (CAP) and Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)** examined 911 police calls for service from eight cities and found that 23-39% of calls were low priority or non-urgent, while only 18-34% of calls were potentially life-threatening emergencies. A **Vera Institute report assessing nine cities** released in April 2022 found that on average **62% of 911 police calls** were not for criminal matters that required enforcement. And the Police Administrator **in Atlanta** estimated that only 45,000 (3.4%) of the city's 1,300,000 calls in 2023 were an emergency.

So, what are these lower-level calls? Many of them are for categories that could fit a mediation response, such as "disturbance," but the vagueness of these call types covers many different kinds of episodes and requires more precision to determine their level of potential risk to responders. In a 2013 academic **study**, the top five police call types were 1) Disturbance/Nuisance (22.6%), 2) Traffic (12.7%), 3) Theft (12.5%), 4) Domestic Disturbance/ Violence (7.2%), and 5) Suspicious/ Wanted [Person, Circumstances, Vehicle] (7.0%). The study observed that the first category, Disturbance/Nuisance, was used for many incident types, including "civil disputes, verbal fights, threats, municipal by-law incidents, and noise complaints." The Vera Institute found that among the top call types in a broader set of 15 cities, many of them were broad categories such as "disturbance" and "breach of peace."

Table: Vera Institute's Analysis of the Most Common Single 911 call Type, Various Cities

Figure 4. Most Common 911 Calls in the Nine Cities Analyzed

City, State	Call Description	Percent of the City's 911 Calls
Baltimore, MD	Business Check	28.5%
Cincinnati, OH	Advised Incident	18.9%
Detroit, MI	Disturbance	17.2%
New Orleans, LA	Complaint Other	11.9%
Cincinnati, OH	911 Call No Emergency	10.8%
Seattle, WA	Disturbance Miscellaneous	10.4%
Cincinnati, OH	Tow Vehicle	10.2%
Burlington, VT	Suspicious Events	9.7%
Detroit, MI	Hang-up[13]	9.4%
Hartford, CT	Breach of Peace	9.0%
New Orleans, LA	Disturbance Other	8.8%
Detroit, MI	Unknown Problem	8.2%
Seattle, WA	Suspicious	8.0%
Tucson, AZ	Check Welfare	8.0%
Hartford, CT	Domestic	7.9%

Source: Vera Institute 911 Analysis: Call Data Shows We Can Rely Less on Police

Dignity Best Practices estimates (based on samples of 911 CAD data and notes from multiple cities) that about half of disturbance calls and about half of domestic disturbance calls , are non-violent, non-threatening, and can be well handled by trained field mediators. Some suspicious person calls can similarly be categorized as non-criminal and can be a good fit for FM. ***See chapter 6 of this toolkit for a closer look at how to estimate which 911 calls fit this opportunity.***

If these estimates are roughly correct, then ten percent of 911 police calls include thousands of calls that are a good fit for field mediation response – and not just in a big city. For example, Lynchburg,

Virginia, considered by some researchers to have the most “median” characteristics of any U.S. city, dispatched **62,583 police calls for service in 2023** (with a population of 79,535). Ten percent of that is 6,258, or 17 calls per day. That is about twice the number of calls per day that might justify investing in a local field mediation team.

Zooming out to the national view, where about 200 million 911 calls are routed to the police annually – ten percent of that is 54,794 calls per day that could be mediation-worthy, but which currently receive a police response.

3. Orient the Project with a Zero-to-Launch Timeline

Set general expectations for implementation roles and timeframes

Purpose

An initial project timeline helps set expectations among both political and operational actors about approximately how long it will take to design, build, and launch a field mediation capability, with the involvement of cross-agency actors.

Key Insights

- **Pivot from momentum to action:** The timeline provides the pivot point between the work of a Champion to secure approval to begin the project, and the Project Manager who must carry it forward with its many details.
- **Outline core planning activities:** Any launch of a local field mediation capability will require determining eligible call types, crafting dispatch routing and field protocol, and = building and delivering of training for field responders.
- **Set timeframe expectations:** If a current mobile response team is being cross-trained as field mediators, the project may take approximately 6-12 months from approval to active in the field. If a new dedicated team is being built, there will be a more extensive building, hiring, and training process which may take approximately 12-24 months. These design and implementation processes are complex and involve many actors, so expect at least one major timeline revision after the process is started.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Zero to Launch Sample Timeline	Provides an editable 1-2 page timeline to help all participants in the launch project get on the same page. **Download Zero to Launch Sample Timeline**

Related Resources and Limitations

- To add insights in project timeline construction from other excellent resources, take a look at:
  - The **"Expanding First Response Toolkit"** by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center. See specifically the Phase descriptions within their Assessment Tool.
  - The **"Alternative Emergency Response Program Development Checklist"** by the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab.

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Zero to Launch Sample Timeline

Instructions:

Project Champions may use this sample timeline to answer questions about implementation steps and feasibility when securing approval to begin the project. Note that it contains elements for both adding a capability to an existing team and starting a new team; edit it to more fully match your specific project type and likely timing.

The Project Manager is encouraged to edit this timeline, adapting it to local goals, resources, processes, and constraints.

If a current mobile response team is being cross-trained as field mediators, the project may take approximately 6-12 months from approval to active in the field. If a new dedicated team is being built, there will be a more extensive building, hiring, and training process which may take approximately 12-24 months.

The 12-month sample timeline below, beginning with Design phase, assumes policy and budget authorization already have pre-approval (Promote phase is complete) and processes are operating smoothly across all actors. Realistically, depending on obstacles faced, and hiring and procurement timelines, this timeline may be 18-24 months, or even longer, even with a determined project lead. It is also very normal for there to be one or two significant timeline resets in the course of implementation. Project managers may also not be given the full time they need to get all elements ready prior to launch (timing is sometimes driven by funder or political expectations, rather than detailed operational planning). In that case the Project Manager will need to resequence some components, including potentially adding in some equipment, training, and capabilities later.

***Note:** *Steps in blue are relevant when launching an entirely new mediation-focused team; steps in black text apply equally to building a new team or adding a mediation capability to an existing mobile team.*

Months	Steps
Phase 1: Promote	
Indeterminate time	Gain high-level policy and budget authorization to initiate the project. This may take anywhere from two months to several years.
Phase 2: Design (Scope/ Call Types/ Budget)	
Month 1	Consensus on high-level project **goals** and **timeline** • Build a cross-agency **working group** and level set on shared goals
Month 2	**Research** the size of the opportunity, and community preferences • Specify eligible **call types**, and **review 911 CAD data** to assess volume • Conduct **community outreach** to gain public feedback

Months	Steps
Month 3	Draft a **dispatch** plan • Specify how calls will be **dispatched**, and expected **shift coverage** Submit the Project's **budget** request • For a new team, include staffing, office space, vehicles and equipment • If adding capability to an existing team: budget for training hours (backfill overtime) and new expenses (e.g., possibly MDTs in vehicles)
Month 4	Secure **approval** (budget and policy) to move forward; meanwhile set **key performance indicators** Write **job descriptions** to be ready to initiate hiring process
Phase 2: Implement (Hire/ Protocol/ Train)	
Month 5	Hire the **team leader** for the Field Mediation Team Develop an initial **field protocol**
Month 6	Hire team members Develop **training curriculum**
Month 7	**Training** Month 1: Emphasis on field mediation **protocol** and **scenario** exercises **Integrate technology** (e.g., CAD, RMS) into staff workflow and vehicles
Month 8	**Training** Month 2: Continue scenario exercises, **add cross-agency training** Conduct outreach to likely inbound and outbound **referral partners**
Phase 3: Launch (Learn/ Improve/ Report)	
Month 9	**Soft launch**/ trial runs and protocol adjustments
Month 10	**Public launch** and increase to full operating hours
Month 11	Solidify continuous **improvement rhythms** • E.g., weekly case review and coaching, monthly dashboard review, monthly or quarterly continuous improvement discussion
Month 12	**Report to city** leadership on initial field experiences

II.Design
(for Project Manager and Working Group)

4. Convene a Cross-Agency Working Group

Establish the team and set the vision

Purpose

To build a successful field mediation program, cities and counties must convene a cross-agency working group empowered to co-design the effort. This chapter guides you in assembling the right partners, aligning around a shared vision, and creating momentum through meaningful collaboration.

Key Insights

- **Cultivate trust among decision makers:** Co-designing with partner agencies builds trust and ensures the program works within local operational constraints. The working group must include decision makers who can act – or escalate – on behalf of their agency.
- **Craft a shared vision:** A clear vision and shared definition of success will keep the group aligned through tough decisions.
- **Accelerate progress with two key roles:** The Project Champion plays a crucial role in unblocking bureaucracy and securing key approvals, while the Project Manager sets meeting agendas, guides the process, and helps ensure everyone is following through on monthly commitments.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Build the Design Team	Learn who should have a seat at the table in the design process in order for a working group to be effective.
Set the Vision and Define Success	Align working group members around a plain-language vision and a shared understanding of what success looks like, laying the foundation for coordinated program design.
Gain Authority to Act	Understand how to embed key approvals into the working group process and maintain momentum by proactively addressing bureaucratic hurdles.

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Strategic Planning:** This chapter focuses on the initial design team and vision setting for the initiative. It does not cover how to develop a comprehensive strategic plan.
- **Performance Management:** See **Chapter 9** for more detailed guidance on goal setting and performance management.

Build the Design Team

Introducing new response options to a city or county's first responder ecosystem greatly benefits from a co-design process that includes the ecosystem's current members.

Who will lead this initiative?

The first step in developing a field mediation program is to identify and empower the people responsible for the initiative.

- **Project Champion:** Identify the high level official who will advocate for the program's needs, both politically and bureaucratically. For example, this person may be a Deputy City Manager or Deputy Chief of Police with the authority and influence to make necessary requests and approvals.
- **Project/Implementation Manager:** The Project Champion should identify and empower a Project (or Implementation) Manager to coordinate and develop the program outlined in this toolkit.

Why is a working group necessary?

This level of change cannot occur in a silo. Benefits of a working group approach include:

- Other agencies feel the new service is built with them, rather than done to them.
- They can provide practical advice on constraints and enablers of field operations that might otherwise be missed. For example:
  - Explaining how radios do and don't work
  - Clarifying whether local laws require a law enforcement response to all missing persons cases

Which agencies should be represented in the working group?

Required representatives:

- **The responsible agency** (and the contracted organization, if used) that is expected to house the program
- The primary local **911 public safety answering point** that will be expected to dispatch mediation-appropriate calls to the team
- The local primary **law enforcement** department – typically police for city, sheriff's office for county – that is expected to work collaboratively with the team and refer calls to them

Optional representatives or ad hoc for specific, relevant meetings:

- A representative from the city or county's **executive offices** to help streamline any needed hiring, procurement, legal, or other bureaucratic efforts. If the representative is within a governmental subsection, this could be from the public safety side, the human services side, or both.
- Local **fire** and/or **EMS** (they are sometimes the same agency, sometimes different).
- An agency that coordinates **public engagement** efforts (e.g., the Public Information Office).
- An agency that supports the development of new training programs (e.g., the Department of Human Resources).
- A **data analyst** to support, from any agency associated with the project.
- Any other agency that is particularly relevant in the local context.
- One or more representatives from the community, including persons with lived experience (see also Chapter 5 in this toolkit for a dedicated workstream on this topic). If the working group convening authority decides to elevate the role of community voices, these representatives could be part of the core working group and invited to every meeting.

Different sizes of working group may be best at different points in the process, to facilitate the

project's forward progress. For example, it may be useful to start with a larger group (12 or so members) to secure a joint vision, and then to shrink the group to half of that size to be more nimble in working through detailed design and planning elements, and then come back to the larger group to provide updates and gather feedback at specific milestones. These functions can also be formalized into two differently named groups, such as a larger stakeholders group and a smaller working group.

Working Groups Require Decision-Makers

Agency delegates should be senior managers or above.

To be effective, the working group needs people senior enough to at least partially speak for and make simple decisions on behalf of their agency, and able to get other answers and decisions fairly quickly from agency leadership when needed. In public safety agencies, this delegate could be a lieutenant but will more often be a captain or higher

What should working group meetings look like?

To be effective, the working group should meet consistently during the design phase – ideally every other week, though weekly or monthly may work depending on urgency and availability. As the program moves into the Implement and Launch phases, the group may continue meeting, but at a reduced frequency.

The **Project Manager** is responsible for **distributing clear agendas** in advance to ensure every meeting has a defined purpose and **confirming attendance** from any agencies relevant to the discussion topics.

The **first meeting** should focus on aligning on project goals and the proposed timeline, or surfacing areas of disagreement and beginning to build consensus.

This process will be smoother if the City or County Executive has already signaled support for the project's success.

Set the Vision and Define Success

Before designing policies, selecting call types, or defining performance metrics, the working group should align on a core question:

What are we building – and what will success look like when it's working?

Programs like field mediation only succeed when multiple agencies and stakeholders are moving in the same direction. That requires more than broad support – it requires clear alignment on purpose, values, and early expectations.

Why start with vision?

A concise, plain-language vision for what this initiative will build helps the group align around a shared purpose. It doesn't need to be flashy – it just needs to express the future this program is ultimately trying to help bring about.

Example: *"To provide a professional, community-centered response to interpersonal conflict calls that would otherwise go to police."*

This isn't a full strategic planning process. While formal vision, mission, and values for the program may follow, the purpose here is to align partners around a **shared directional vision** – one that can guide early design decisions and keep stakeholders grounded in the same goals.

This early clarity will help the group stay aligned when hard choices come later around staffing, dispatch, or training. A well-stated vision acts as a touchstone.

How will we know it's working?

Once you've named the vision, take time to agree on a few short **success statements** – plain descriptions of what the program should look and feel like when it's functioning as intended.

These are starting point goals, but are not metrics (yet). Think of them as shared expectations that the whole group can agree on, even if they work in different systems.

Examples:

✓ "The team is trusted by residents and partner agencies."

✓ "Police and dispatch refer calls regularly and appropriately."

✓ "Conflicts are resolved calmly, without escalation."

✓ "The response feels helpful – not punitive – to the people involved."

You do not need to overly wordsmith these. They are meant to align the group's mental picture of success, so future decisions are rooted in shared intent.

What happens next?

Later in this toolkit, the group will return to these success statements and use them to guide performance measurement and continuous improvement. For now, the goal is simply alignment. If working with an outside evaluator, these early definitions can also guide your year 1 implementation evaluation – focusing on whether the program is set up and functioning as intended.

Aim to build strong enough rapport with working group members (and a substantive enough set of meeting agendas) that they attend regularly, and send a delegate in their place only rarely. Inevitably, some delegates will have been "volun-told" to take on their role. Yet if the group is healthy then by the second month of working together everyone's contributions should be genuine rather than just a check-the-box form of attendance. Also request that if someone faces a transition in their role (rotations are especially common in police departments), that they attempt a transition plan, or request permission to remain assigned to the working group even though their departmental role has shifted.

Gain Authority to Act: Securing Approvals and Unblocking Progress

Many working group decisions will require formal approval from senior city/county leadership or public safety executives before the program can proceed. These may include:

- Approval of the program's starting call types and dispatch approach
- Sign-off on the initial budget and policy plan
- Authorization to begin hiring and procurement

These approvals should not be treated as isolated checkboxes. Instead, they should be embedded into the working group process – with the Project Champion playing a key role in clearing barriers and navigating high-level decision-making.

> ***Tip:*** *Keep contacts warm in HR and Procurement early. Even informal coordination during the Design phase can speed up hiring and purchasing once approvals are granted.*

Ideally, **the Project Champion or their proxy should participate in working group meetings**, or at minimum, receive regular briefings from the Project Manager to ensure alignment and continued momentum.

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Sample Working Group Agenda

Working groups are exactly that – they are task-oriented and fast-moving, gathering inputs and making decisions together to get things done and move the project forward.

As seen in this sample working group agenda from Dayton, one month after first convening, the group already had a fairly shared vision and dove into the operational details. In Dayton's case the working group met weekly at first, although meeting every other week can also be a functional cadence.

Mediation response WG meeting #5 – 9/1/21

Present

Convened by:

- Project managers - Samantha Bunecke and Daniel Kornfield - DBP

Invited as members of the working group: 1 representative from each of:

- City Manager's office
- Police department
- Fire/EMS
- Sheriff's office (runs the 911 Dispatch Center)
- Local community mediation center

Guest

- IT specialist to help with technology budget estimate

Agenda

1. Any updates from around the room
2. Review and feedback on mediation specialist positions – # intended to hire, thoughts on job description
3. Begin discussion for technology budget estimates [dispatch center input]
    - IT specialist: Do you want to be in our dispatch center? Do you want to use the 911 phone/ CAD system? Or an office space with a regular telephone?
    - Could range from a few thousand to well into the six figures. Are they looking for the use of our CAD, our workstations in the dispatch center or office space and a phone line?

      These questions need to be asked in the weekly meeting so all of the stakeholders are on the same page as to what is needed.

      We do have office space, with furniture and established phone lines available. Everything will incur a cost but what level or access and technology will drive that cost estimate.
4. Continue discussion on 911 protocols
   What calls are field dispatch, call center, or RDC dispatched?
   Mediation 100 (To be the crew call-number)
5. Preview next WG meetings in the month ahead
    - 9/8 – Finish job descriptions and begin spreading the word on the specialist field positions, review technology budget estimates, request list of likely scenarios
    - 9/15 – Begin discussion of mediation center field response protocol (using likely scenarios, how do they actually respond in the field?)
    - Call center protocol
        - Standard
        - If… then…
    - Field response protocol
        - Standard
        - If… then…
    - 9/22 – Begin discussion of what data could be shared across agencies and how (911, police, health), and what performance metrics could be used

5. Invest in Community Engagement

Facilitating a community-involved design process for your field mediation service

Purpose

This chapter offers practical strategies for engaging community members in designing your Field Mediation Team service. Early and continuous community involvement is essential for building strong, sustainable, and effective response services.

Key Insights

- **Partner:** Community engagement is all about working with people – not just for them – on the issues that impact their lives.
- **Be transparent:** Be intentional and honest about how deeply you will engage community perspectives (consider the six-point spectrum: Ignore, Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower). Do not misrepresent your level of engagement. Avoid "consulting" with community members on decisions that are already set in stone.
- **Focus on impacted people and places:** Be creative and methodical around different avenues for engagement, prioritize voices with relevant lived experience, and work to co-host discussions with trusted representatives from the invited groups.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Community Engagement Overview	An overview of the strategic role and importance of community-involved planning efforts when designing new public services.
Key Frameworks	Learn about two frameworks to support your self-assessment and planning for community engagement: Community Engagement Spectrum and Matrix of Community Voice Representation.
Planning Worksheet	Use this worksheet to plan your tactics for involving community in the design of your field mediation service.
Appendix: Resources	A list of sources, frameworks, and tools for more information on community engagement strategies and tactics.

5. Invest in Community Engagement

Facilitating a community-involved design process for your field mediation service

Related Resources and Limitations

- This section provides an overview and basic planning considerations for involving community in the design of your field mediation service, however it does not cover methods for community accountability in program implementation.
- Jurisdictions implementing a field mediation service should prioritize building trust with communities disproportionately impacted by low-trust encounters with police to address potential concerns, particularly Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, as well as economically disadvantaged and higher-crime areas. Partnering with trusted community leaders can help secure their buy-in and input throughout the planning and implementation process.
- If community-involved planning is a new concept to you, it may be hard to envision how to apply the tactics outlined in this chapter. Read specific examples of community engagement for alternative response in the Council of State Governments' **Expanding First Response Toolkit**.

Source

The content in this chapter is adapted from the Community Engagement Guide created by Dignity Best Practices for the Clear Pathways Crisis Response Pilot (2024). **Clear Pathways'** partners include **The Pew Charitable Trusts** who supported the Crisis Response Pilot with **Peg's Foundation**. Dignity Best Practices served as an implementation partner, including project planning, facilitating discussions, and developing worksheets and templates to support local planning efforts. **Mathematica** evaluated the pilot and provided research support on other Clear Pathways activities.

Overview of Community Engagement

Community engagement is about working with people – not just for them – on the issues that affect their lives. It is a process that creates space for real conversations, shared decision-making, and collective problem-solving. The best approach is to listen, learn, and act on what people share – starting with "What can we do together?" instead of "How do we get them on board?"

Why does it matter?

When done right, community engagement leads to stronger, more effective policies, programs, and services – because they actually reflect the needs and lived experiences of the people they impact. It also builds trust. When people are heard and can see their input making a difference, they're more likely to stay engaged, support new initiatives, and be active partners in the process. On the flip side, when decisions are made about a community without them, the results can be disappointing. Programs can miss the mark, policies can face resistance, and well-intentioned efforts can fall flat.

When engagement is meaningful, the benefits are real:

- **Stronger, more effective solutions** because the people who are most impacted are providing information on what service intervention they are most likely to use.
- **A data-driven case for bold changes** because there is representative and defensible information to advocate for operational decisions, directly from those who the initiative is intended to serve.
- **Greater sense of local ownership and support.** Elected leaders and political priorities may change, but a community who has shaped a program will help ensure it lives on.

Skipping community engagement or treating it as a checkbox exercise can backfire, leading to community pushback, missed opportunities, and ineffective programs. So the question isn't just "Are we engaging community?" but instead "Are we engaging in a way that truly shifts power, builds trust, and leads to better outcomes?"

When should community engagement be used?

Community engagement is not the right approach for every situation. If decisions have already been made and there is not room to shape the outcome, inviting community members to provide their input, participate in a workgroup, or join another form of engagement can actually break trust instead of building it. Additionally, there is no one-size-fits-all way to engage a community. Different frameworks help organizations figure out where they are, where they want to be, and how to get there. For more examples of different approaches, please see the appendix at the end of this chapter.

Casting a Vision: Case Studies in Community Engagement

Designing an effective Field Mediation Team requires meaningful engagement with the communities they aim to serve, but it can often be difficult to envision what that engagement looks like in practice. Successful models go beyond traditional consultation to center community voices in shaping policies, programs, and decision-making. The following case studies highlight examples of deliberate and comprehensive community engagement – demonstrating how inclusive, participatory processes can lead to more responsive and trusted alternative response services.

The Council of State Governments has compiled examples that demonstrate high levels of engagement. You may access some of these examples and other resources related to community engagement in their **Expanding First Response Toolkit**.

Case Studies

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Overview: In July 2020, Albuquerque committed to creating a cabinet-level community safety department – alongside police and fire – to handle behavioral health, quality-of-life, and non-criminal 911 calls. Instead of rushing the launch, the City spent six months gathering community input to make sure the Albuquerque Community Safety Department (ACS) reflected the values and needs of the people it was built to serve. A citywide survey drew nearly 3,000 responses and over 1,000 written comments, alongside seven facilitated engagement sessions with both residents and service providers, and targeted outreach to marginalized communities.

Activities: City-Led Survey, Engagement Events, Outreach

Topics: Responder Skills, Hiring, and Training; Availability, Dispatch, and Transportation; Relationship to Police; Uniforms, Supplies, Vehicles; Connection to Services and Referrals; Community Accountability

Community Engagement Report

Organizational Plan

Atlanta, Georgia

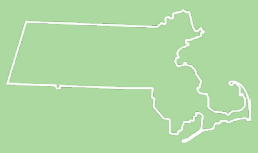
Overview: In 2020 when designing the City of Atlanta's 311-dispatched Community Response Services, the service provider Policing Alternatives & Diversion (PAD) Initiative led a data-driven design process. In addition to studying 3.5 years of 911 call data, PAD co-hosted three virtual listening sessions with 15 other community-based organizations, surveyed City of Atlanta residents, and convened six stakeholder working groups.

Activities: Nonprofit-Led Survey, Engagement Events, Working Groups

Topics: Satisfaction and interaction with 911 system and services; Likelihood to utilize non-police service response; Beliefs around quality of life concerns and Harm Reduction practices; Scope of Response (Call Types and Situations); Availability and Dispatch

Community Listening Sessions

Community Engagement Survey



Boston, Massachusetts

Overview: In 2021, the City of Boston launched a community-driven process to develop a non-police mental health crisis response model, facilitated by The City School and Boston Liberation Health. A 14-member Community-Led Design Group spent eight months using a data-driven, evidence-informed approach to design the model. After incorporating insights from national programs and local community feedback, the CLDG submitted its final proposal in December 2022 to the Mayor's Office and the Boston Public Health Commission, which now houses the program. As of April 2025, the Community Responder service is in development.

Activities: Grassroots Coalition-Led, Community Design Team, Engagement Events

Topics: Values, Scope of Response (Call Types and Situations), Availability, Dispatch, Operations; Relationship to Police; Responder Skills, Hiring, and Training; Connection to Services and Referrals; Community Accountability; Situating the Service Model (Grassroots, Nonprofit, Government)

Community Recommendations Report

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Community Engagement Spectrum

This table outlines the Community Engagement Spectrum, a key tool for your planning. As you review it, you'll see that community influence grows across the spectrum. On the left, people provide limited input on operational considerations for your community's field mediation service. On the right, community leaders and organizations share decision-making on protocols, transfers, and training. Take a few minutes to review the framework before starting the worksheet.

	Ignore	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Impact	Withhold access to decision-making processes and information about new programs or services.	Provide balanced and objective information about new programs or services, and about the reasons for choosing them	Invite feedback on alternatives, analyses, and decisions related to new programs or services.	Work with community members to ensure that their aspirations and concerns are considered at every stage of planning and decision-making. We also engage their assets as partners to implement solutions.	Enable community members to participate in every aspect of planning and decision-making for new programs or services. Community members actively produce outcomes.	Give community members sole decision-making authority over new programs or services, and lead work to implement solutions. Professionals only serve in consultative or supportive roles.
Message	"We are creating this without gauging community interest."	"We will keep you informed."	"We will keep you informed, listen to your input and feedback, and let you know your ideas and concerns have influenced decisions."	"We will ensure your input and feedback is directly reflected in alternatives, and let you know how your involvement influenced decisions. We will engage you as partners to implement solutions."	"We will co-create and co-produce solutions with you. You will be true partners in making and implementing decisions for the community, your advice and recommendat-ions will be incorporated as much as possible."	"We will support your decisions to implement solutions."
Activities	Closed-door meetings, minimal publicly accessible information.	Fact sheets, newsletters, websites, open houses.	Surveys, focus groups, community meetings and forums.	Community organizing, leadership development, workshops.	Advisory boards, seats on governing boards, engaging and funding as partners.	Support full governance, leadership, and partnership.

Adapted from the Community Engagement Toolkit, Version 2.2 (Collective Impact Forum, 2017) and Spectrum from Community Engagement to Ownership (Movement Strategy Center, 2019).

Self-assessment

Consider how your department, organization, or initiative's current practices align with the community engagement spectrum. How would you describe the current approach and impact of your efforts?

Current State: Generally, the approach to community engagement is to...					
☐ **Ignore**	☐ **Inform**	☐ **Consult**	☐ **Involve**	☐ **Collaborate**	☐ **Empower**
Why does your initiative land at this level? What factors influence this placement? Consider staffing capacity, methods of engagement, and strength of relationships with community organizations.					

Goal: To engage community in the design of my jurisdiction's field mediation service, I propose we take the following approach...				
☐ **Inform**	☐ **Consult**	☐ **Involve**	☐ **Collaborate**	☐ **Empower**

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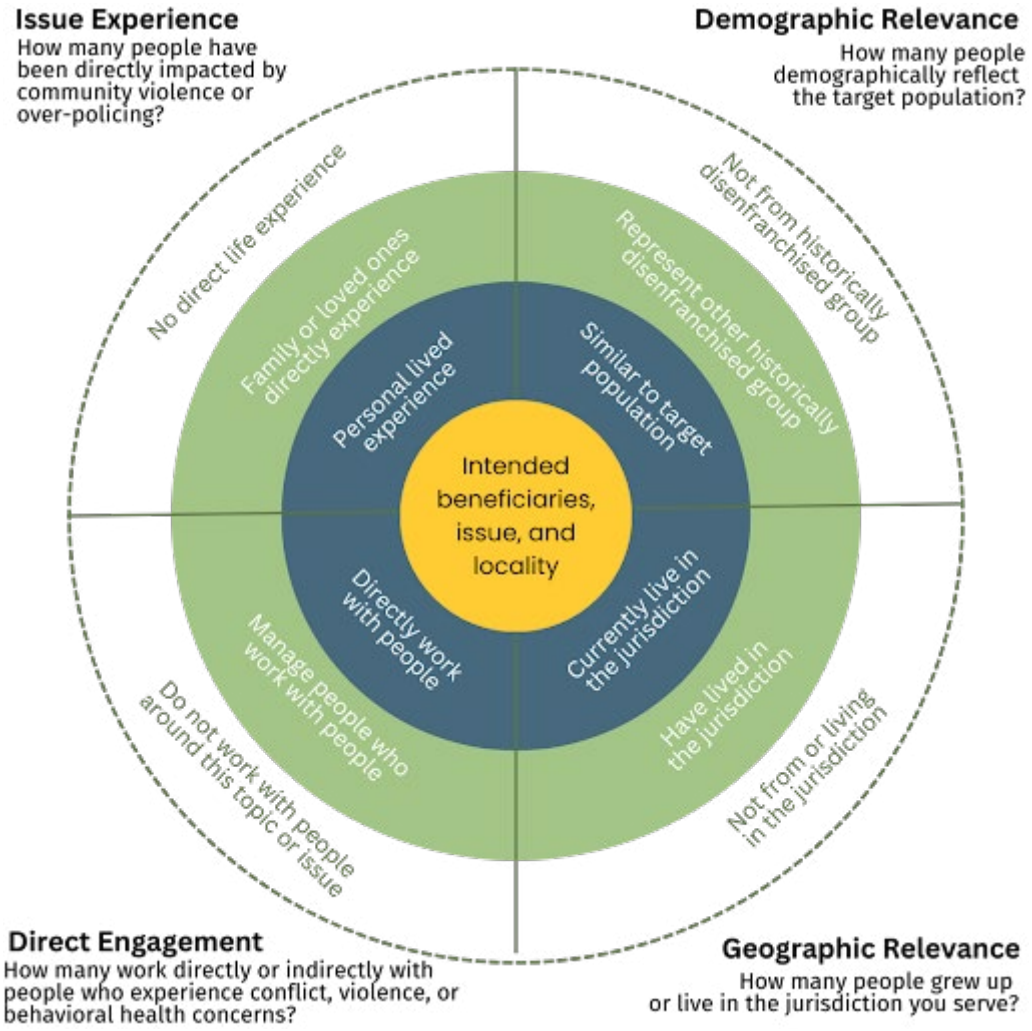
Matrix of Community Voice Representation

The following graphic can be a strategic tool for ensuring equity in your community engagement efforts. The Matrix of Community Voice Representation is an adaptation from Collective Impact Forum's Community Engagement Toolkit (2017) and includes four quadrants to assess for representational equity...

- **Issue experience:** How many people have you engaged that have been directly impacted by interpersonal conflict, family conflict, or community violence?
- **Demographic relevance:** To what extent do the people you've engaged reflect the populations most directly affected and disproportionately impacted by over-policing or incarceration?
- **Direct engagement:** How many people work directly or indirectly with people who experience conflict or violence?
- **Geographic relevance:** How many people grew up or live in the community you serve?

Review the matrix below. Who is already represented in your community safety and alternative response planning efforts? Who is underrepresented, or not represented at all?



Adapted from the Community Engagement Toolkit, Version 2.2 (Collective Impact Forum, 2017).

Planning for Community Engagement in the Design of Your Field Mediation Service

You have assessed how your agency currently engages the community in its planning and decision-making. Now, you need to consider which engagement strategy fits this initiative and how it will take shape in practice.

Who to engage?

As you consider ways you will invite community representation into the design process, you also need to determine which community representatives to prioritize for engagement. Community members you may want to engage in your planning efforts include people who experience the following:

- Disproportionately impacted by over-policing
- Interpersonal or intimate partner violence
- Extreme poverty and/or homelessness
- Challenges related to mental health, drug use, or other behavioral health needs
- Issues related to jails, prisons, and probation
- Identify as trans and/or LGBQ
- Young people
- Immigrants and refugees

Optional activity: Plotting the Matrix of Community Voice Representation

First, it is helpful to understand whose perspectives are already represented in your planning efforts. Review the matrix graphic above. To the best of your ability, map your proposed cross-agency planning workgroup members, and any other planned engagement processes, onto the table below. As you do this reflective exercise, please keep in mind:

- Public disclosure related to each quadrant of the matrix does not carry the same weight, especially among colleagues with varying relationships. For example, disclosing a professional identity differs from sharing personal experiences with crisis or conflict.
- A single individual should not unilaterally assess or assume colleagues' or community partners' identities. Instead, individuals should have the opportunity to self-identify if they choose.
- Sensitive identities (e.g., mental health status, LGBTQ+) should never be required or coerced. Avoid pressuring colleagues to disclose or reveal their information.
- Defining "demographically relevant" participation requires nuance, as lived experiences with, for example, police or gun violence, are more complex than geography.

	Direct Relevance	Secondary Relevance	Limited Relevance
Demographic Background			
Geographic Background			
Direct Engagement			
Issue Experience			

Are you currently involving a mix of representatives who understand the needs and nuances of your jurisdiction's communities, and the people who are most impacted by conflict and violence? Who of those representatives has direct or secondary experience with interpersonal or community conflict, and would be important to learn from? Engaging people from these communities will help improve the quality of your work.

With whom can your agency partner to reach priority community members?

Community Groups: My agency has relationships with the following community organizations...

Beyond your organization's current relationships, what groups or coalitions in your community already engage residents on behavioral health, public safety, or related issues?

- Are there advisory groups, grassroot organizations, or existing community-led tables where engagement could take place?
- Could your organization strengthen or familiarize engagement by partnering with these groups?
- What barriers exist to leveraging these existing spaces?

List relevant community groups and potential partnerships.

How to engage community representatives in planning?

There are many ways you can involve community representatives in this cross-agency planning process, whether that is using your agency's existing methods for engagement or exploring new avenues unique to this project.

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Community Engagement Activities Checklist

The following are specific ways you could engage community in the design of your field mediation service. Check the activities that you are most interested in pursuing:

Engagement Activities: Check the activities that you are planning to implement in the design of your field mediation service...	
Inform	☐ Develop fact sheets and/or public webpages about the Field Mediation Team ☐ Distribute a newsletter ☐ Table community events ☐ Host an open house ☐ Other:
Consult	☐ Circulate a survey to inform the design of the field mediation service ☐ Conduct focus groups or listening sessions to inform the design of the field mediation service ☐ Host a community meeting, town hall, or forum to discuss issues or concerns related to neighborhood or interpersonal conflict, community, violence, and alternatives to policing ☐ Other:
Involve	☐ Conduct interactive community workshops on specific aspects of program design ☐ Facilitate an equity assessment of the proposed protocol, policies, and service operations ☐ Organize a community advisory board or bring operational considerations to an existing community advisory board ☐ Other:
Collaborate	☐ Invite representatives from service or advocacy organizations into the cross-agency workgroup ☐ Establish MOUs with community-based organizations ☐ Lead community organizing efforts around relevant policy issues ☐ Other:
Empower	☐ Provide seats on a governing board for community representatives (voting) ☐ Conduct participatory action research ☐ Facilitate a participatory budgeting process ☐ Co-fundraise with a community-based organization ☐ Other:

You do not have to conduct these activities by yourself! In fact, it is recommended to partner with trusted community organizations or a coalition to, for example, host listening sessions or workshops with people of diverse experiences.

Rather than inviting individuals into the cross-agency workgroup, consider inviting leadership from organizations who represent the broader interests of groups most impacted by the issues (consult your Matrix of Community Voice Representation). This may be leadership from community violence prevention or intervention service and advocacy organizations, agencies led by formerly incarcerated people, peer recovery services, LBGTQ+ support organizations, disability rights organizations, the homeless authority, and more.

Check: Do most of your engagement activities align with your goal? If not, what needs to change?

Whatever method(s) of engagement you choose, it is critical to be clear and transparent about the proposed level of input and decision-making with participating community members and organizations. Conflicts can arise if, for example, you solicit input on different solutions when decisions have already been made.

What topics or aspects of the field mediation service will you cover in your community engagement processes? Check options below.

- ☐ Availability
- ☐ Connection to services and referrals
- ☐ Dispatch
- ☐ Relationship to police
- ☐ Responder skills, hiring, and training
- ☐ Scope of response (call types and situations)
- ☐ Service offerings and supplies
- ☐ Situating the service model (grassroots, nonprofit, Government)
- ☐ Transportation practices
- ☐ Uniforms and vehicles
- ☐ Beliefs around conflict, quality of life concerns, and reparative processes
- ☐ Community oversight & accountability
- ☐ Likelihood to utilize non-police service response via 911
- ☐ Program values
- ☐ Satisfaction and interaction with 911 system and services
- ☐ Other:

What steps will you need to take to pursue that level of engagement? How would that impact the authority or decision-making power of the workgroup? Consider the activities you selected above.

What will you need to communicate to community representatives to ensure expectations around input vs. decision-making are clear?

Appendix: Community Engagement Planning Tools & Resources

The following sources were referenced throughout this guide and/or provide valuable frameworks and considerations when planning community engagement:

1. **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute** (DePaul University).
2. **Community Engagement Framework** (New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2017).
3. **Community Engagement Toolkit, Version 2.2** (Collective Impact Forum, 2017).
4. **Equity-Centered Community Engagement** (Centre for Public Impact).
5. **Expanding First Response Toolkit: Community Engagement and Collaboration with Key Stakeholders** (Council of State Governments, 2025).
6. **The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership** (Movement Strategy Center, 2019).

6. Select Call Types and Quantify the Opportunity

Choose the right call types for field mediation and plan for demand

Purpose

This chapter guides you through how to identify the 911 call types most appropriate for a field mediation response program and helps you quantify the volume of those calls to inform staffing and operations.

Key Insights

- **Start simple, then layer in the field picture:** First attempt a plain-language description of the types of calls you generally would and would not consider eligible for field mediation. Then review full lists of 911 call types, with informed commentary from responders on how often these call types involve disputes that are non-violent.
- **911 call types are usually too broad – time permitting, use CAD notes to create sub-categories for a nuanced view:** For the call types in question it can also be very useful to download and review a sample of 6-8 weeks of actual 911 computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data, using the notes on each call to make a nuanced countable sub-categorization of calls according to likely fit for mediation.
- **Use this data for operational needs:** Use this analysis to help inform the density distribution of likely calls by time of day and day of week, to build the team's shift schedule and availability, and for 911 to build updated call transfer training for 911 call takers.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Overview	Provides the big-picture purpose of call type analysis and outlines the four key steps. Use this section to orient yourself before diving into the process.
Step #1: Identify the Program's Intent Using Plain Language	Helps your working group build consensus on when field mediation is a good fit. Use this section to define inclusion and exclusion criteria through collaborative, jargon-free discussion.
Step #2: Review the Full Universe of Police Call Types	Guides you through evaluating your full list of CAD call types using a two-part scoring method. Use this to align actual 911 categories with the intent you defined in Step 1. **Download Call Type Analysis Template**
Step #3: Assess Eligible Call Volume by Analyzing 911 CAD Data	Describes how to estimate how often eligible calls occur using real CAD data. Use this section to understand demand, plan staffing, and time your team's shifts.
Step #4: Develop Formal Protocols and Training for 911 Call Takers	Covers how to translate your decisions into formal protocols for call takers. Use this to operationalize your call type decisions and prepare for implementation.

6. Select Call Types and Quantify the Opportunity

Choose the right call types for field mediation and plan for demand

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Language and systems vary locally:** Not every jurisdiction uses the same CAD system, call type codes, or protocol software (e.g., ProQA). The templates and tools in this chapter are meant to be adapted to fit your local context.

Overview

What is the purpose of analyzing call data?

As your cross-agency working group embarks on the critical task of designing protocols and procedures, you will need to decide on priority call types that your 911 and law enforcement partners will transfer to a Field Mediation Team (FMT).

Performing a call type analysis allows you to answer these two fundamental questions:

1. **Which 911 call types will go to the FMT?** Law enforcement, 911, and mediation (optionally, fire/EMS) need to agree on which 911 call types are usually a good fit for field mediation, with inclusionary and exclusionary criteria used to assess both general call types and individual cases. Work with your 911 liaison to translate this agreement into a technical protocol authorizing 911 call-takers to transfer these eligible calls.
2. **How much call volume should the FMT expect, and when should it be active?** How often are eligible 911 calls coming in, by time of day and day of week? What does that mean for the team's staffing model, shift structure, and hours of operation?

Note that even with a well-running working group, there are likely to be meaningful differences of opinion on which call types to transfer, and it may take several sessions, more learning, and some effort towards compromise to work through them. Keep in mind that there can be a preliminary list of approved call types which can be expanded later.

Also note that it can take some time to receive approval for access to CAD data - we recommend working on these approvals before it is time for the working group to begin this task.

What are the steps in designing call transfer criteria?

1. **Identify the program's intended call types using plain language.** Facilitate a conceptual discussion about the types of 911 calls the FMT is intended to respond to, naming initial inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. Ensure that the needs and voice of the community captured during community engagement is centered in this discussion.
    - Key actors: working group representatives from 911, law enforcement, mediation, guided by the working group facilitator.
    - Meant to be done simply, without significant data or technical jargon, in collaborative discussions in the cross-agency working group.
2. **Review the full universe of police call types (and if relevant, fire/EMS calls)** that could benefit from a field mediation response.
    - Key actors: working group representatives from 911, law enforcement, mediation (and optionally fire/EMS), guided by the working group facilitator.
    - Requires a formal list of call types, and familiarization with technical terminology and call categorization systems used by your local 911 dispatch center's CAD system (and possibly, your local police department).
3. **Assess eligible call volume for the team** to inform hours and staffing structure.
    - Key actors: 911 data analyst, project lead.
    - The most technical step, and requires access to, understanding of, and analysis of CAD call data from your local 911 dispatch center.

4. **Develop formal protocols and training for 911 call takers.**
    - Key actors: 911 leadership.
    - Technical step and will require the leadership of someone with protocol-altering authority and training design within your 911 dispatch center.

Step #1: Identify the Program's Intent Using Plain Language

Begin by clarifying, in plain language, under what circumstances the working group believes **field mediation** is the best fit (inclusionary criteria) and when it is not (exclusionary criteria).

The working group should challenge themselves to think through and discuss a wide range of situations that could be diverted to mediation, even if there are initial hesitations for safety or other concerns. Make sure you elevate community voices and represent their needs throughout this process.

Practical Example: Dayton Call Types

When Dayton's working group performed this exercise in October of 2021, they reached a consensus as illustrated below.

Dayton Call Types Consensus – PlainLanguage
(Illustrative Example)

Mediation is Best Fit
1. Noise and pet complaints 2. Loitering, begging, minor trespassing 3. Youth [juvenile] disturbances 4. Arguments between neighbors 5. Arguments between friends or family members
Police is Best Fit
1. Any violence 2. Any weapon 3. Credible threats 4. Any injury 5. A history of violence at the location or with these individuals 6. A [serious] crime has been committed

Mediation, police, and fire/EMS will all be in close contact with each other over the police radio system to call for the other where appropriate.

It may be helpful for the working group facilitator to begin with a starting point table, such as the example above, to spur discussion about local needs.

Note that while the focus in this table was in distinguishing between mediation and police as the best fit response, a more detailed analysis might also specify which call types are a best fit for another 911-dispatchable entity in your area, such as a behavioral health mobile team, child protective services, or animal control.

Eligibility

This plain language intent will be used to identify 911 police call types that cover those situations (see Step #2). **These become *mediation-eligible* call types.** However, diversion is ultimately dependent on whether exclusionary criteria are triggered.

Determine the exclusions that will make calls ineligible for the civilian team to respond to, even if they are initially categorized by an eligible call type. Example criteria for when mediation will not be the primary response include:

- Weapons are being actively brandished
- A serious crime is being committed (this will need further specification for situations such as a minor trespassing)
- A medical emergency
- Known history of assault or violence at that location

In Dayton, when plain language intent was translated into the 911 police call types used locally, the 11 categories of eligible calls for service were these: *Peace Officer Request, Juvenile, Noise Complaint, Trespass, Neighbor Trouble, Barking Dog, Begging, Roommate Trouble, Party, and Loitering*. It was understood that not every call within these call types would be appropriate for mediation, but they contained a meaningful number that could be considered eligible after exclusionary criteria was considered.

Ultimately, here is the distribution of call types that Dayton's Mediation Response Unit responded to in their first two months in the field:

Call types (first 10 wks)	%
Neighbor Trouble	19%
Noise Complaint	14%
Peace Officer Request	13%
Disorderly Subject	11%
Juvenile	8%
Welfare Check	8%
Parking Complaint	7%
Barking Dog	3%
Animal	3%
Roommate Trouble	2%
Domestic	1%
Mental Health	1%
Other	10%

This list was mostly a good fit with the original intent, and also included some learning once the team got started. Perhaps the biggest surprise was that "Disorderly Subject" and "Parking Complaint" call types could be helpfully handled by the mediation team, and these call types were formally added to the eligible call types list.

Step #2: Review the Full Universe of Police Call Types

Once your working group has prioritized which call types are eligible for transfer to a **field mediation**, we recommend looking at all types of 911 calls for service received. This exercise may broaden or clarify the scope of which calls you think are suitable for a field mediation response.

In order to review a full list of call types, you will need to decide whether to use 911 computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system data and call categorizations, or police records management system (RMS) data and call categorizations. CAD data is almost always the best way to evaluate calls for service , both because it is the most directly tied into 911, and because it is likely to be cleaner. Police departments often have lists of 200-300 call types, some of which should be grouped together and are inconsistently or rarely used. The good news is that typically 911 dispatch centers have a more manageable list of about 30-50 police call types in their CAD systems. CAD data can also tell you the frequency of different kinds of 911 calls.

Call Type Analysis Scorecard

EDITABLE

You may want to use this template or create your own to list out and analyze your jurisdiction's call types

Develop a rating system

Consider rating a comprehensive list of police 911 call types by this two-part scoring methodology.

First, evaluate the intervention's main inclusionary criteria.

Criteria 1: How often is this call type related to interpersonal conflict?	
1	Always
2	Often
3	Sometimes
4	Rarely
5	Never
9	More information is needed about this code to determine

Second, evaluate the intervention's main exclusionary criteria.

Criteria 2: How often is this call type non-violent and not a serious crime?	
1	Always
2	Often
3	Sometimes
4	Rarely
5	Never
9	More information is needed about this code to determine

If a score is low (1-2) on both criteria, it is usually a non-violent dispute and likely a good fit for mediation. If the score is high (4-5) on either criteria, then it is likely not a good fit. When performing this analysis, the high score is the limiting factor and therefore determines the overall fit.

Scores in the middle (3s) should be examined carefully; more discussion and information may be needed to distinguish between the eligibility of calls in those categories. Any 4s may usually be excluded (although with the option for a 911 call-taker to exercise judgement to opt-in on the mediation relevance of one of these calls). Using this scoring methodology or another approach your planning group has agreed upon, methodically review which call types should be considered as eligible for transfer to the new team. For example "disturbance" calls might initially be included, whereas "robbery" calls may be excluded. "Trespass" calls, on the other hand, may be conditionally eligible, to be parsed on a case-by-case basis.

Call Type Fit Analysis Scorecard (Template)

Police Call Types	Interpersonal Conflict?	Non-Violent? (not crime)	Overall fit (highest score of the two to left)	Clarifying notes on Definition or Fit
Call Type 1				
Call Type 2				
Call Type 3				
Call Type 4				
Call Type 5				
Etc.				

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Applied example

Below, we apply the scorecard above to a commonly used 911 set of police call types, known alternately as ProQA (the software) or PPDS (the protocol):

Police Priority Dispatch System (PPDS) Call Type Analysis

In the example below, we will use the 36 police call categories ("chief complaints") applied in the frequently-utilized Police Priority Dispatch System (PPDS) protocol, often implemented through ProQA software (mentioned here because 911 people will sometimes just say "we use ProQA"). The "Chief Complaint" (CC) codes are used by dispatchers to categorize police calls and determine the appropriate response level. Only one chief complaint is assigned to each call, and if more than one issue is going on, the one considered most serious is assigned as the chief complaint.

Utilizing the 2-part scoring approach assessing whether there is a conflict and whether violence is involved, a scorecard for these 36 call types may look like this:

Evaluation of Police 911 (PPDS) chief complaints list for FMT response

The 36 police call types ("Chief Complaints") - PPDS 911 Protocols # 101-136	Interpersonal conflict?	Non-violent?	Overall fit (highest score)	Clarifying notes
101 Abduction (kidnapping)/ Custody issue	2-Usually	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Fit: Child custody issue calls could become relevant; check local laws
102 Abuse/ Abandonment/ Neglect	1-Always	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: CPS or APS may be better fit
103 Administrative (e.g., lost property)	3-Some	2-Usually	3-Some	Definition: Non-urgent, non criminal matter, often report-taking
104 Alarms	4-Rarely	2-Usually	4-Rarely	Definition: No evidence of criminal activity, otherwise other code used
105 Animal	2-Usually	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Mediation (pet behavior) or animal control (strays, attacks)
106 Assault/ sexual assault/ shooting	1-Always	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Definition: Attack or attempted attack
107 Assist other agencies	3-Some	3-Some	3-Some	Definition: Varies widely - can include serving court orders
108 Bomb or hazard found/ susp.package	3-Some	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Definition: Physical hazard found

The 36 police call types ("Chief Complaints") - PPDS 911 Protocols # 101-136	Interpersonal conflict?	Non-violent?	Overall fit (highest score)	Clarifying notes
109 Bomb/chem/bio/radio/ nuclear threat	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Definition: Physical hazard - with clear threat to harm
110 Burglary/ Home Invasion	3-Some	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Occasionally part of a domestic dispute
111 Damage/ Vandalism/ Mischief	2-Usually	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Can be a fit if owner is not determined to press charges
112-Deceased person	4-Rarely	3-Some	4-Rarely	Definition: Not a homicide/assault code (that would be 106)
113 Disturbance/ Nuisance	2-Usually	2-Usually	2-Usually	Fit: Includes noise complaints, disorderly
114 Domestic Disturbance/ Violence	1-Always	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: If verbal, fits mediation; If physical, then police - check local laws
115 DUI (impaired driving)	4-Rarely	5-Never	5-Never	Fit: Requires law enforcement
116 Drugs	3-Some	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Can have a behavioral/ conflict complaint
117 Explosion	3-Some	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Fit: Requires fire/EMS and possibly law enforcement
118 Fraud/ Deception	1-Always	2-Usually	2-Usually	Fit: Includes business/customer disputes, will depend on scope
119 Harassment/ Stalking/ Threat	1-Always	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Can be for mediation if not threatening and no restraining order
120 Indecency lewdness	2-Usually	2-Usually	2-Usually	Definition: Includes public urination/ defecation
121 Mental or behavioral problems	2-Usually	2-Usually	2-Usually	Fit: MH usually best fit; may add mediators if also a conflict
122 Miscellaneous	3-Some	3-Some	3-Some	Definition: Does not fit another category
123 Missing/ Runaway, Found person	2-Usually	2-Usually	2-Usually	Fit: Check local laws - sometime law enforcement is mandated

The 36 police call types ("Chief Complaints") - PPDS 911 Protocols # 101-136	Interpersonal conflict?	Non-violent?	Overall fit (highest score)	Clarifying notes
124 Officer needs assistance	9-Unclear	9-Unclear	9-Unclear	Fit: Circumstantial
125 Public service	2-Usually	2-Usually	2-Usually	Definition: Includes keep peace, reckless activity, welfare checks
126 Robbery/carjacking	2-Usually	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Definition: Usually involves force, threat of force, or intimidation
127 Suicidal person/ Attempted suicide	3-Some	2-Usually	3-Some	Fit: MH usually best fit; may add mediators if also a conflict
128 Supplemental	3-Some	2-Usually	3-Some	Definition: Adding new information to an existing report
129 Suspicious/ Wanted (person, vehicle)	2-Usually	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Sometimes actually a nuisance call
130 Theft (Larceny)	3-Some	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Sometimes part of a dispute
131 Traffic incident	2-Usually	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Definition: Moving violation
132 Traffic violation, complaint, hazard	3-Some	2-Usually	3-Some	Fit: Sometimes part of a dispute; Def: Includes parking complaints
133 Trespassing/ Unwanted person	2-Usually	3-Some	3-Some	Fit: Can be a fit if owner is not determined to press charges
134 Unknown 3rd party	9-Unclear	9-Unclear	9-Unclear	Definition: Insufficient information to classify
135 Weapons/Firearms	2-Usually	4-Rarely	4-Rarely	Definition: Weapon displayed but no one has been attacked/injured
136 Active Assailant	2-Usually	5-Never	5-Never	Definition: Harm already done and the threat continues

Such an analysis is meant to help set up a deeper understanding of 911 call types, and to direct further insightful conversation towards finalizing call types guidance for transfer to a Field Mediation Team. The analysis is NOT meant to be used as an immediate conclusion, however, since there are likely to be details in some categories that need customized attention.

Sample customization after initial scoring analysis

For example, from the methodical analysis above, the following six categories are rated as 1s or 2s in Overall Fit and are therefore promising as good-fit calls for mediation response. However, we would generally recommend excluding 121, as described further below.

- 113 Disturbance/ Nuisance
- 118 Fraud/ Deception (if an active dispute, and not a serious crime)
- 120 Indecency lewdness (this does not include sexual assault)
- ~~121 Mental or behavioral problems~~ - usually excluded
- 123 Missing/ Runaway, Found person (if locally permissible for non-police)
- 125 Public service (especially "keep the peace" calls – some welfare check calls are behavioral health)

The category of "121 Mental or behavioral problems" deserves special treatment. Even though it may be a non-violent dispute call, the FMT should usually only take mental health and substance use-designated 911 calls as the first responder if the team is also trained as a behavioral health (BH) mobile response team. If the team is not so trained, and there is a separate, focused BH team that is available in the local 911 call ecosystem, that BH team is likely the best fit response. It could be that in some circumstances a mental health call also involves interpersonal conflict, in which case the BH team may respond to the individual most in crisis while also requesting that the mediation team co-respond to support the conflict element with other involved persons.

Additionally, some call types from the analysis table above are notably in the "sometimes" Overall Fit category, requiring further delineation:

- 105 Animal
  - If the dispute is between two people about the behavior of an animal owned or controlled by one of those people, then this could be a good fit for the mediation team.
  - If the animal is causing a disturbance in public and ***no owner is known or can be found, this is not a mediation call*** and is likely a call for animal control.
- 114 Domestic Disturbance/ Violence
  - If the call is over a verbal disturbance (sometimes called a "Family Dispute"), and no one has been physically aggressive or injured, this could be a good fit for mediation.
  - If the call is over a physical disturbance ("Domestic Violence"), where someone is being physically aggressive and ***has harmed or is threatening to harm another person, this is likely a better fit for a police call***, with a possible mediation co-response if requested.
- 119 Harassment/ Stalking/ Threat
  - If the dispute is between people with an ongoing relationship, with no credible threats of violence, and no restraining orders have been filed, then this could be a mediation call, even if the caller is saying "he/she won't leave me alone!"
  - If there are credible threats of violence, or a restraining order is to be filed or has already been filed and violated, this should be a police call.
- 133 Trespassing/ Unwanted person
  - If the caller wants to see a change in behavior from the other person, and is not determined to press charges, this could be a mediation call.

- If the caller is determined to press charges, or the person trespassing seems to be in significant danger of committing assault or destruction of property, this is a police call.
- If the person called-on shows signs of experiencing a behavioral health crisis (e.g., significant mental disorientation) or a medical crisis (e.g., dangerous levels of intoxication), then BH or EMS teams should be called, respectively.

Note that some call types you have heard of from more complex lists will not appear in the list above, but likely do belong in these categories and can be discussed independently for greater clarity. For example, "Barking dog" fits under "Animal." "Noise complaint," "Neighbor Trouble," "Juvenile," and "Disorderly Subject" may fit under "Disturbance." "Roommate trouble" fits under "Domestic Disturbance." "Peace Officer Request" and "Welfare Check" fit under "Public service," and "Parking complaint" fits under "Traffic violation."

Formally establish mediation-eligible call types

After performing the call type analysis, decide which call types are eligible for launch and reevaluate if needed based on experience.

It is not necessary, or even recommended, that programs attempt to make a single, final decision about which call types should be transferred to the FMT. Rather, there should be a meaningful set of calls agreed upon for initial transfer. Other call types might be incorporated later, as the team builds trust and experience. For example, "Parking Complaints" were not initially included in Dayton, but later it turned out the mediation team was capable of handling them fairly well when encountered on an ad-hoc basis, and they were added to the list.

Step #3: Assess Eligible Call Volume by Analyzing 911 CAD Data

Once your working group has specified and prioritized the call types eligible for transfer to the FMT, we recommend moving through an exercise to estimate the number of calls that are likely to be eligible for transfer on an average day or week. **This analysis allows you to anticipate the demand for the response and inform the design of the team's shift schedule.**

The analysis involves the following steps:

1. Pull a subset of 911 CAD data (for example, 6 weeks of data). While you may not have the resources to examine all seasons, note there may be variation, with call volume being typically higher in the summer and lower in the winter.
2. For the call types selected, identify what the average weekly call volume is for these call types.
3. Do not assume that 100% of any broadly eligible call type will actually be diverted. An analyst can review CAD notes to refine which calls are safe enough for a civilian team and estimate the percentage for each type.
    a. Note: It will likely be helpful to create a new "Best responder" data field next to each call in the reviewed CAD dataset and to mark each row with a new code, such as (M = for mediation response solo, M-LE = for mediation response but may require law enforcement co-response for safety, BH = for behavioral health response, LE = for standard law enforcement response, when not appropriate for mediation or BH diversified response). Then these designations can be counted overall, and for each call type,

in the sample. The most important resulting number is how many calls mediation would be a good fit for without LE assistance.

b. Alternatively: If it is not feasible to access and categorize calls based on the CAD notes, 911 **call priority** levels can be used as a proxy for whether the call was likely to involve the threat of violence. In the PPDS protocol, for example, priority levels rise from lowest priority to highest priority in the following order: Omega (very low concern), Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo (imminent death). Generally it can be assumed that Alpha and Bravo calls within targeted call types would always be fine for mediation responders, and that Delta and Echo calls would never be a good fit. The Bravo and Charlie calls would need further examination. Other protocols number police priority levels (e.g.,Priority 1-6), although lower numbers may indicate higher or lower priority. The local protocol has to be understood (ideally through an interview with a local responder and/or public safety manager) to be properly used in analysis.

4. Based on these percentages, build a revised expected weekly call volume number.
5. Identify whether eligible calls follow any notable density patterns for time of day and day of week.

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CAD Data Annotation and Visualizations

If you are reading and sub-categorizing a 6-8 week sampling of 911 CAD data, resulting data annotation and visualizations may look similar to the following examples from Dayton's design data analysis, in which 1733 911 calls were examined in relevant call types over a six-week period, for 289 average calls per week, of which 157 per week were designated as a good fit for field mediation based on the CAD call notes.

Sample Lines of a CAD Dataset
Inclusion of the notes field is essential for the Ideal responder code to be filled in

Incident Type	Incident Number	Incident Date	Area	CAD incident notes	Ideal responder code (added by analyst after reading CAD call notes)
NOISE	DA21090600000076	09/06/2021 04:10:09	DAEAST	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur laborum.	Mediation
PARTY	DA21090600000089	09/06/2021 05:16:38	DAWEST	Adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.	Mediation
PEACE	DA21090600000094	09/06/2021 05:33:13	DAWEST	Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco	Police
JUVE	DA21090600000119	09/06/2021 08:15:38	DAEAST	Nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.	Co-response
PEACE	DA21090600000120	09/06/2021 08:16:18	DAWEST	Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu	Mediation

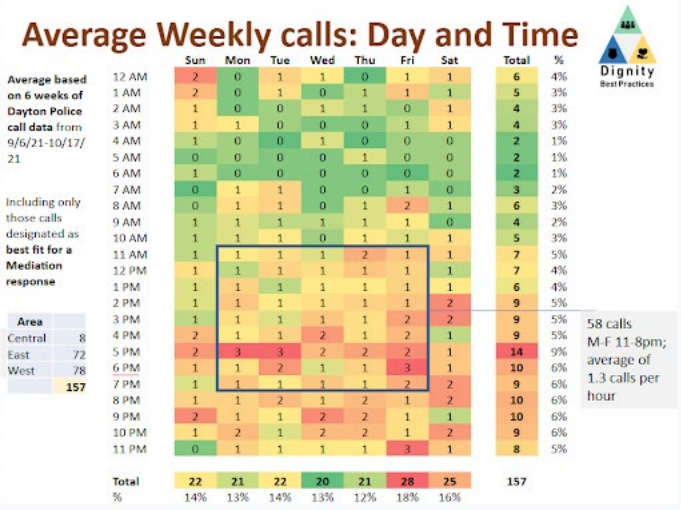
Sample Aggregates – built with pivot tables

Data: Which Calls for Mediation?

911 Call Types considered for Mediation	Avg calls per week	Identified as Best Fit for Mediation	%
Peace Officer	93	39	41%
Juvenile	59	29	49%
Noise	49	47	97%
Trespass	42	8	20%
Neighbor Dispute	28	19	68%
Barking Dog	7	7	100%
Begging	3	3	80%
Roommate Trouble	3	1	32%
Party	2	2	100%
Loitering	1	1	100%
Total	**289**	**157**	**54%**

Best Fit 911 Responder	Avg calls per week	%
Ideal for Mediation	157	54%
Ideal for Police	72	25%
Co-response (both on scene)	33	11%
Unclear	13	4%
Police then Mediation follow-up	13	4%
Mental Health	2	1%
Total	**289**	**100%**

Sample Time of Day / Day of Week Analysis



The time density of eligible calls is a good indicator of the highest demand times of day and days of week for a mediation response, which can help with designing the team's shift schedule, also depending on the initial budget. Of course, not all eligible calls will actually be transferred to the FMT, even during its operating hours. The percentage of calls actually transferred is variable due to factors such as 911 call-taker awareness and caution, and team availability. It is also highly related to the "Dispatch routing/ Inbound calls plan" part of the program design. In the case of Dayton's team, there were an estimated 11-15 calls eligible during a 9-hour shift, and once launched, the team typically received about 8 calls a shift during its first months of operation – a very successful portion of eligible calls.

How do I obtain the data for this analysis?

Whoever leads the eligible calls time density analysis will need to **work with a 911 partner to secure and clean the data from their CAD system**. This process involves reviewing each data field to understand the type of information it contains and how it relates to your analysis objectives.

Requesting public safety data for outside review can involve a lengthy and bureaucratic process. In some cases, support from the city or county executive's office for this program launch can help expedite the process or allow for an informal route to data access. It is recommended that a member of the police department's senior leadership, who has the authority to request this data, be a member of the working group. Alternatively, it is sometimes most efficient to ask 911 to have one of their own data analysts conduct this analysis, in-house. Be aware, though, that most 911 centers are understaffed and their data analysts may already have a high workload, so make these requests judiciously.

The analyst will want to **ensure that not only the primary "call type" field, but also Notes and Description fields, are included in the 911 call data pull. These fields provide crucial details about a call's circumstances, helping determine if it includes a conflict component and/or violence or a significant safety risk**. Discussing this context – especially the mediation response team's ability to handle such cases – is a key part of planning protocols.

There is a balance between data detail and accessibility. Call notes and descriptions may contain personally identifiable information or protected criminal justice information, which could require special access or a formal data-sharing agreement. Your 911 partner may want to consult legal counsel to understand data protections under federal regulations. Policies also vary by state. In many states, 911 calls are considered public records, but they may also be exempt from public access request laws without agency consent or a court order. This research process should operate through agency consent, as part of the cross-agency trust-building process in design and launch.

911 call data Notes and Description Fields often provide crucial details about a call's circumstances. Discussing this context with planning partners—especially the mediation response team's ability to handle such cases—is a key part of planning protocols.

Step #4: Develop Formal Protocols and Training for 911 Call Takers

Once the working group (with the approval of senior leadership) has agreed on which call types will be eligible for transfer, the FMT team leader will work with the 911 dispatch center to translate this decision into updated technical protocols for their 911 call takers. These technical protocols should be shared and reviewed by the working group. Once agreed upon, 911 leadership will also need to train their team on these new protocols prior to the FMT launch date. Along with which calls to transfer, this protocol will need to specify whether the mediation response is available for all geographies in the jurisdiction or only some, and 24/7 or only during certain days and hours. It will also need to specify under what circumstances the FMT might be co-notified to respond alongside another response team, such as police, fire, EMS, or behavioral health mobile response.

7. Develop Field Protocol

A framework for policies, procedures, and protocols

Purpose

This chapter outlines the core principles of a field mediation response protocol. It provides a shared structured approach to handling conflict-related calls while allowing flexibility to adapt to local needs. Instead of a rigid protocol, this section introduces key considerations that will inform the more detailed policies and procedures your program will develop.

Key Insights

- **Enables consistent performance:** Good written protocol helps mediation field teams respond professionally, safely, and consistently, helps clarify expectations, forms a backbone for training, and provides guidance for special circumstances.
- **Sets guardrails while still allowing for personality:** There is a balancing act between providing clear guidance and still allowing team members the opportunity to bring themselves authentically into their work. For example, it is recommended that all team members be expected to introduce themselves clearly and warmly at the beginning of an interaction, but it is not recommended that there is a specific script to follow for making an introduction.
- **Develops further as the team learns:** A Field Protocol is a living document and should be updated as team supervisors learn what needs clarification or adjustment.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Protocol Writing Advice	Use this to understand the purpose and core concepts of a field protocol before developing policies.
Field Protocol Guidance	Detailed policy considerations covering how mediation responders should handle calls from start to finish, safety, and guidance for common issues. Use this when drafting or refining your own field procedures. **Download Field Protocol Guidance: 6-Stage Call Flow** **Download Field Protocol Guidance: Safety** **Download Field Protocol Guidance: Specific Situations**
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Writing Template	A template Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to show what final operational policies might look like from a formatting level. **Download Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Writing Template**
Techniques Reference Sheet	While Protocols tell responders what to do, Techniques Reference Sheets can help guide them in how to do it. **Download Techniques Reference Sheet - Stage IV. Options Discussion**

7. Develop Field Protocol

A framework for policies, procedures, and protocols

Chapter Contents (continued)

Section	How to Use It
Field Mediation vs. Behavioral Health Mobile Response	A side-by-side comparison of mediation vs. behavioral health response models. Use this to clarify your team's scope or determine how mediation might integrate into an existing BH program. **Download Protocol Comparison: Mediation and Behavioral Health Response**

Related Resources and Limitations

- **This is not a complete, ready-to-use SOP.** The framework provided here offers guiding principles and structured approaches, but you will need to develop detailed policies and procedures specific to your program.
- **Training methods are not included.** While this chapter outlines mediation response principles, it does not provide training exercises – see **Chapter 12** for training guidance.
- **Legal and policy requirements vary.** This framework does not replace legal review or compliance with local regulations. Work with your city, county, or legal team to ensure policies align with applicable laws and agency requirements.
- **Ongoing adaptation is expected.** Field Protocols should be living documents that evolve based on real-world experience, responder feedback, and community needs.

The Role of a Field Protocol in Mediation Response

Creating a Field Protocol – often in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs) – is a key input that will enable your community to launch its mediation response. Field Protocol offers a road map for responders. It is a resource the team will use for training, day-to-day guidance, and quality control. Whether you are launching a new team or adding mediation capabilities to a traditional behavioral health mobile team, Field Protocol should aim to do at least three things:

1. **Set standard response guidance.** Help ensure team members respond similarly, safely, and with professionalism to conflict calls. A highly differentiated personal response style could lead to inconsistent experiences for community members who are calling for assistance, thereby breaking trust.
2. **Offer customized guidance for complex situations.** Anticipate how to respond to challenging situations that may occasionally arise, such as an escalation from agitation to threats or violence, a demand for law enforcement action, or a co-occurring behavioral health challenge.
3. **Serve as a living document, adjusted as the team learns.** Through training and real field experience, team leaders may find that the initial protocol needs adjustments based on new insights or situations. Instead of just giving verbal updates, revise the protocol and share changes with the team to keep everyone aligned.

Essential Elements of a Field Mediation Protocol

An effective Field Protocol balances between clear expectations and the important reality that not every situation can be fully anticipated. The team will still need to exercise judgment in the field. It is worth noting that protocol alone does not ensure full understanding, skill, or willingness to follow its guidance. Team leaders must actively teach, demonstrate, and coach members to apply it in real situations through examples and debriefings. For more on training, see **chapter 12**.

A Field Protocol should remain short enough to be memorable and useful, not turn into an exhaustive book-sized document. However, it is recommended that a Field Protocol include the following components:

I. Safe arrival

II. Initial engagement

II. Supportive listening

III. Discussion of options

IV. Planning and closeout

V. Follow-up

What concepts should be included in the Field Protocol?

The following table provides an overview of core concepts that should be included in your Field Protocol. The proposed protocol includes six stages and 12 steps, and integrates mediation principles especially in Stages 3 (Supportive Listening) and 4 (Options Discussion).

Your jurisdiction will likely want and need a more exhaustive standard operating procedure that reflects the style and formatting used by your local agencies. However, this table can be used to align with your cross-agency planning partners on core components of the team's field protocol, as well as a cheat sheet for the field team in their office or van.

As with most guidance in this toolkit, standard operating procedure should be adapted to fit your team's local needs. Leverage your cross-agency working group and community partners to determine the best fit protocol.

Field Protocol Guidance: 6-Stage Call Flow Framework

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(Adapt locally as needed)

Protocol Stages	Steps	Procedure Reminders
I. Safe arrival	1. Receive call and gather information	Gather initial information from 911 CAD and/or mediation call-taker; Confirm the call type is appropriate; Call back the initial caller to attempt to establish a connection and learn more while on the way
	2. Choose roles	Decide which responder will lead contact, and which will keep their eye on safety
	3. Mark on scene, initial safety scan*	Park at a slight distance; Notify via radio: arrived on scene; Confirm a manageable agitation level: no violence in progress, no involved weapons
II. Initial engagement	4. Introductions	Warmly and clearly offer names, explain purpose, establish rapport
	5. De-escalate (if needed)	Interrupt, reassure, separate parties in conflict, promise to listen to both sides
III. Supportive listening	6. Listen (empathetically yet neutrally) to caller, and if available, listen to the person called-on	Listen for, and reflect back without taking sides: • What happened; their feelings and goals • What are they afraid or hopeful about that might happen next? • Attention to: cause, history, risks, strengths
IV. Options discussion	7. Provide conflict coaching and evoke options	• Ask for creative options and collaboratively consider pros and cons of different paths forward • Encourage empowerment and direct contact, avoid carrying messages • Clarify legal aspects if relevant • Refer to other services if relevant
	8. Agree on a plan for next steps, and facilitate the first ones (if relevant)	Only count what a party seems bought into Optionally: help them talk with each other
V. Finalizing plan and close-out	9. Check for understanding	Ask the client(s) to summarize what they are taking from the conversation, and what they'll try to do next
	10. Conclude warmly	End on an empathetic & affirming note Tell dispatch the call close disposition
VI. Follow-up	11. Complete notes in the RMS the same day	Flag if the call merits review for learning purposes
	12. Call or visit again within a week	Get the update, listen, offer further support Request client satisfaction/ feedback

*Safety Assessment is not just at step 3, it is an ongoing activity throughout the call, led by the partner on the team who is not leading the discussion. **Final Protocol will likely have a page of guidance for each of the 6 stages listed above.

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Field Protocol Guidance: Safety

Below is starting point guidance to be locally adapted and built into your Field Protocols, to help ensure the safety of the responders and the people responded to, while maintaining compatibility with a connecting and caring response.

1. **Know that field response is a generally safe practice, but not risk-free.**
   a. Responding to 911 calls without police is generally safe but not without risks. Many cities successfully use civilian responders (e.g., DC, Albuquerque, Baltimore, Durham, Houston, Austin, Dayton, Eugene, Olympia, Denver, and Prince George's County, MD). Their safety record is generally quite strong, partly because they observe practices such as the following outlined in this section.
2. **Build rapport.**
   a. First impressions matter – set a warm, nonjudgmental tone.
   b. Stay calm and engaged, avoiding signals of aggression, boredom, or contempt.
   c. Be neutral. Avoid taking sides verbally or through body language (e.g., exclaiming "Oh no!" with your hand over your heart).
3. **Seek consent and respect personal space.**
   a. Always ask before entering a space (home, tent, or even standing close).
   b. If permission is not granted, respect that boundary. If one party consents but another does not, move elsewhere with the consenting party.
4. **Practice situational awareness.**
   a. Work in pairs: One focuses on conversation, the other watches the surroundings.You may trade roles partway through an encounter.
   b. Scan the environment – who's nearby, body language, possible threats, weapons.
   c. Get familiar with frequent service locations and community members who live, work, or worship there.
5. **Distinguish between your discomfort and actual deteriorating safety.**
   a. Tolerate uncomfortable expressions and upset feelings without escalating.
      i. Common expressions include yelling, cursing, pacing, or moving arms expressively.
      ii. Keep a safe distance, your own tone level moderate, and internal peace without demanding a behavioral change from the upset party.
   b. Identify actual threats – someone stepping toward you despite requests for space is a red flag.
   c. Distinguish emotive speech from credible threats.
      i. Generalized anger such as, "I feel I just want to throttle someone," is different from a direct threat like, "Come closer and you'll regret it."
      ii. To distinguish, you may ask for clarity: "Do you mean you're really going to hurt someone today, or are you saying that's how you feel?"
6. **Request what you need to lower safety risk while maintaining engagement.**
   a. If a space feels unsafe, suggest moving elsewhere (e.g., out of a kitchen with knives or in a formation that allows you to safely exit the encounter).
   b. If someone makes a statement that sounds potentially threatening, ask for clarification. Take responsibility for a potential misunderstanding rather than implying there is something wrong with what the person said.

c. Separate conflicting parties to reduce tension.

i. Frame the request as a form of support: "We want to make sure that you are each fully heard."

ii. Invite one of them to go for a walk with one responding partner while the other says or walks with the other individual in the opposite direction.

iii. Maintain enough distance for privacy, but stay close enough to help your responding partner if a situation escalates.

d. Create distance from bystanders who might escalate the situation.

e. If someone makes you uncomfortable (e.g., inappropriate touching or comments), set a boundary or leave.

f. If a situation is escalating, use distance and a calm tone to stay safe.

i. Try to slow things down if there's still conversation, rather than speeding things up.

ii. If you can't de-escalate, leave the area.

iii. If you think anyone is still at risk after you leave, or if you can't leave, call the police.

7. Know when to leave.

a. If safety concerns grow, leave together immediately. Use a code word if needed.

b. Always keep an exit path open.

i. If someone locks their front door after you enter the room, explain that you need the door to remain unlocked based on your organization's safety requirements.

c. If sitting feels unsafe, remain standing.

i. If someone invites you to sit and you have any doubt, explain you would love to accept the offer to sit, but guidelines require you to stand.

d. If a responder is emotionally activated by a conflict theme, attempt to switch roles or leave.

i. If a responder becomes emotionally triggered – such as a responder going through a divorce when the conflict involves a divorce – they or their partner should suggest switching roles, with the triggered person stepping back to observe.

ii. If the situation remains unsafe or unmanageable, both should apologize and exit.

8. Know how to respond to violence or injuries.

a. If a minor altercation occurs (e.g., a push but no injuries), you feel safe, and the situation can still be resolved – warn that further contact will lead to leaving and calling for help.

b. If there is an accident, injuries, or medical emergency, call for EMS.

c. If someone is threatened with a weapon:

i. Move away from the person causing harm if possible.

ii. Use the emergency button or call the police urgently, clearly describing the situation, any weapons, and injuries.

d. Physical conflict:

i. If physical violence breaks out between the participants, responders should never attempt to physically intervene.

ii. The responder should move to create some distance between themselves and the assault and call for police assistance.

iii. If you're attacked, focus on protecting yourself and escaping quickly.

iv. Do not try to disable the aggressor unless you cannot escape.

v. Remember, distance is safer than hiding behind objects if there is a threat like a firearm.

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Field Protocol Guidance: Specific Situations

Below is starting point guidance to be locally adapted in your Field Protocols, for specific situations that will predictably come up during field mediation work. Add to this list when another kind of special circumstance arises frequently enough that it deserves written guidance to help ensure consistent, connecting, and safe response

1. **Refusal to engage**
   a. If someone tells you to leave, respect their wishes. Let them know they are not required to talk, you are not on anyone's side, and you're here to help if they change their mind.
   b. If one party is willing to engage but the other is not, proceed only with the willing party. You may ask the unwilling party once more if they'd like to share their side, but avoid further pressure.
   c. If appropriate, leave behind resources and/or contact information for future follow-up.
2. **Demand for law enforcement**
   a. If someone wants police instead of mediators, offer to explain why mediation may help (e.g., resolving conflicts for the long term, not just immediate enforcement).
   b. Make it clear that they have the right to call 911 themselves, as mediation responders do not initiate police contact. Instruct them to call 911 and say they want police, not mediators.
3. **Public space complaints (trespassing, panhandling, indecency, etc).**
   a. Listen attentively and with care.
      i. Most often these complaints come from someone who is calling because they are upset by the behavior of a stranger. (e.g., someone is doing pushups in a park after dark, and the park has a sign that says it closes at dusk).
      ii. If the behavior is not against the law, make that clear while still expressing you understand it may still be bothersome and you're happy to talk about other next steps.
   b. Clarify the legal situation.
      i. If the behavior is illegal, remind them that mediation may resolve the issue more effectively than police intervention, though calling the police remains their choice.
   c. Encourage understanding of the other person's perspective and, if appropriate, suggest a respectful conversation between the parties.
      i. If the caller is irascible and insists they will call the police unless someone "solves the problem," mediators may wish to engage the other party, explain that someone has been bothered, and see whether they are willing to change their behavior.
   d. Do not enforce the caller's personal biases or prejudices.
      i. Mediation responders should not ask someone to change a behavior simply because the caller has a prejudice about someone's age, race, etc. (e.g., "I don't like kids in my part of the park.")
      ii. Listen and try to support the bothered person through conflict coaching, and attempt to identify whether there is a more substantive root issue that is bothering them.
4. **Requests for a ride**
   a. Providing transportation can be a way to provide tangible help to someone, and it is only an option if your program allows it.
   b. Rides should be incidental to a conflict

rather than the main request.

i. Example: "I can't afford a rideshare service" is not a good fit for a mediation response. However, "My neighbor parked my car in, they don't seem to be home, and I need to pick up my kid from school!" could be.

c. Use discretion to ensure safety, notify dispatch or a supervisor before providing a ride, and never search a person for weapons.

d. In lieu of physical searches before giving a ride, it is sound practice to:

i. Explain that there are a few questions the mediators are required to ask before offering a ride.

ii. Ask the person if they have any weapons or dangerous objects on their person.

iii. If it seems necessary (the responder does not feel confident the person is unarmed), ask the person to turn their pockets inside out or lift their shirt up enough to see the waistband of their pants.

iv. Secure any bags being brought by the participant in the back of the vehicle until arriving at the destination.

5. Clarifying laws

a. Provide legal information only if you are certain of it. If unsure, be transparent and avoid speculation. Even when the law is on one party's side, explore solutions beyond law enforcement where practical. Do not encourage calling the police unless serious harm is involved.

6. Youth, consent & parental notification

a. If a minor is involved, try to contact their parent or guardian before engaging. Some states allow minors (e.g., 14+ in Pennsylvania) to consent to mediation independently – check local laws. A brief, practical conversation with a child (e.g., about property boundaries) is fine, but do not engage in extensive conflict resolution without parental consent.

7. Cognitive impairment (intoxication, mental health issues, etc.)

a. If the person is slightly impaired but still communicative, proceed and offer referrals if needed.

b. If medical assistance may be needed, call EMS.

c. If the person is violent or brandishing a weapon, call the police.

d. If someone is in a serious mental health crisis and at risk of harming themselves or others, encourage them to call 988, a crisis team, or seek help. Call for a mobile crisis team if they refuse. Only involve police if no other options exist. If they are not a danger but are experiencing distress, offer support but do not force intervention.

e. If policy permits and the person is experiencing suicidal or homicidal ideation (thoughts) and is agreeable to being transported to a hospital, crisis stabilization center, or other psychiatric assessment location, the field mediation team may offer transportation if they feel comfortable doing so.

8. Interacting with other agencies

a. If other emergency responders (e.g., police, EMS, fire) are present, each agency takes the lead within their area of expertise (e.g., EMS for medical issues, police for safety, mediators for conflict resolution).

b. If another agency is better suited to handle the issue, hand over leadership to them.

c. Avoid public disputes over decisions – concerns should be addressed in debriefs.

9. Notifications & reporting requirements

a. Abuse: Follow mandatory reporting laws for child or vulnerable adult abuse. If not a mandatory reporter, notify a supervisor for guidance.

b. Other concerns: Check local requirements for reporting fire hazards, unsafe conditions, etc.

c. Referral tracking: Document referrals given and received, maintaining open communication with partner organizations.

Translating field protocol concepts into formal SOP documents

The protocol guidance pages above are written in plain language, and are not yet fully translated into the institutional and hierarchical flow of terms often used in public safety Standard Operating Procedures (sometimes called General Orders).

If the Project Manager and team supervisor wish to adapt the above into a more conventional format, they may want to start with local pre-existing SOP document structures used within their city or county. However, if beginning from scratch for a new organization, and seeking a formal approach to protocol language, the following template can help.

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Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Writing Template

Instructions

This template is designed to help you draft a single Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Field Mediation Team (FMT). Your agency may create multiple SOPs over time – this format ensures consistency and makes it easier to maintain and reference them. The numbering system (e.g., 1.1) reflects the SOP's place within that larger structure.

This SOP format is intended to complement this toolkit's strategic guidance and best practices, helping you translate that material into **formal, technical documents suitable for internal policy and procedures.**

Each section includes prompts to guide your thinking – which is especially useful if you're new to writing SOPs in a public safety or field response context. Don't worry about getting it perfect on the first pass. Use this as a starting point to get your ideas on paper. You can revise and refine it as your protocols evolve.

A few key notes on structure:

- The **Policy** section should be relatively evergreen. It expresses your agency's stance, values, or expectations – e.g., "Responders shall document all responses in the records management system (RMS)." This section should rarely need to change.
- The **Procedure** section outlines exactly how a task or process is carried out. It may evolve more often as practices shift, systems change, or your program grows.
    - Section **1.1.4 marks the start of the Procedure**, but it's just a structural placeholder. You can (and should) **rename this header and any subsequent ones (1.1.5, 1.1.6, etc.)** based on the content. For example, if your procedure includes multiple areas like "Operational Readiness," "Scene Protocols," or "Documentation & Reporting," use those as your section headers. Think of 1.1.4 as the beginning of the procedural section – not the procedure itself.
- Use the **Definitions** section to list any jargon, acronyms, or technical terms that may not be immediately clear – especially for new staff, cross-agency partners, or community stakeholders reviewing your SOPs. If a term has a specific operational meaning or isn't commonly used outside your field, define it.

Red text throughout the template provides guidance prompts. Delete these notes as you complete each section and replace them with finalized content.

1.1 SOP Title		
FMT-1.1	Effective Date: DD.MM.YY	Revised Date: DD.MM.YY

Related SOPs, Policies, and Rescinded SOPs or Special Orders

A. Related SOPs and Policies

a. Link to any directly related SOPs from your own agency or partner agencies (911 dispatch, police, fire, EMS, etc.).

b. Include policies, procedures, or local/state laws that may govern this work.

B. Rescinded SOPs and Special Orders

a. Reference any SOP, temporary order, or outdated protocol that this SOP is replacing (relevant as your agency grows and evolves).

1.1.1 Purpose

A. Briefly explain what this SOP is for. What is its function? What issue does it address or what gap does it fill?

1.1.2 Policy

A. State the agency's official expectation(s) related to this SOP. This should be high-level and stable over time.

1.1.3 Definitions

A. Term: Definition

B. Term: Definition

1.1.4 Procedure [Rename if appropriate]

A. Begin outlining the core steps or responsibilities involved in carrying out this SOP.

1.1.5 [Additional Procedural Component]

B. Use this and any following sections (1.1.6, etc.) to break up complex procedures. Title each section based on its focus (e.g., Communications, Shift Prep, Documentation).

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Techniques Reference Sheet - Stage IV. Options Discussion

(Adapt locally as needed)

When discussing options with the individual(s) in crisis, one or more of the following techniques may be useful:

1. **Set the stage with creative problem solving**
   a. What options could each person imagine for moving forward? Do they have an interest in relating more positively to the other, not just resolving the "issue"?
   b. Is there a practical solution that would meet both sides' needs?
   c. Is there a behavior change one is willing to ask for, or to make if the other asks respectfully?
   d. Will either or both take any responsibility for the dynamic? Is either willing to express that they did not fully understand, and/or to apologize, or request an apology?
2. **Conflict coaching: Engage one or both parties independently (more common)**
   a. Discuss options to create a more positive relationship over the next few weeks, opening a path to dialogue.
   b. Discuss options for next time there is a provocation – how to handle both the emotions and the concrete problem.
   c. Clarify the legal aspects of the situation, and whether the police would be likely to take any action if requested (the mediator is not encouraging this, simply clarifying it.)
3. **Field mediation: Both engage now and responders accompany them (less common)**
   a. Both agree to talk to each other respectfully on the scene.
   b. One agrees to walk over to attempt to talk with the other respectfully.
   c. The mediation team may help facilitate the conversation, but is encouraged not to "carry messages" on behalf of the other parties – they need to practice speaking directly with each other.
4. **Scheduled mediation: Agree to engage later**
   a. Both agree to schedule a mediation session for a later date, either locally, at the mediation center, or a place of their choice.
   b. One or both agree to have you follow up with them separately in a few days to see how things are going.
5. **Referrals: Connect to other services**
   a. Someone could use another kind of help – e.g., physical or mental health, food, clothes, employment, housing, etc.

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Protocol Comparison: Mediation and Behavioral Health Response

If training an existing behavioral health mobile response team (or a former member of such a team) in field mediation, it can be useful to compare and contrast the points of emphasis in the flow of a field mediation call, compared to a behavioral health call.

If your local teams disagree with any of these points, no problem! Please feel free to edit them to match your local understanding. Additionally, we welcome you to strengthen our work by sharing your different perspectives at **contact@dignitybestpractices.org**.

Section	True for both	Field Mediation Emphasis	BH Mobile Emphasis
1. Receive call	Review context and potential hazards, double-check appropriate triage; decide which of the two responders on the mobile team will take the lead in the conversation.	Check for a history of assault at this address or with this individual, if known in CAD or RMS.	Connect with care providers: If known, connect to BH service providers involved with this person's care for context sharing.
2. Arrive on scene	Situational awareness, a warm and transparent introduction, and de-escalation help the person(s) in crisis to be and feel safe, and to come out of a heightened state.	Separate people: If both parties in a conflict are still together, encourage them to move outside of each other's hearing range, then take turns discussing what has happened.	Distinguish whether a crisis is BH or medical: Look for any signs that EMS care may be needed, such as a head wound, dehydration, or a strong sudden deviation from that person's baseline.
3. Listen	Engage in active listening, ask open-ended questions; honor the client's voice, feelings, and strengths; check for understanding of their distress.	Responders as conflict coaches: Listen to hold space for venting, followed by a mindset shift in the conversation where people feel encouraged towards taking constructive steps in a difficult relationship. Tone: Empathetic, with a balancing focus on neutrality (not taking sides in a narrative about the other person, opening up a view of the other side as a person, not just a problem). Look to gently highlight and reflect back any statements that humanize the other side.	Responders as behavioral health experts: Listen first to conduct a risk assessment, with extra attention to the potential for harm to self (and others), and secondarily to assess other needs. Tone: Empathetic, with a balancing focus on reality (careful not to lend agreement to statements that appear untrue or self-destructive). Look to gently highlight and reflect back any protective and supportive factors in their lives.

Section	True for both	Field Mediation Emphasis	BH Mobile Emphasis
4. Discuss Options	Consider options, and where possible, honor the client's decision-making agency. Encourage perspective shifting and support practical problem solving.	Mitigate helplessness by providing less directiveness: Responders prompt the client to propose their own creative options.	Mitigate hopelessness by providing more directiveness: Responders likely to directly recommend options for the client, including a particular level of care (especially if a higher acuity crisis).
5. Consultation with others	Understand the social context for the person in crisis, speaking with others if possible.	Speak with the other party in the conflict (and offer them similar conflict coaching).	Involve natural supports (e.g., family, friends, and offer them support also).
6. Make a Plan, Summarize, and Close	Co-create a plan. The plan may include what will happen in the next 48 hours, and if there is another trigger or flare-up. May also include referrals, and a commitment by responders to follow-up. Ask the client to summarize next steps to check for agreement, and close.	How to constructively engage the other person and the relationship involved in the conflict.	How to constructively engage themselves – safety/wellness planning and connection to treatment/support.
7. Afterwards: Document, Follow-up, and Review for Lessons	Attempt to check in again within 48 hours; Internally highlight great and hard calls to review and learn from.	If one of the conflicting parties was not located, try to speak with them the next day.	

8. Determine Dispatch Routing and Technology

Establish a call-for-service workflow and equip your team to respond

Purpose

This chapter explains how Field Mediation Teams (FMTs) receive and are assigned calls – and what technology is needed to support that response. It covers inbound call channels, dispatch models, and the infrastructure required to operate as a trusted responder in the 911 system.

Key Insights

- **Self-dispatch can get the team going quickly:** The ability to self-dispatch in the 911 CAD system can significantly increase call volume for a Field Mediation Team compared to the other possibilities in its first year. While the long-term goal for new 911 services is to be frequently and directly dispatched, just like police, fire, and EMS, it can take awhile for 911 call takers and other actors to become accustomed to having a partner that takes calls that used to go to police.
- **Call volume is important for team sustainability:** Having a meaningful call volume reach the team really matters – both to justify the investment in its existence, and to fulfill its mission to redirect some calls away from enforcement, when they can be handled as well or better by an unarmed responder.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Dispatch Planning Overview	Lays out why dispatch strategy matters and who should be involved in designing it. Use this section to build your planning team and frame key decisions.
Receiving Inbound Calls	Learn about the primary paths by which requests for mediation can reach the team.
Dispatch Methods	Explains a range of assignment models, from self-dispatch to post-call referrals. Use this to select or combine methods that fit your program's current stage and local context.
Establish Technology Infrastructure for Dispatch	Details the equipment, access, and training needed to support dispatch. Use this section to plan and implement the tools required to operate like a first responder.

8. Determine Dispatch Routing and Technology

Establish a call-for-service workflow and equip your team to respond

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Training exercises** for responders and dispatchers are not included here. For more on how to prepare staff for field technology use or radio communication, see **chapter 12**.
- This section is not a substitute for **formal dispatch protocol development** or policy manuals. All dispatch models should be developed in partnership with your local 911 center and adapted to meet their operational and legal requirements.
- **Legal review** may be required before granting CAD access or establishing shared systems, especially for teams based outside of local government. Consult your legal or interagency team early in the process.

Dispatch Planning Overview

Before a Field Mediation Team (FMT) begins responding to calls, the jurisdiction must decide: **how will calls reach the team?**

This decision is foundational to the program's impact and sustainability for two critical reasons:

1. **Call Volume and Sustainability**

Most alternative response programs require a minimum call volume to justify continued funding once the program is fully operational. The dispatch model directly impacts whether the team receives enough calls to sustain its operations and whether the public sees them as a legitimate, available service.

2. **Effective Diversion From Law Enforcement**

One of the primary goals of field mediation is reducing unnecessary police involvement in conflict situations. The stronger the integration into 911 dispatch, the more likely mediation responders will be the primary response rather than law enforcement.

Who should be involved in determining dispatch criteria?

Collaborative planning helps ensure an effective dispatch process. Leadership from the following organizations should be involved:

- Field Mediation Team (or the host organization, if they are not yet a team)
- Police
- 911 Public Safety Answering Point (dispatch)
- City and/or county Executive's Office

Additionally, it is wise to consult community stakeholders to help ensure transparency, build trust, and align expectations. See **chapter 5** for more on community engagement methods.

Receiving Inbound Calls

To maximize public access to the field mediation team, activate multiple inbound channels.

How can the Field Mediation Team receive inbound calls for service?

911 System

911 should be the primary inbound channel for the FMT. It is the most direct and impactful channel. When field mediation is integrated into the 911 system, it signals legitimacy and creates high-volume access.

- Callers dial 911, and the call is identified as appropriate for mediation
- May involve direct dispatch or warm transfer

Dedicated 10-Digit Line

A phone number operated by the FMT or their host agency. This channel supports:

- Community members seeking help directly
- Follow-ups after initial response
- Referrals from trusted partners or social service organizations

The FMT will have to establish who receives these inbound calls and approves sending the field team. The person receiving the calls could be the supervisor, a designated call-taker, or the field team itself.

Partner Referrals

Inbound referrals from a variety of local sources and community partners where relationships are effectively built.

- Referrals from police, fire, or EMS officers via CAD or phone
- 988 crisis line
- Schools, shelters, libraries, faith groups, and nonprofits

These may be real-time or post-call, and rely heavily

on relationships, outreach, and trust-building.

The Goal: Field Mediation as First Response

Field Mediation Teams can maximize their value when they are **equipped as first responders** and are **frequently utilized** by the 911 ecosystem.

- Being a first responder means being able to respond to a 911 call as the primary response dispatched, arriving rapidly – in less than an hour, ideally closer to 20-30 minutes – and without police first being required on scene.
- Frequently utilized means receiving significant call volume (e.g. multiple calls per day), truly helping 911 calls find their best fit response, without unnecessary law enforcement involvement.
- Some residents may avoid 911 due to past traumatic experiences with the emergency response system. Providing access to a 10-digit line can offer an additional high value service for people who would not otherwise access the service via 911.

Dispatch Methods: Aiming for 911 Integration

Once a request for field mediation is made – through 911, a direct line, or a partner referral – the next step is dispatch: **how the call gets assigned, and how quickly and effectively the team is deployed.**

There are multiple approaches to dispatching mobile teams (including mediation teams) – but **the most important design decision is whether the team is integrated into the 911 Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system**. Integration creates flexibility. It allows teams to receive calls in multiple ways, including direct assignment, self-dispatch, or through real-time coordination with 911 staff. Integration also increases responder safety, since they can report their locations upon arrival, receive time checks by dispatchers (we haven't heard an update from you in 30 minutes, are you okay?), and call for rapid back-up by law enforcement if necessary.

The long-term goal is for mediation teams to be directly dispatched through 911 like any other first responder. But building toward that model takes time. Many teams begin with self-dispatch or other early-stage methods that help establish call volume, demonstrate efficacy, and build trust with dispatch.

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Mobile Dispatch Methods, from Most to Least 911 Integrated

Dispatch Method	How it works
911 dispatches FMT through CAD/radio	911 call-takers dispatch the FMT directly through CAD and/or radio, just like they send police, fire, or EMS units. Additionally, any of these other units can request FMT directly over the radio, facilitated by a 911 dispatcher. While this is the ideal long-term model, often when it is set up this way on paper, call volume may initially be low due to significant 911 call taker caution towards using a non-police option. This can be improved with trust-building exercises such as cross-agency leadership support, targeted training, and cross-training with the FMT. Embedding an FMT liaison at dispatch is another proven strategy to improve call-matching and referral rates.
FMT self-dispatches through 911 CAD/radio	Field mediators monitor 911 calls in the police queue on a mobile data terminal in their vehicle and assign themselves to low-priority, unassigned, FMT-eligible calls (e.g., a neighbor dispute). These calls may sit in the queue for an hour or longer before an officer becomes available. Mediators also monitor radio traffic and can offer or request co-response when appropriate. This self-dispatch approach is highly recommended by the authors of this toolkit. It is what enabled Dayton's Mediation Response Unit to receive about 8 calls per day in its first few months of existence, rather than an estimated call once every 1-2 days if they had relied exclusively on direct 911 dispatching. This approach requires significant trust-building with 911 and law enforcement partners, however.
911 transfers a call to FMT's 10-digit line	When a 911 call taker determines that a call is appropriate for mediation, they transfer the caller to the FMT on a separate phone line. This is similar to how they might transfer a non-emergency request for trash collection schedules over to 311 or the department of public works. The FMT is not integrated into the CAD system or the radio network, so the 911 call-taker will not know the outcome of the call once it is transferred, often decreasing their willingness to send the call outside of the 911 system. A variation on this call transfer approach, often used for mobile crisis teams, is to transfer calls from 911 to a crisis line such as 988, which becomes the dispatching entity that decides whether a mobile team should be sent. This works well for crisis calls. It is not a good fit as the main dispatching path to reach a mediation team however, however. This is because 988 is equipped to handle crisis calls over the phone but is not designed to be an intermediary in interpersonal disputes.
911 dual dispatch: mediation is sent along with LE for a safety check	911 dispatch designates field mediation as the primary response but sends law enforcement first to secure the scene. The FMT stages nearby and takes over once safety is confirmed. This method can lower call volume, as dispatchers and officers may see less value in an FMT response if officers already have to be there. It also introduces an armed response to non-violent situations, which mediation programs aim to avoid. A related and reasonable alternative is allowing FMT to request a safety check when they feel it is needed – ideally in fewer than 20% of calls.

Referral methods	How It Works
LE first response with the option to request FMT	Police are dispatched as usual, and officers on scene may choose to call field mediation for support or a handoff. Use of this option varies widely by officer. Since waiting for mediators can take longer than resolving the call themselves, officers may frequently opt to close the scene without involving FMT.
LE first response with FMT follow-up	Police respond and handle the call in full. Later – daily or weekly – 911 or the police department shares a list of calls matching certain call types (e.g., neighbor disputes, noise complaints, roommate and family disputes) with the FMT, including contact information for follow-up. This approach can generate more total contacts than some real-time methods, but it removes the team from the 911 response ecosystem. Without same-day intervention, the opportunity to support people in the moment of acute need may be lost.
LE first response with the option to leave behind the FMT phone number	Officers handle the call fully and may, at their discretion, offer the caller a pamphlet, card, or phone number for the mediation team. FMT only hears about the call if the officer shares the information and the caller chooses to reach out – making this the lowest-volume, least predictable referral method.

Many programs begin by using multiple dispatch methods in parallel. As long as these pathways are well-organized and clearly communicated, a mixed approach can ensure more appropriate calls reach the team.

While the goal for field mediation programs is full first response from the start, that's not always possible. In some jurisdictions, 911 dispatchers, law enforcement, or other traditional first responders may hesitate to send unarmed teams into active scenes without a police presence. In this case, the team may have to build trust through the effective handling of referrals before it proceeds to being dispatched as a first response.

These concerns can often be addressed by involving key stakeholders early through a cross-agency working group, building shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and safety protocols. Champions and project managers can also draw on the success of other 911-integrated, unarmed response programs – including those in **Dayton**, **Durham**, **Albuquerque**, **Olympia**, and **Baltimore** – to demonstrate both safety and impact.

Self-Dispatch: An Immediate Path to Higher Call Volume

For new programs, self-dispatch is often the fastest way to begin taking calls and building credibility with emergency responders. When field mediators are granted CAD access, they can view appropriate call types and assign themselves to lower-priority calls still waiting in the queue.

This approach was key to Dayton's early and ongoing success, increasing call volume to the mediation team an estimated 10–20x compared to waiting for 911 call-takers to transfer calls. It also allows responders to demonstrate their professionalism and responsiveness in real-world conditions.

While direct dispatch from 911 is the long-term goal, self-dispatch is a practical, low-barrier way to gain traction, especially in the absence of full dispatcher buy-in. Over time, programs can pair self-dispatch with dispatcher training, internal champions, and embedded liaisons to transition toward full first response integration.

Embedding at the Call Center: A Relational Strategy

One proven strategy for moving from self-dispatch to direct dispatch is embedding a representative at the 911 center. This could be a trained member of the Field Mediation Team, a supervisor, or a designated liaison who helps screen calls, support dispatchers, and identify appropriate referrals in real time. Embedding builds trust, improves call-matching, and helps dispatch staff feel supported in sending alternative responders.

Several cities have implemented versions of this model for other alternative response programs – Durham and Houston use formal crisis dall diversion programs, while Albuquerque embeds triage specialists at 911. The key is having an expert in your response at dispatch to advise and work with 911 personnel.

Note also that despite best efforts to triage well, the situation a responder discovers on scene is not always the same as what the caller initially described. Therefore, the dispatch mechanism must also include a way to reroute a call from the mediation team to another first responder such as police, EMS, or mobile crisis, or to add another responder to jointly respond to that call in the field. While CAD and radio integration help these adjustments move as rapidly as possible and with the clearest shared documentation, it is also possible to make these post-dispatch adjustments in a lower-tech way by having the field mediation team call 911 (or 988, if that is how mobile crisis is dispatched locally), while also noting the change in their own records management system.

Secure 911 Technology for Dispatch

For a Field Mediation Team to receive and respond to 911-dispatched calls – whether through direct assignment or self-dispatch – it must be equipped with the same core tools in their mobile workspaces and vehicles as traditional first responders.

While the required technology is largely the same, the path to implementation will look different depending on whether your team is already embedded in the 911 ecosystem.

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Technology Needs List

What software and equipment is needed if your team already receives 911 calls?

Some mobile response teams – particularly those focused on behavioral health – may already have CAD access and basic dispatch infrastructure in place. In these cases, integrating field mediation may simply involve:

- Expanding call-type eligibility to include interpersonal conflict
- Updating dispatch protocols to include mediation as a response type
- Training call-takers, dispatchers, and field teams on the new capability
- Adjusting reporting and RMS workflows to support conflict-related calls

What software and equipment is needed if your team is starting from scratch?

New teams and teams previously using independent hotlines will need to build both technology access and interagency agreements from the ground up. This will require coordination with your public safety answering point (dispatch center), IT department, and any relevant public safety partners. Software and hardware core components include:

Cell phones for client communication and laptops for record keeping

CAD access and Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)

- Ability to view real-time 911 call boards and unit assignments
- MDTs installed in vehicles or configured as secure mobile devices
- Wireless connectivity (e.g., vehicle modem or secure hotspot)

Radios and GPS

- Two-way radios integrated with police/fire/EMS systems
- Used for receiving dispatch, coordinating scenes, or requesting backup
- GPS tracking through vehicle systems, radio/MDT, and/or mobile devices for safety and location-based dispatch

Records Management System (RMS)

- Software to document calls, outcomes, and field notes
- Should be distinct from law enforcement RMS to preserve confidentiality and community trust
- May also include optional case management or referral tracking features

What steps are needed to be operational?

Once core technology needs are identified, the next step is to move from planning to deployment. Below are the key stages most jurisdictions will need to complete, which should be adapted based on the team's level of current integration.

1. **Conduct a Needs Assessment**
   - Identify what technology the team already has access to, and what still needs to be added
   - Clarify dispatch models under consideration (e.g., self-dispatch, direct dispatch)
   - Engage stakeholders from PSAP, IT, and field partners to align expectations and identify technical requirements
2. **Secure Budget and Policy Approvals**
   - Ensure funding is in place for equipment, connectivity, and staffing
   - Confirm CAD access policy and what data will be viewable by the FMT
   - Determine early whether any public safety clearances (e.g., CJIS) will be required for CAD or radio access, and under what circumstances people may have difficulty receiving those clearances
   - For non-governmental teams, clarify agreements with city or county agencies to enable secure access to dispatch systems. If this will present a substantial local obstacle, the program design may choose to house mediation responders as government employees, to facilitate their access.
3. **Procure and Configure Equipment**
   - Order MDTs, radios, vehicle modems, and other hardware
   - If procurement lead times are overly long, explore whether any other agency can lend the team relevant equipment so they can launch on time
   - Coordinate with IT and the 911 dispatch center (public safety answering point) to ensure equipment is compatible with local dispatch systems
   - When possible, pilot hardware with a small group of responders to identify any technical or user issues
4. **Install and Test in the Field**
   - Equip vehicles or kits with MDTs, radios, and GPS functionality
   - Conduct live testing with 911 staff to confirm real-time call visibility, radio function, and GPS tracking
   - Resolve connectivity or system integration issues prior to launch
5. **Train Staff on Tools and Protocols (see chapters 7 and 12 for details)**
   - Provide hands-on training for responders on CAD navigation, radio etiquette, GPS use, and RMS documentation
   - Use a mix of group instruction and one-on-one coaching, especially for responders who are new to traditional public safety tools
   - Consider including 911 staff in early training sessions to build familiarity and mutual trust

Tip: *If procurement is delayed, consider asking to borrow – or replace at a later date – equipment from public safety partners. In Dayton, the Fire Department provided radios to the mediation team to support early implementation.*

9. Prepare to Measure What Matters

Use data to drive action and prove value

Purpose

This chapter helps you build a practical performance system that reflects your program's goals and supports everyday decision-making. It walks through how to define success, choose what to measure, and use that information to guide improvement and tell your story.

Key Insights

- Goals cascade to key performance indicators: A good performance system starts with alignment on goals – not just data points.
- Some important indicators aren't metrics: Not every indicator has to be a number – milestones and signals matter, too.
- Your program phase determines what you evaluate: Indicators should span different levels: first track what you are building (implementation), then how it is working (service success), and finally what is changing as a result (impact).
- Plan ahead with your data strategy: Selectively collecting important data points now can enable answering critical questions later that help make the case for program sustainability or growth.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Build Your Story: Connect Vision to Measurement	Learn why purpose-driven performance systems matter, then use the Performance Story Map Worksheet to link your vision to core services, define success, and sketch out meaningful indicators. **Download Performance Story Map Worksheet**
Match Your Measures to the Moment	Understand how performance needs change over time, then use the Program Maturity & Measurement Guide to align your indicators and SMART goals with your program's current stage of development. **Download Program Maturity & Measurement Guide** **Download Harvard's GPL's Essential Metrics for Alternative Emergency Response Programs**

Related Resources and Limitations

- For early goal-setting and success statements, see **chapter 4**. For using data to drive adaptation, see **chapter 15**.

Build Your Story: Connect Vision to Measurement

A good performance management system helps you stay focused on what matters most. It connects the change you want to create with the services you've designed – and gives you practical ways to track whether it's working.

You already laid the groundwork in chapter 4, where you built a shared vision of what the program should achieve. Now that the details of your program's design are coming into focus, it's time to turn that big-picture vision into something you can act on – and measure.

Why use a storytelling approach?

It's easy to fall into the trap of tracking whatever data is available, even if it doesn't reflect what really matters. The storytelling approach flips that process: instead of starting with data, you start with purpose. Then you work your way down – connecting vision, services, and outcomes all the way to your day-to-day measures.

This makes it easier to:

- Align your team and partners around a shared idea of success
- Prioritize areas that need improvement
- Track the right information at the right time
- Tell a clear story to funders, decision-makers, and community members
- Make the case for additional resources or scale

The framework, in brief:

The storytelling framework helps you define what success looks like and what you'll track – starting from your program's overall vision.

1. **Vision** – What change are you trying to make in the community?
2. **Core Services** – What are you doing to create that change?
3. **Attributes of Success** – What does good look like for each service?
4. **Measures** – What will you track to know it's working?

What counts as a measure?

When people hear performance, they think of metrics. But during early program development, traditional metrics often can't capture the full picture of progress. Consider leveraging multiple indicators of success:

Milestones: Clear programmatic steps, events, or accomplishments that indicate you're on track. (e.g., hiring complete, team training complete)

Metrics: Quantitative data points that can be measured over time. (e.g., call volume, response time)

Signals: Qualitative or anecdotal signs that something is working—or needs attention (e.g., success stories, confusion stories).

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Performance Story Map Worksheet

Use this tool to map how your vision connects to the services your Field Mediation Team (FMT) provides, what success looks like for each one, and how you'll track it.

Program Vision: What change are you trying to make in the community?

Write one clear, purpose-driven sentence.

Sample Vision Statement: People in conflict are met with safety, dignity, and support—and find a path to resolution without relying on enforcement.

Core Services: What are the key functions that bring this vision to life?

List 2-5 core functions of your program.

Example Core Services:

1. Divert conflict away from enforcement systems
2. Respond to conflict safely and supportively in the field
3. Support sustainable resolutions through follow-up

Attributes of Success: What does good look like for each service?
Measures: What will you track to know it's working?

For each core service, fill out a row.

Core Service	What Success Looks Like	What We'll Track
E.g., Call Diversion	✓ FMT is consistently offered as an alternative to police response ✓ Calls are appropriated qualified for FMT	• # and % of eligible calls diverted to FMT • % of calls sent back to police by FMT units
E.g., Field Response	✓ Responses are timely ✓ Responders effectively resolve calls	• Avg. time from call create to on-scene • % calls resolved w/out police involvement
E.g., Follow-Up	✓ Participants receive timely follow-up that reinforces the resolution ✓ Referrals to services or mediation are accepted and acted upon	• % of follow-up cases completed within 48–72 hours • % of participants who follow through on referred services
Other		

Note: *Each attribute of success may have multiple measures. You can use this table to sketch out the big picture—then expand your list of indicators as your performance system matures.* This worksheet becomes the foundation of your performance story.

Match Your Measures to the Moment

This section builds directly from the performance story map. Now that you've defined what you want to track, it's time to decide when to track it—and how to adapt your measurement approach as your program matures.

How should your measures evolve as your program grows?

Not all measures make sense at every stage. When a program is just getting off the ground, outcome metrics aren't realistic—or helpful. Instead, start with milestones that show progress. As your program matures, build toward service-level metrics that reflect performance. And throughout, pay attention to signals—like stories, feedback, and trust—that help give your data meaning.

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Program Maturity & Measurement Guide

Choose the right indicators for where your program is today—and build toward deeper impact over time. This table outlines what to focus on, what to track, and how to use SMART goals in each phase.

	Start-Up (Year 1, *begins at planning*)	**Operational (Year 2+**, *begins at launch*)	**Maturity (Year 3+)**
Focus	**Implementation** *Design and establish service delivery*	**Service** *Assess and strengthen performance*	**Impact** *Learn, adapt, and demonstrate impact*
Key Question	*Did we do what we said we would?*	*Is the program working day-to-day?*	*Is the program making a real difference?*
What to Measure	**Milestones** • Staff Hired • SOPs created • Dispatch system implemented • Services launched	**Service Metrics** • # responses • % calls by referral source • # calls by disposition • % resolved w/out police • Avg. response time	**Outcome Metrics** • Decrease in repeat callers • Change in police involvement or arrest rates • % consumers who report reduced tension or improved communication
Signals to Watch For	• Staff readiness • Public awareness • Early trust	• Feedback • Referrals • Community stories	• Gaps in service • New needs • Lived experience patterns
Sample SMART Goal	*Hire and train 5 responders by end of Q3*	*Reach 90% weekly responses resolved w/out police by EOY*	*By third year, 75% of participants report high satisfaction with FMT response, and prefer it over police for their type of call*

Use and adapt this table to guide what you track now—and revisit it regularly as your program evolves and your learning deepens.

Some programs will also have an external evaluator, whether at program launch or later. Make sure to get on the same page with that evaluator about what kind of measures can be reasonably applied to which expectations at each stage of program development.

Tip: *Resources like **Harvard's Essential Metrics for Alternative Emergency Response Programs** offer a helpful list of additional indicators to consider.*

How can your measurement system help your team get better?

Performance tracking isn't just about proving that your program works—it should help your team learn, adapt, and improve over time. The most useful metrics are the ones that give you insight and help you take action.

Your indicators and SMART goals shouldn't just sit on a dashboard. Use them in real time to:

- Spot issues early
- Track progress and trends
- Adjust schedules, workflows, or protocols
- Reinforce trust through transparent sharing

Even informal reflection—like a team huddle reviewing recent cases—can build a feedback loop that strengthens your services.

Performance is most powerful when it drives learning, not just reporting.

For more ideas on how to build these habits into your daily operations, see **chapter 15**.

10. Secure Budgeted Resources

Key considerations for funding mediation response

Purpose

This chapter offers a high-level view of the core budget considerations to help you scope, plan, and communicate what's needed to stand up or scale a mediation capability.

Key Insights

- **Personnel costs are the primary budget line for launching a dedicated team:** A minimally viable team is two full-time employees, but the recommended launch size is five: one supervisor and four responders (with two vehicles).
- **For adding a capability to an existing team, training and 911 CAD integration costs may be primary budget items:** The resourcing complexity of cross-training a behavioral health mobile response team to also be a Field Mediation Team depends in part on whether that team is already CAD-integrated.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Budgeting Overview	Learn what elements will need to be budgeted for, if adding a field mediation capability to an existing team, or if launching an entirely new team.
Roles and Staffing Levels	Understand minimal and recommended staffing levels for a Field Mediation Team. Personnel expenses will be the largest recurring cost for the program.
Operating Costs Planning Table	Review potential non-personnel operating expenses, both one-time and recurring. **Download Non-Personnel Operating Costs Planning Table**

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Budget cycle:** For an overview of a local government's annual budget cycle and why understanding it is important, see **Chapter 2**.

Budgeting Overview

Launching a mediation response capability – whether by expanding an existing mobile team or building a new one from the ground up – requires a realistic and thoughtful approach to budgeting.

Ideally, by the time you're working through this toolkit, there's already been some level of buy-in from city or county leadership and at least a rough idea of how the effort might be funded (e.g., general fund, federal grants, philanthropic support, or a mix).

Now it is time to develop a detailed budget request for what will be needed to stand up or scale a mediation capability.

If you're adding mediation to an existing mobile team

In this case, the biggest line items are typically **training-related**. That includes:

- **Curriculum development**, especially if scenario-based trainings must be developed externally or require specialized facilitators.
- **Backfill or overtime pay** to free up staff for training while still meeting shift coverage. (Some jurisdictions may be able to use existing professional development days instead.)
- **Dispatch-readiness upgrades,** if the team doesn't already receive direct 911 dispatches – this may mean purchasing radios and installing Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) in vehicles.

If you're building a new program

If you're launching a brand-new team, your budget will need to account for both start-up and ongoing expenses. These fall into two major categories: personnel and operating costs. Within each, you'll need to distinguish between recurring and one-time needs. The sections below outline key budget considerations to help you scope your request and build a clear, realistic funding plan.

As a point of reference, Dayton's initial budget for its first year of operation for the Mediation Response Unit (2022) was about $750,000, over 90% of which was for personnel costs (salary and benefits) for five full-time staff. Their non-personnel budget covered telephones, training, fleet, supplies, and gasoline, and was lower than it would have been if they had to purchase all new equipment – other programs in the city donated vehicles, radios, and other equipment to help launch the program.

When budgeting the for a new program, decisions will have to be made about where the program will be institutionally hosted (e.g.,which government agency or community partner, or will there be a competitive RFP), and the funding sources for the program (e.g.,local funds, grants, etc.). One word of caution from the field is that the host organization and/or primary funding source may have significant unintended influence over the character that the program takes on. For example, mediation efforts funded by courts often take on a legal-procedural character. Since part of the intent of a Field Mediation Team is to offer a truly distinct alternative to a police response, we suggest avoiding having the team be hosted by the local police department, or subject to their budgetary control. The team should be a respected and respecting partner to the police in the first response ecosystem, but not an auxiliary part of it.

Roles and staffing levels

Personnel costs will account for the largest share of your recurring budget. Designing a safe, functional team starts with making a few foundational decisions.

Common Roles

- **Team lead:** Provides supervision, coordination, and support for field staff. May also manage scheduling and training logistics.
- **Field mediator:** Core responder role responsible

for direct conflict resolution and field-based intervention.

- **Senior field mediator *(optional):*** A more experienced responder who may support training, mentorship, or complex call handling.

Minimum Staffing Requirements

- Teams must deploy in pairs. All civilian mobile units should operate with two-person teams for safety and accountability.
- Absolute minimum team size: two FTEs (1 two-person unit).
- Recommended starting size: five FTEs.
  - 1 team lead
  - 2 teams of 2 field mediators
- 24/7 Coverage Model
  - Minimum staffing level for full coverage: nine FTEs
    - 1 team lead
    - 4 teams of 2 (8 responders total)
  - This allows for coverage across three shifts, seven days a week, with minimal redundancy.
  - Note, however, that in most cities and counties, there is relatively low 911 call volume between about midnight and 8am, plus or minus 2 hours (and starting a bit later on weekends). Often a diversified response team will start by staffing a day shift, then add an evening shift, and only if there is significant demand, add an overnight shift.
- Compensation Considerations
  - Work with HR early to determine appropriate salary bands and benefit rates.
  - Determine if the roles will be salaried or hourly, and whether shift differentials (e.g., for overnight or weekend shifts) should be factored in.
  - Prioritize competitive pay. These first responder roles require emotional stamina, sound judgment, and the ability to build community trust. Underpaying leads to high turnover, which undermines program stability and culture.
  - Plan for sustainability and growth. Consider how roles and pay structures might need to evolve as the team grows or expands coverage.

Tip: Use your call type analysis to support your staffing plan. *Projected service demand can strengthen your rationale for team size, shift coverage, and long-term growth when making the case to funders or leadership.*

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Non-Personnel Operating Costs Planning Table

What operating costs should you plan for?

Beyond staffing, a new team will require equipment, technology, vehicles, space, and other start-up support to function safely and effectively. The table below outlines common operating cost categories, separated by one-time (non-recurring) and ongoing (recurring) expenses.

Category	Cost Type	What You'll Need	Guidance & Considerations
Facilities	Recurring or One-Time	Shared or dedicated office space, training/meeting rooms	Teams need a place to prep, debrief, and meet. Space can be co-located or shared with other departments to reduce cost. Costs may be recurring or one-time depending on whether the space is leased or purchased.
	One-Time	Initial renovations	You may need funds to renovate a space to meet your team's needs
Training & Development	One-Time	Scenario-based curriculum development and/or external facilitators	Custom training may require outside expertise. Costs depend on whether you're building from scratch or adapting existing models.
	Recurring	Ongoing training and professional development	Budget annually for refreshers, scenario practice, and continued skills development. Depending on the staffing structure, training might require not only hiring the trainers, but also paying some shifts overtime to backfill other teams while they are trained.
Technology & Communications	One-Time	Cell phones, radios, Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)	Radios and MDTs can be borrowed initially. Coordinate with IT or public safety partners early.
	Recurring	Software licenses and technical support	Account for CAD, RMS, data plans, and other subscription-based tools in your recurring budget.

Category	Cost Type	What You'll Need	Guidance & Considerations
Vehicles	One-Time	One vehicle per unit, plus at least one spare	Choose vehicles with room to transport non-team members. As the program grows, a reserve fleet of 10-20% of the operational fleet is recommended.
	One-Time	Vehicle upfitting: wrap, MDT mount, safety features	Marked vehicles support visibility and legitimacy. Consider some reflective component of the wrap. Emergency lights are optional; sirens are generally not used.
	Recurring	Fuel, maintenance, and insurance	Standard operating costs. May be handled through a city/county fleet division or reimbursed through a separate line item.
Equipment & Supplies	One-time	Uniforms, field gear, office setup	Uniforms can be simple (e.g., polo shirts). Avoid paramilitary gear like vests or pepper spray. Office setup may include desks, chairs, and whiteboards.
	Recurring	Field supplies, replacement of tech, uniforms, or gear	Snacks and water, care packages (e.g., socks, tooth brush) and basic life-saving supplies in vehicles (e.g., Narcan, first aid kits, AEDs, and tourniquets). Plan to regularly replenish basic supplies. Phones and laptops may need replacement every 2-4 years
Marketing & Communications	One-time	Public education campaign (e.g., digital, print, bus ads, etc)	Grants or one-time general funds can be useful to boost awareness of the new function.
	Recurring	Print materials (e.g., flyers, brochures, business cards, and handouts for community events); branded swag and tabling materials; digital marketing tool subscriptions (e.g., Canva Pro, Mailchimp); photography and video content creation; translation/ interpretation services for multilingual outreach	Ongoing community engagement and participation in events is important to increase familiarity with the program. Consider creating a monthly newsletter and maintaining a social media presence that normalizes your responders.

Before finalizing your budget request, initiate conversations with HR, procurement, and finance as early as possible. These partners can help you price out roles, clarify purchasing requirements, and flag long lead times that might affect your launch timeline. Waiting until funding is approved to engage these departments can create costly delays. Getting aligned on position classifications, procurement pathways, and onboarding logistics up front will save time – and headaches – later on.

Think of it as preloading your launch plan.

It can also be worth contacting existing agencies and departments that may be able to provide some equipment or services in kind without having to add them to your budget. For example, there may be a Public Information Office which can provide you with some of the marketing materials you expect to need free of charge.

III. Implement
(for Project Manager and Team Supervisor)

11. Hire a Capable Team

Selecting Field Mediation Team leader and members

Purpose

If your program is building a new team for field mediation, or is expanding the size of an existing team with a mediation capability, this chapter's guidance on hiring considerations is for you. It includes advice for job descriptions (including qualifications to prioritize) and interviewing techniques, to help ensure hiring of people well suited to creative yet disciplined mediation work in the field.

Key Insights

- **Seek abilities more than credentials:** Look for broad experience with unstructured environments and demonstrated competence in role-playing, more than school-based degrees or specific careers.
- **Offer mediation training and certification to new hires:** While prior mediation experience is a positive, do not require it as a prerequisite for these positions.
- **Include a ride-along during the hiring process:** This can help the team and the candidates to assess whether they are a good fit for first responder work.

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Salary ranges:** This chapter does not recommend specific pay ranges. Competitive to generous pay is encouraged for these demanding jobs, especially after someone has proven themselves in the first year.
- **Retention:** While important, this toolkit does not address the topic of retention. On this topic we recommend outside resources that discuss employee engagement.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
General Hiring Guidance	Orients the hiring team towards building a hiring process and job descriptions that privilege practical skills over specific career paths.
Hiring the Team Supervisor	Approach and qualifications to look for in hiring the team lead.
Hiring Mediation Responders	Approach and qualifications to look for in hiring the team's field responders.
Interview Techniques and Tools	Guidance for incorporating role play exercises and ride-alongs into interview processes. **Downloadable sample Interview Questions and Role Play Exercise**
Sample Job Descriptions (from Dayton)	**Downloadable sample Supervisor job description** **Downloadable sample Responder job description**

Overview of Hiring Guidance

Building a new team in a new field

1. **New job descriptions will be needed**. Since field mediation is a new realm of professional activity, it is likely that job descriptions will have to be specifically written or revised for these roles. Some relevant components may be borrowed from existing mobile crisis team and community mediation job descriptions.
2. **Be clear that the job is a first response role.** Transparent job descriptions will help attract the right kind of candidates for these roles and avoid people who would not be a good fit. The description should mention up front that this is a field response role responding to 911 calls out in the community, doing work in parks, on porches, in homes, and in businesses. It should also make clear that it involves meeting with and supporting people who are having a hard day and are often not at their best. While it can be deeply fulfilling work, it can also be challenging and requires being calm, caring, and creative under pressure, with frequent task and context switching.
3. **Search in adjacent fields.** Candidates' past experience is unlikely to have been directly in the role of field mediation, since this is a new concept in most places. However, candidates may have relevant experience with human services in unstructured and semi-structured environments (situations that are not completely predictable, and where not everyone always prefers to be there) in related fields, including community mediation, restorative justice, community organizing, community social work, youth social work, teaching, coaching, camp counseling, paramedicine, and law enforcement.
4. **Be clear on what background checks will require:** While we do not generally recommend excluding candidates for a history of marijuana use or due to a non-violent or distant criminal record, consult HR and public safety partners ahead of time to understand whether there will be a required background check and what it will entail, especially if team members will need to meet certain standards for CJIS clearance, associated with CAD access.
5. **Role play performance may be more important than resume virtues**. A candidate may have the desired attributes even if they do not come from an expected background. Open-mindedness in the hiring screening process is encouraged, along with practical exercises that test for desired qualities. We recommend that the hiring team look for candidates experienced with unstructured environments, and that demonstrate competence in role-playing during the interview process, more than school-based degrees. Strict requirements for career path or schooling credentials are discouraged.
6. **Role plays also show receptivity to feedback.** Role plays during interviews are not only to assess candidates' style and approach to conflict mediation, they also illuminate how gracefully and insightfully they receive and give feedback. A successful candidate does not have to be a fully competent mediator prior to the training they receive, but they should show promising inclinations towards being teachable and likely to grow in the role.

Open-mindedness in the hiring screening process is encouraged, along with practical exercises that test for desired qualities.

What roles will need to be hired?

- **Team lead or supervisor:** Serves as the internal manager and external face of the team. They must have supervisory experience, entrepreneurial energy, and very sound judgment.
- **Field mediators:** Serve in teams of two as first responders to 911 non-violent interpersonal conflict calls. They must be calm, caring, connecting, and creative in unpredictable environments.
- **Deputy team lead (optional):** Budget permitting, it is highly recommended to equip the team with a deputy leader. This way the two leaders can split up elements of what is otherwise a very challenging scope, including administrative responsibilities, public communication and relationship building, team management and supervision, training, taking substitute shifts, and so forth. This pairing also supports succession planning and continuity in case one of the two leaders departs the team. For the most part hiring a deputy team lead should follow similar qualifications and processes as hiring the team lead. If the team lead position is already filled, however, it may make sense to look for particular skills and characteristics that complement that leader's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Senior field mediator (optional):** A more experienced responder who may support training, mentorship, or complex call handling. This senior position may work best as a promotion for an experienced field mediator. Dayton found that hiring people directly into senior positions based on their social work qualifications and background, if they did not also have mediation experience, could lead to a deficit in the person's realization that they still need to learn and center the unique skillset of mediation.
- **Additional support roles:** While many response teams cannot afford their very own dedicated back-office support staff, it can be worth considering whether this team can access shared services from a larger agency or organization, such as part-time support from a data analyst, training coordinator, administrative assistant, legal counsel, etc. The team may also benefit from shared marketing, communications, and community engagement support.

Hiring the Team Supervisor

Launching the supervisor hiring process

- **Invest in getting this critical hire right.** The team leader is the core hire for a new mediation field team. This person will be the face of, and will set the tone for, how the team is perceived by partners, the public, and the team members they manage. It is worth investing time to find someone who is a good fit.
- **Assign a temporary hiring manager.** For the supervisor hire, it is important to designate who the hiring manager is in the responsible/hiring agency, and to "borrow" some of their time recruiting, screening, interviewing, and hiring for 2-3 months, since this will likely not have already been a part of that person's job. HR will provide support, but it is helpful to have someone lead the hiring process who has experience leading direct service teams – and ideally, teams that do field work. Once the supervisor is hired, they can become the hiring manager for the hiring of the remaining team members.
- **Build a great candidate pool.** Many of the nuts and bolts of leading an effective hiring process are the same as for any middle management position and do not require detailed elaboration here: build a good candidate pool by getting the word out to your own and your colleagues' networks, check references as a way to ensure

someone demonstrates the same virtues in their normal work that they demonstrated in their interview, and so forth.

Supervisor Qualifications

Note that not all of these are elements that can be judged based on a candidate's resume. Candidates may optionally be asked to submit short paragraph responses to prompts to discuss some of these elements, and even then these abilities must be verified during questions and exercises in the interview process.

1. Experienced in some form of unstructured field environment, such as a behavioral health mobile response team, EMS/community paramedicine, law enforcement, etc., or can persuasively articulate how their experience lends itself to having similar skills and abilities.
2. Has managerial experience.
3. Either is certified as a community mediator with substantial experience, or demonstrates significant humility towards the practices of mediation (does not assume they "already know how to do it") and shows willingness to undertake a learning journey to become a highly skilled community mediator.
4. A leader AND a doer. Scrappy and happy to be a jack of all trades: Willing to go on calls themselves, manage and coach the team, write policies and handle paperwork, be a liaison to other government agencies and partnering community organizations, apply for grants, be a spokesperson for the program and engage with members of the community.
5. Organized and entrepreneurial, good prioritization and time management, comfortable creating systems where they do not yet exist.
6. Good judgment in creating and complying with policies, and managing team members. Experience administering progressive discipline.
7. Effective and compelling communicator, both verbally and in writing.
8. Effective at designing scenario exercises, and coaching participants after running through them (this may be a good practical exercise as part of an interviewing process).
9. Able to articulate a positive vision for building a collaborative relationship with law enforcement, while also being passionate about providing the public with a better experience than they have often had with law enforcement.
10. Understands that different effective field mediators may have different personal styles, and can tell the difference between a stylistic difference to be encouraged or tolerated, vs. a deviation from important team standards.
11. Very strong positive referrals – 360 degree viewpoint if possible (referrals from previous bosses, peers, and people they have managed).

Hiring Field Mediators

Launching the responder hiring process

- **The team supervisor should be the hiring manager.** Once hired, the team leader should be the person to select and assemble the new team (or new members of an expanding team), with support from HR.
- **Announce the positions through community channels as well as usual hiring networks.** It is likely that the positions will be posted on LinkedIn, the city or county's website, and so forth. In addition, assuming that there were community engagement efforts in the process of assessing support for a field mediation program in this community (see **Chapter 5** of this toolkit

for more), use those same avenues (library bulletin boards, neighborhood meetings, civic councils, etc.) to announce that these jobs are now available. The same neighbors that provided input on the birth and design of the program – and their networks – should be made aware of these job opportunities.

Field Mediator Qualifications

1. Strong communication and active listening skills, warm and empathetic, able to help others rapidly generate problem - solving ideas, able to play a supportive coaching role without being overly directive or dominating the conversation.
2. Ideally has experience with people in distress in unstructured environments, such as behavioral health crisis work, community social work, law enforcement, probation officers, case management, classroom teaching. Otherwise can compellingly articulate how their work experience has prepared them with similar skills.
3. Must appreciate the value of scenario-based learning and respond constructively to feedback, both in attitude and in application.
4. Experience as a mediator is valued but not required – training will be provided.
5. Strong positive referrals from previous bosses and peers.
6. Ability to switch rapidly and smoothly between task types (listen to people, maintain situational awareness, respond to the radio, drive, write reports)

Interviewing Guidance

- **Write an interview guide with selected questions.** As with any interview, formulate common questions for candidates in advance, aiming to understand their experiences, reasoning, motives, and ability to demonstrate the qualities they have claimed to have in their application. (See example below.)
- **Role play exercises.** Since this role requires regular creative, professional response under pressure, there is no way for a resume or even a standard interview Q&A to reveal how someone will perform in the field. Therefore we believe it is essential that candidates who are interviewed be asked to role play as a part of their evaluation process. The role play should aim to assess their current style and approach to conflict mediation, as well as how gracefully and insightfully they receive and give feedback. For consistency, these role plays should be structured with the same starting prompt (the beginning of a scenario) provided by the hiring panel to each candidate. (See example below.)
- **Tell candidates how to succeed.** Prior to the role play, we recommend briefing the candidate on the qualities that the panel is looking for in a candidate during the exercise. These could be qualities such as "**the 8 C's**" in Internal Family Systems therapy: Connectedness, Compassion, Calm, Courage, Curiosity, Clarity, Confidence, Creativity.

In role plays, look for "the 8 C's:" Connectedness, Compassion, Calm, Courage, Curiosity, Clarity, Confidence, Creativity.

- **When hiring a supervisor, they must show both how to do and how to coach.** Supervisor candidates should be able to demonstrate good initial instincts toward being a mediator themselves (after all, they will set the tone of the rest of the team), and also good instincts in how they assess someone else's performance and provide feedback.

- **Run the role play more than once.** We recommend two or three back-to-back role plays during the interview process:
  1. The candidate role plays being the mediator.
  2. The candidate role plays being the mediator again, after receiving and integrating three points of feedback from the hiring panel.
  3. [*For supervisory candidates only*]: The candidate role plays being the manager giving feedback by watching someone else on the hiring team do the role play of being the mediator (in a new, scripted scenario). Have the candidate provide the person doing the role play with three points of feedback on how they did.
- **Watch for balance in the candidate:**
  1. When role playing being a mediator, observe if they avoid being too directive (e.g., bossy or law-enforcement lite) or too passive (e.g., just asking questions without being helpful, or being at a loss for what to say next)?
  2. How well do they respond to feedback and correction? Did they really listen? Were they teachable, or defensive?
  3. [*For supervisory candidates*] When role playing being the manager, observe if their feedback is on point and insightful, or are they nit-picking? Are they able to deliver their feedback in a way that honors the attempt of the other person, or are they likely to provoke defensiveness?

Watch for willingness to acknowledge and adjust old habits

This hiring guidance has emphasized that great field mediator candidates often come from a background where they have already had to interact with people in tough circumstances, such as community social work, bartending, classroom teaching, or law enforcement. These past experiences bring useful lessons for this new role. At the same time, people often carry in some habits from their prior background that will not apply as well to this job. It can be useful in the interview process to see if any of those possible mismatches can be named, and whether the person is able to flexibly recognize that there may be a need to retrain some old habits.

Here are some examples of potentially characteristic starting-point growing edges as people from adjacent backgrounds transition to becoming Field Mediation Team members. While this is certainly not true of every person in any of these fields, these are some trends to watch for in hiring and training:

Community Mediation Backgrounds

- May have to rebalance from non-directive towards semi-directive, in order to provide practical support for the parties in around one hour.
- Sometimes struggle with rapidly building rapport and getting traction in an unstructured environment, where not everyone agreed in advance to the activity or rules of engagement.

Mobile Crisis Response Backgrounds

- May have to let go of being an expert, as conducting behavioral risk assessment does not necessarily translate to mediation.
- Sometimes struggle with maintaining true mediator-style neutrality while listening warmly to both sides.

Law Enforcement Backgrounds

- May have to let go of being in control and having the right answers.
- Sometimes struggle with patient active listening (rather than rapidfire who/what/when/where questions).

The value of a ride-along during hiring

Whenever possible, during the interview process, it is recommended that before any offer is given or responded to, finalist candidates (and possibly their hiring manager along with them) go on a ride-along with the FMT. If that team has not yet been launched, then the ride-along can be coordinated with a field response team that already serves the city or county responding to 911 calls. This could be law enforcement, a behavioral health mobile response team, EMS/community paramedicine, etc. The candidate will get a sense for how 911 calls work and the significant variety in who is calling about what, which may help inform them about whether this is the right kind of work environment for them. It can be helpful to also tell them they do not need to emulate the response culture of the agency they ride with (the mediation team will have its own culture, suited to its mission), although they will need to be able to collaborate with that other agency and its culture.

Probationary period

Many jobs have a three- or six-month probationary period wherein someone can be easily dismissed from their role if they are demonstrating that they are not a good fit. We highly recommend that this team have such a probationary period, and that it be taken seriously. Whether in training or in the field, the person should have a chance to demonstrate their crisis response instincts and their ability to respond to feedback. If challenges in professionalism or a lack of aptitude for field mediation are surfaced after hiring, and if there is no rapid improvement in response to targeted coaching, that person should be let go. Having field responders who do not represent the team well can be very damaging to the team's credibility with their community.

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Interview Questions and Role Play Exercise

Below are some sample interview questions and a role play from Dayton's initial hiring process. Feel free to adapt these, or use them as examples as you build your own interview and role play processes.

Sample Interview Questions from Dayton's Interview Process

Interview Category	Interview Question
Motivation	1. You are interviewing today for the position of Mediation Response Specialist I. Please tell us about yourself and what makes you passionate about this type of work. Why do you want this job?
Experience and skills	2. What in your life experience and/ or in your professional development has prepared you to do a job like this one?
Work style	3. Please describe your ideal work environment.
Handling stress	4. How do you manage stress during times of uncertainty? Describe a time you handled a highly stressful situation well.
Learning from failure	5. Please provide an example of a time when you experienced your own professional failure. What did you learn?
Cultural competency	6. Dayton is a diverse city. You will respond to the homes of people of different cultures. Describe potential cultural differences you may encounter. How would you demonstrate or show respect in those situations?
Multitasking	7. This position requires multitasking. Describe how you handle simultaneous tasks?
Rapport building	8. This job requires you to engage and relate with people who are challenged with their life's circumstances. Please describe how you build rapport during challenging moments?
Receiving feedback	9. This organization practices a reflective learning process. We examine all aspects of our work to engage in continuous learning and growth. For example, we look back on tasks, individual performance, and discuss opportunities for improvement. Tell us about a time when you reacted to difficult feedback.
Teamwork	10. You will be working closely with teammates. What gifts do you bring to this team?
Your questions	11. What questions do you have for us?

Sample Role Play from Dayton's Interview Process in Winter 2021-2022

INTERVIEW: SCENARIOS with ROLE PLAYS

We're going to do (one or two) role plays. In each, you have three goals:

1. Introduce yourself and build enough connection that they are willing to speak with you
2. Invite them to explain what's going on and actively listen
3. Propose some constructive options for how to move forward

If you start on one of your goals but don't fully achieve it, try again with that same goal before you move forward.

Scenario 1: **Neighbor's trash cans** are leaning on my truck

- You show up on scene as a mediator, and Chris is the upset neighbor who called. He is inside his house. If you decide to knock on the neighbor's door, Tenia will be the neighbor.
- [Role play]
  - Chris (Caller) answers the door: Hello?
  - **Mediator: introduces self**
  - Chris (Caller): I wanted the POLICE to move the cans. But maybe you'll move them for me and talk to MY RUDE neighbor?
  - **Mediator: further explains purpose and next steps, then invites Chris to tell his story more fully**
  - Chris (Caller): She puts her trash cans out in front of my house instead of in front of her house, leaning against my truck, and doesn't bring them in for days after the trash is collected. I was hoping the police could scare her straight.
  - **Mediator: further explains purpose and next steps, then invites Chris to tell his story more fully**
  - Chris (Caller): She puts her trash cans out in front of my house instead of in front of her house, leaning against my truck, and doesn't bring them in for days after the trash is collected. I was hoping the police could scare her straight.
  - **Mediator: proposes options for moving forward, which may include talking to the neighbor**
  - Tenia (Neighbor): What do YOU want?
  - **Mediator or Chris explains Chris's concern**
  - Tenia (Neighbor): I don't know who moved those trash cans. WASN'T ME. Maybe the wind blew them. Anyways I have a bad back but when my son comes over I'll have him bring them in.
  - **Mediator: propose some options for moving forward**

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Job Description Examples: Team Supervisor and Field Responder

Note: Below are two job descriptions used by the Dayton Mediation Center in November 2024 when launching their Mediation Response Unit. While many aspects of these examples follow the advice above from Dignity Best Practices, there may also be divergences. Make sure you read the guidance above when considering how to modify the below, if you take them as a starting point.

The "Mediation Response Coordinator" position listed below is equivalent to the role referred to above as the Field Mediation Team supervisor.

Mediation Response Coordinator

Recruitment #21-7211-001

Date Opened: 11/4/2024 09:00:00 AM
Salary: $79,310.40 - $106,787.20 per year
Department: Planning, Neighborhoods & Development

Responsibilities

The Mediation Response Coordinator administers and manages the Dayton Mediation Center's Mediation Response Program (MRP), a community first response program for 911 calls and minor disputes, either by telephone or in-person. The Coordinator will develop the scope of the MRP, build relationships with stakeholders (including Police, Fire, EMS, Regional Dispatch, community members, and social service agencies), train and manage staff to ensure outreach, education and delivery of the most appropriate conflict intervention service and connection to social service agencies is provided. Provides specialized training or technical assistance in a variety of conflict intervention processes including mediation, dialogue, conflict coaching, and conflict management skills training for individuals, groups, teams, and organizations. Supervises employees/contractors who provides program and case management services for referrals, performs mediation and conflict intervention services, and who provide field response to 911 calls.

The Coordinator administers the MRP including personnel administration, development and management of an annual budget, management of grants, contracts, and purchasing, and is accountable for overall oversight and quality control for all MRP services. Incumbent maintains program evaluation including statistical information,documenting case outcomes, tracking program information and data, analyzing and monitoring data to detect trends and identify opportunities to improve the delivery of high quality MRP services. Provides reports, analyses and recommendations to the Division Manager and City Administration. Act as an expert to provide conflict intervention consultation for organizations and teams. The Coordinator should be able to demonstrate competency in the Transformative approach to conflict intervention, mediation case management and other conflict intervention processes including but not limited to conflict management systems design, facilitation/dialogue processes,restorative justice philosophy, organizational and team development.

While performing the duties of this job, the incumbent is frequently both outdoors and indoors as dictated by the call for service. The environment can range from, but is not limited to the office, homes for referrals/clients, places of business, and in the community, potentially in both fair and inclement weather.

Minimum Qualifications

Bachelor's degree in Conflict Management, Criminal Justice, or closely related field **AND** 3 years of supervisory experience in crisis management, case management, mediation, or volunteer management.

Master's degree or equivalent experience in Conflict Management, Public Administration, Criminal Justice, or closely related field is preferred.

Degree must be from a college or university that is accredited by the U.S. Department of Education through the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Higher Learning Commission or equivalent region.

Certifications

- Must obtain through the City of Dayton a Basic Mental Health First Aid certification within 6 months of employment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.
- Must obtain through the City of Dayton a First Aid for Adult/Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) with Automated External Defibrillator (AED) certification within 6 months of employment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.
- Must receive certification by the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation, Inc. within 12 months of employment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.

License Requirements

Must possess a valid driver's license at time of appointment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.

The “Mediation Response Specialist I” position listed below is equivalent to the role referred to above as the field mediator.

Mediation Response Specialist I

Recruitment # 24-7212-001

Date Opened: 6/10/2024 09:00:00 AM
Close Date: Continuous
Salary: $56,180.80 - $75,420.80 per year
Department: Planning, Neighborhoods & Development
Job Type: Noncompetitive

Responsibilities

The Mediation Response Specialist I works with the Mediation Response Unit (MRU), an alternative to police response for appropriate 911 police calls and minor disputes, either in-person or by telephone. This position is the primary contact for field response and follow up for individuals who have low emergent crises, customers interested in mediation/conflict management services related to the MRU field responses, and walk-in and telephone inquiries.

Incumbents work closely with and foster relationships with stakeholders (including Police, Fire EMS, Dispatch, Courts, Agencies and Community Members) and will be a part of a high-functioning team providing crisis management, de-escalation and conflict intervention services to City of Dayton community members experiencing conflict. Responsible for knowing the relevant community referral sources which may provide assistance to customers; creating and expanding mediation services; developing innovative training for volunteers/public; and conducting research to further the goals of the Mediation Center.

Performs intake and case-management services, and works with customers to increase their awareness and understanding of the mediation process and/or other conflict resolution services offered by the Center. Incumbents prepare reports, compile and enter data in a timely manner, schedule mediations, and coordinate the scheduling of volunteer mediators to conduct mediations. Mediation Response Specialist I's supervise mediations, including Saturday and weekday evenings.

While performing the duties of this job, the incumbent is frequently both outdoors and indoors as dictated by the call for service. The environment can range from, but is not limited to the office, homes of referrals/clients, places of business, and in the community, potentially in both fair and inclement weather.

Minimum Qualifications

Associate’s degree in Conflict Management, Social Work, Human and Social Services, Criminal Justice or a closely related field AND 2 years of experience in mediation/conflict management, emergency response/police crisis work,social/human service case management, or customer service;

OR

High School diploma (or G.E.D.) AND 4 years of experience in mediation/conflict management, emergency response/police crisis work, social/human service case management, or customer service.

Certifications

- Must obtain a Basic Mental Health First Aid certification within 6 months of employment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.
- Must obtain a First Aid for Adult/Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) with Automated External Defibrillator (AED) certification within 6 months of employment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.
- Must obtain a Certification by the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation, Inc., OR certification from the Dayton Mediation Center as a "Master Mediator" within 12 months of employment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.

License Requirements

Must possess a valid driver's license at time of appointment and maintain thereafter as a term and condition of continued employment.

12. Train through Scenarios

Curriculum Outline and Role Play Exercises

Purpose

Provide guidance, proposed curriculum, and sample training activity for your Field Mediation Team (FMT) so they are prepared to respond consistently and effectively to conflict calls in the field, and are equipped to give and receive feedback within the team to improve each others' practice for years.

Key Insights

- **Sequence the training thoughtfully:** Train on field mediation practices before layering in other topics like safety. This anchors trainees in their core practice of offering empowering support.
- **Connect with the ecosystem:** Throughout the training, meet and join the ecosystem of other responders, service providers, and community organizations. We are most helpful when we can connect with other forms of help.
- **Practice at each stage:** The primary training mechanism is role playing scenarios with feedback. It is not enough to understand what good work looks like – trying it and reflecting on it has to become a habit. Even when training is formally over, coaching and feedback from team leadership will shape team professionalism and ongoing improvement in the field.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
General Training Guidance	Overview of the topics and methods recommended for FMT training. Includes cycles of teaching concepts followed by practicing receiving feedback and building sound habits.
Training Curriculum Outline	Provides a 7 week curriculum outline with detailed learning outcomes and day-by-day content progression, to be followed by a 2-month field training module. **Download 7-Week Training Curriculum and 2-Month Field Training**
Role Play Guidance	Learn how to structure role plays to layer in habit formation related to recent training content. **Download Role Play Exercises Guidance.**
Scenarios Library	Use this starting list of 17 practical scenarios, and become inspired to write your own. **Download Scenarios Library and Scenario-Writing Template**
Scored Role Play Feedback	Use this scorecard to record notes and prepare constructive feedback as others conduct their role plays. **Download Role Play Feedback Template**

12. Train through Scenarios

Curriculum Outline and Role Play Exercises

Related Resources and Limitations

- **A detailed outline, not full training content:** This chapter contains a training curriculum outline, but it does not contain all of the content to be used in carrying out the curriculum.
- **The team lead may benefit from developing some of the training content:** It can help the team lead to build ownership over concepts taught to the team by developing the presentation slides, handouts, or other forms of conveying core materials.
- **Look to local partners for some content sections:** Some recommended training topics, such as Trauma Informed Care and Cultural Humility may be best provided by local training partners at community-based organizations who can speak from years of locally-grounded experience.

Overview of Field Mediation Team Training Curriculum

Mediation Field Response Training Curriculum should build a multi-week set of experiences and feedback loops that help team members learn to respond consistently and effectively to the kinds of calls they will receive in the field. Done well, training sets clear expectations and a quality bar for the team, and helps them practice so that they can perform their roles confidently and based on a blend of shared principles, their own sound judgment, and well-formed habits.

Core Approach: Role Play

After teaching basic concepts, each training module should focus on role-playing. Feedback should come from all directions – participants, trainers, peers, and experienced veterans – and role-plays can build on previous modules to reinforce multiple skills at once (e.g., building rapport, on-scene safety, etc.).

Using scenario-based role playing, the proposed training involves repeated cycles of:

- **Concept (Teach, Demonstrate, Early Q&A) and**
- **Habit (Practice, Feedback, Reflection).**

After this preparatory training, a team should be ready to take calls in the field. However, they will still need at least two months of field-based training, pairing with a more experienced person, participating in structured debriefs, and giving and receiving feedback.

What topics should the training cover?

The following curriculum sequence is recommended for your Field Mediation Team:

Part I: The Heart of the Practice of Field Mediation Response (3 weeks)

1. Community Mediation, Field Mediation, and Conflict Coaching
2. Field Mediation Protocol and Practice
3. Role Playing and Building a Positive Feedback Culture
4. Report Writing
5. Safety and Special Cases
6. Legal Clarifications

Part II: Being a First Responder (2 weeks)

7. The Public Safety Ecosystem - 911, Police, Fire, EMS, (others)
8. How to Use Radio, CAD, RMS, Language Line

Part III: Connecting to the Community (2 weeks)

9. Trauma Informed Care, Cultural Humility
10. Community Partners and Places, Common Referral Partners (Inbound and Outbound)
11. Connection, Burnout, and Self-Care

Does my team need to do all four parts of the training provided?

The curriculum is designed for a team cohort that is beginning the journey of being field mediators together and taking non-violent, conflict based, 911 calls. It may be adapted to your program's specific needs. For example, if mediation capabilities are added to your existing mobile response team, some of the content can be tweaked based on the team's existing training.

Heart of the Practice	 Being a First Responder	 Connecting with Community	 Field Training
Required: Core training for any team not already specifically trained as field mediators.	**May be shortened or skipped under certain circumstances:** If the team already takes 911 calls (e.g., for behavioral health calls), is integrated in the 911 system, and collaborates with other first response teams in the field.	**May be shortened or skipped under certain circumstances:** If the team is already experienced in community mobile response, well connected with other community partners, and oriented towards trauma-informed care and self care.	**Required:** Field training is an essential part of the training process for any first responder.

EDITABLE

7 Week Training Curriculum and 2 Month Field Training

Part I: The Heart of the Practice (3 Weeks)

- Week 1: Introductions & **Community Mediation** Basic Training (Voice and Choice, Being Non-Directive and Warm Neutral, Conflict Coaching); Role Playing and Building a Positive Feedback Culture
- Week 2: **Field Mediation Basic** Training (Core Concepts, Unstructured Environments, Field Protocol, Report Writing, Legal Clarifications)
- Week 3: **Field Mediation Intermediate** Training (Safety and Special Cases); Pass/Fail Role Play Exam

Part II: Being a First Responder (2 Weeks)

- Week 4: Introduction to Other **Agencies in the Public Safety Ecosystem** (911, Police, EMS), including visits and ride-alongs
- Week 5: Incorporating the **Radio, Language Line, and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD)**; Cross-Agency Training

Part III: Connecting with Community (2 Weeks)

- Week 6: Getting to Know **Local Referral Partners** (Community Partners Panel, site visits and ride-alongs)
- Week 7: **Taking Care of Self and Others** (Burnout & Self-Care, Trauma Informed Care, Cultural Humility); Final Preparations for Launch; Team Building

Part IV: Field Training (2 Months)

- Weeks 8-16: Field-Based Training & Structured Debriefs

The sample training curriculum is broken into 7 weeks, and assumes a 5 day, 8 hour work week. It can be adjusted as needed for different team schedules.

Note: Early on in designing Part I of your training, find out whether there is a local community mediation center that can offer their existing community mediation basic training, or else co-author it with you. Many cities and counties have a community mediation center that offers low- or no-cost services to the community to support disputes that occur prior to court involvement. This is distinct from a mediation center that focuses mostly or exclusively on court-involved disputes such as lawsuits, divorces, and custody disputes. It is still possible to build a local field mediation capability without there being a local community mediation center, but in that case we recommend partnering with one elsewhere (consult **National Association for Community Mediation** to find one) to provide training support and guidance. Similarly, other local agencies and partners may be able to assist with building out other elements of your curriculum.

Part I: The Heart of the Practice (3 Weeks)

Week 1: Introductions & Community Mediation Basic Training

Learning Outcomes

1. **Explain the training trajectory**
   a. Articulate the arc of the field mediation training they are embarking on, what will happen each day (or week, depending on length), and why it is sequenced this way.
2. **Explain and practice community mediation**
   a. Explain what community mediation is (facilitative support for all community members in navigating conflict constructively by encouraging their voice and choice) and what it is not (not mandatory, not arbitration, not directive, not centering the mediator to propose the right path, not necessarily full immediate resolution).
   b. Describe what they learned when practicing applying community mediation principles (drawing out voice, choice, and recognition of the other) in role play exercises with feedback.
3. **Explain and practice reflective learning (i.e. belonging and contributing to a positive feedback culture)**
   a. Explain what it means to see field mediation as a practice or craft (like carpentry) which, rather than simply being learned once and quickly, benefits from improvement across years with feedback from peers and from those who have more experience.
   b. Commit to participating in a culture of giving and receiving feedback graciously and frequently – understanding that no individual sees the whole picture. Reject seeing feedback as a difficult moment to avoid or something to only engage in when something is badly wrong.
   c. Keep the people being served in focus (whether in a training scenario, or actually in the field) – how well did our response provide warm connection and empowering, useful support? Do we think the people engaged in the conflict will be happy with our response and have a more clear path forward than they did before our involvement?
   d. Also notice our own internal state as practitioners and how well we are managing our own emotions in order to provide the right context for the response.
   e. Commit together to practicing the spirit of reflecting learning while debriefing role play exercises.

Week 1: Day by Day

1. **Introductions (0.5 day)**
   1. To each other
      i. Getting to know each other exercises
   2. To field mediation (see **chapter 1** in this toolkit for relevant content to borrow)
      i. Community mediation (voice and choice)
      ii. Field mediation (unstructured settings)
      iii. Typical call types, engagements, and outcomes
      iv. Why this service matters – helping people feel cared for, calm, and clear-minded when they are downward spiraling; avoiding enforcement encounters
   3. To the training period (sample schedule in presentation – suggestion: include a field trip 1x a week)
      i. Overview and schedule of the training weeks
   4. To reflective learning (belonging and contributing to a positive feedback culture) (see more detailed description in "Learning Outcomes" above)

2. **Community Mediation Basic Training (4.5 days: 2 days training, 2 days practice, 0.5 day reflection)**
   1. Core concepts and Q&A (use local community mediation center's practice, if available)
      i. Along with your local community mediation center's training materials, consider materials from the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and National Association for Community Mediation
   2. Practice and feedback (ideally included in the community mediation standard training – if not, add in)
      i. Scenario role play
      ii. Have trainees work some hours as the junior partner helping to facilitate mediations at the community mediation center, if available
   3. Reflection – What are we learning? What has been exciting/ surprising? What questions do we have? What fears/doubts/anxieties are arising? How are we growing?

Week 2: Field Mediation Basic Training (Core Concepts and Protocol)

Learning Outcomes

1. ***Explain and practice the basics of field mediation***
   a. *Advantages* and complexities of field mediation as an innovative way of practicing community mediation
      i. Advantages: Reaching more people while avoiding unnecessary law enforcement encounters. Feeling heard often helps people shift their mindset from angry and/ or afraid to centered and able.
      ii. Complexities: Unstructured environment, heat of the moment, not everyone on the same page about whether and how to engage with mediators, safety considerations, people may have less patience and want to see more prompt enforcement or faster results.
   b. *Prominent role of conflict coaching:* Parties are often not ready to interact (no longer on the scene or feeling too heated) and the field response practice is conflict coaching for one party at a time with a possible mediation scheduled for later.
   c. *Describe the balancing act of empowering rather than directing* (e.g., evoking the discussion of options rather than telling people what to do), while also providing enough structure and support for clients to feel that they have genuinely been helped by the end of the encounter.
   d. *Describe what they learned* when beginning to practice field mediation basics in role play exercises with feedback – while demonstrating the spirit of reflective learning (gracious giving and receiving of feedback).
2. ***Explain and practice the protocol-based steps of field mediation***
   a. Be able to describe the steps in the basic Field Protocol (e.g., safe arrival, initial engagement, etc.) and principles for how to do each well.
   b. Be able to describe their own strengths and weaknesses when role playing – where do they need to focus to improve further?
3. ***Explain and practice the essentials of field encounter report writing***
   a. Describe the "Goldilocks" sweet spot for report writing – what is not too short and not too long, but is just about right? What information needs to be captured? Who will be able to see this report and what does that mean for confidentiality considerations?
   b. Describe what was learned from practicing

writing field encounter reports based on role plays, and be able to ask remaining questions that have arisen during practice writing.

4. **Explain the local legal frameworks around common issues** (e.g., noise complaints, parking complaints, pet complaints, loitering, etc.), and integrate these explanations into response role plays in a way that is clearly about clarifying context, not enforcement**.**

Week 2: Day by Day

1. **Field Mediation Basics (1 day)**
   i. Field Mediation Core Concepts: Teach, Demonstrate, Q&A (0.25 day)
      1. What field mediation is
         a. Goal: Empowering through voice and choice
      2. What field mediation isn't – common misunderstandings
         a. Not enforcement, not expert assessment, not an investigation, not necessarily reaching immediate resolution, etc.
      3. Highlights from how to be in the field
         a. Role and tone: Confident service-provider, friendly guest, ask don't tell, unhurried yet dynamic
      4. Trainer's role play demonstration – showing the concepts in action (allow the trainees to provide feedback, since even the trainers are not perfect).
   ii. Practice, Feedback Reflection: Scenario-based role playing for the trainees (0.75 day)
      1. Practice, Feedback
         a. See and adapt the tools below: Scenarios Guidance, Sample Scenarios, and Scenarios Template, Role Play Feedback Template
      2. Reflection

2. **Field Mediation Protocol (1 day)**
   i. Teach, Demonstrate, Q&A (uses the Field Protocol template from **chapter 7**) (0.25 day)
      1. Stages in the Protocol (e.g., safe arrival, initial engagement, etc.)
   ii. Practice, Feedback, Reflection: Scenario-based role playing for the trainees (0.75 day)

3. **Report Writing (1 day)**
   i. Teach, Demonstrate, Q&A (0.25 day). Use your actual records management system, if it is set up at this point. If not, use a document that has a similar format.
   ii. Practice, Feedback, Reflection: Role playing with report-writing (0.75 day)

4. **Legal Frameworks Clarification, Feedback, Reflection (1 day)**
   i. Invite a local law enforcement or legal expert to provide a half-day seminar on legal clarification questions that are likely to come up in field mediation work. (0.5 day)

      These may be issues such as:
      1. When are local quiet hours in effect, and what may be the consequence for violating them? (What is the full extent of the law, but also, what usually happens?)
      2. What do local laws say about neighbors' obligations towards each other with things like pet management, yard management, sidewalk shoveling, trespassing, etc.? Who enforces these things and how?
      3. What do local laws say about loitering, panhandling, public intoxication, voiding in public, and other "nuisance" crimes? Who enforces these things and how?
      4. Can field mediators be sued by members of the public? Under what circumstances? What legal protections do responders have?
   ii. Practice incorporating answering legal

clarification questions into mediation responses. Continue to encourage productive interpersonal dialogue rather than enforcement as the primary path forward when feasible. (0.5 day)

5. **Go on a field trip to visit a community partner (1 day)**

Week 3: Field Mediation Intermediate Training (Safety and Special Cases); Exam

Learning Outcomes

1. **Explain the safety practices that will help keep mediators and others safe:**
   a. How to cultivate situational awareness and intentional body positioning
   b. How to respond to heightened interactions
   c. When to leave
   d. When to call for police assistance
2. **Explain and practice how to respond to special situations**, such as interactions with youth, co-occurring challenges, and sharing a scene with other response organizations. (See **chapter 7** for guidance on these issues).
3. **Demonstrate effective field response fundamentals in a pass/fail exam role-play.** A score of Acceptable or higher in all areas of the Core Practices section of the Feedback Template (with an opportunity to re-try and improve areas that do not meet this standard).

Week 3: Day by Day

1. **Safety 101 (1 day)**
   1. Teach and Demonstrate (0.25 day) (see the Field Protocol guidance in **chapter 7**)
   2. Practice and Feedback (0.75 day)
2. **Field Mediation Special Cases Protocols (uses Field Protocol Guidance: Specific Situations) (1 day)**
   1. Teach and Demonstrate (0.25 day)
      i. Under 18
      ii. Cognitively impaired (e.g., intoxicated or experiencing mental illness)
      iii. Threatening/escalation towards assault/ violence
      iv. Demanding enforcement
      5. Parking
      6. Public space complaint (e.g., trespassing in a park after dark, loitering, panhandling)
      vii. Presence of another responding agency on-scene
   2. Practice and Feedback (0.75 day)
3. **Summing-up Practice, and Exam, Feedback, Reflection (2 days)**
   1. Practice everything learned in the past 2.5 weeks (0.5 days)
   2. Pass/Fail role play exam for each trainee, with feedback (0.5 days)
      i. Role Play Feedback Template (1 page)
   3. Improvement measures and make-up exam for anyone who did not initially pass (0.5 days)
   4. Team Reflections (0.5 days)

Part II: Being a First Responder (2 Weeks)

Week 4: Introduction to Other Agencies in the Public Safety Ecosystem

Learning Outcomes

1. Explain basic similarities and differences in the mindsets of frontline first responders in each of the following agencies: 911, police, EMS.
   a. General mindsets (examples below)
      i. 911: Focus on speed to dispatch and call priority triage.
      ii. Police: Focus on safety and availability to

respond and provide backup for serious calls.

iii. EMS: Focus on protocol and not missing important medical signs.

b. How these mindsets apply to field mediation

i. In what ways may responders see field mediation as a positive opportunity?

ii. What are potential responder concerns? What may help alleviate these concerns over time?

2. Explain how calls flow in the 911 ecosystem, e.g., from caller to 911 call-taker to 911 dispatcher to assigned unit back to close-out with the dispatcher and what the basic roles phone, CAD, and radios play in this process.

3. Describe cases where Police or EMS must be involved versus when their involvement can be at the discretion of the responder or the caller.

Week 4: Day by Day

1. **Basic orientations to 911, Police, and EMS (1 day)**

a. Initial teaching (0.25 day)

i. Things to know about each agency, the kinds of calls they take, how they operate independently and when they work together.

ii. Add clarifying remarks about the local roles for fire departments (e.g., integrated or not integrated with EMS) and sheriff's offices (e.g., do they mostly handle courts and jail or also do field law enforcement?).

b. Panel discussion #1 with guests from 911, police, EMS (0.25 day)

i. Prepare a panel discussion questions prep sheet to share with invited agencies in advance. Include questions such as: What's a normal day like in the field for your frontline staff? When are you prioritizing speed, and when are you prioritizing other things? What are your 5 most common call types? How do you get involved with neighbor disputes/ family and roommate disputes/ noise complaints? How do you see our role making a positive contribution?

c. Reflections and questions (0.25 day)

2. **Practice Field Mediation (1 day)**

a. A day coming back to the core practice – don't lose touch with this!

3. **Visits and Ride-Alongs (2 days)**

a. Visit 911 (0.5 day)

b. EMS ride-along (0.5 day)

c. Police ride-along (0.5 day)

d. Scheduling flexibility/admin/reflecting/ downtime (0.5 day)

4. **Wrap-up (1 day)**

a. Reflections and new questions (0.25 day)

i. Discussion, in what ways will field mediation be similar to other first responders, and in what ways will it be unique?

b. Practice field mediation and report writing (0.5 day)

c. Admin time/relax (0.25 day)

Week 5: Incorporating the Radio & Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD); Cross-Agency Training

Learning Outcomes

1. Explain and practice how to use the radio at the start, midpoint, and end of a call, including routine as well as emergency purposes. Explain how not to use the radio (e.g., not clogging up the air).

2. Explain and practice how to use Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software to identify eligible calls, self-dispatch, see relevant information, add notes, and close out calls. Explain how not to abuse the privilege of CAD access.

3. Jointly practice scenarios with other responders and explain lessons learned from those experiences.

Week 5: Day by Day

1. **How to Use the Radio and Language Line (1 day)**
   a. Radio: Teaching and Demonstrating (0.25 day)
      i. Guest: 911 dispatcher
   b. Language Line: Teaching and Demonstrating (0.25 day)
   c. Practicing, Feedback, and Reflection (0.50 day)
2. **How to Use Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) in Your Vehicle (1 day)**
   a. Teaching and Demonstrating (0.25 day)
      i. Guest: Police officer
   b. Practicing, Feedback, and Reflection (0.75 day)
3. **Cross-agency Training (3 days)**
   a. Practice with key partner public safety agencies, both pre-set and surprise scenarios, e.g.,:
      i. Practice with 911, in training center (1 day)
      ii. Practice with police, in a park or training center (1 day)
      iii. Practice with EMS, in a park or training center (1 day)

      Note: Law enforcement may offer to provide defensive tactics or other safety-related training to the field mediation team. It is NOT recommended that this be done during Part I of this training curriculum (where the team's foundational habits of connection with callers are being built). Such an offer could be accepted during Part II, after those foundations are established. Dayton's MRU has found it more useful to train defensive tactics with martial artists that are oriented towards responding to physical escalations without using weapons.

      However, the primary tool for team safety is to leave a situation before or as physical escalation occurs, and to call for help. Physical struggle should be extremely rare and only in the case where a responder is trapped and in a life-threatening situation (see **chapter 7** for more safety guidance). Since people do what they train and physical encounters are highly discouraged, we do not recommend significant emphasis on defensive tactics in field mediation training.

   b. During each training day, only with the other agency 0.25 day, but the full cycle takes 1 day, as in the following sample cross-training day agenda:
      i. Prepare for practice (0.25 day)
         1. For the pre-set scenario, how do we think we should handle it?
         2. Which elements will we need to be smooth about?
      iii. Cross-agency training (0.25 day)
         1. Mutual introductions
         2. Pre-set scenario and joint debrief
         3. Surprise scenario and joint debrief (x2)
         4. Final debrief, Q&A, and summing up
      v. Reflections (0.25 day)
         6. What did we do well? What could we improve?
         7. What did we learn? What are we still confused about?
      viii. Commuting time (0.25 day)
4. **Wrap-up (1 day)**
   a. Reflections (0.25 day)

b. Practice field mediation including role playing other agencies (0.5 day)

c. Admin time/relax (0.25 day)

Part III: Connecting with Community (2 Weeks)

Week 6: Getting to Know Local Referral Partners

Learning Outcomes

1. Explain why inbound referral partners are essential to having enough work to do, and why outbound referral partners are essential to providing the most useful response.
2. Explain and practice being able to name (or consult a reference sheet to quickly find) who the best local referral partners are for various situations (e.g., mental health, DV, need for shelter, etc.)
3. Practice setting expectations for what referred-service providers are and are not likely to be able to do and how quickly things can be done.
4. Explain and practice what to do if someone reports having had a difficult experience with a referred service provider.

Week 6: Day by Day

1. **Importance of Inbound and Outbound Referral Partners (1 day)**
2. **Community Partners Panel (1 day)**
   a. Local mental health crisis response , e.g., local 988, mobile team (if different), crisis receiving center, clinic, inpatient care (e.g., psychiatric hospital), affordable therapy options
   b. Housing and food: Local shelters, food pantries, soup kitchens
   c. Youth and Aging services and supports
   d. LGBTQ, Women, Men, Gender, DV/IPV
   e. BIPOC, migration, and ethnic group supports
   f. Religious organizations
3. **Site Visits & Ride Alongs with Service Providers (1-2 days)**
4. **Practice (1 day)**

Week 7: Taking Care of Self and Others; Final Preparations for Launch

Learning Outcomes

1. **Explain principles of *trauma-informed care and cultural humility*** and fundamental practices in how responders can connect across lines of identity and experience.
2. **Explain the *pitfalls of responders not taking sufficient care of themselves*** (and each other) and practice building a self care plan.
3. **Describe how the *launch week* will go** and the roles and responsibilities of responders. Ensure that any major outstanding questions have been asked and answered.

Week 7: Day by Day

1. **Trauma Informed Care & Cultural Humility (1 day)**
2. **Burnout & Self-Care: Connection with self and sustaining connections with others (1 day)**
3. **Launch Plan and Final Q&A before launching field response (1 day)**
4. **General Scenario Practice (1 day)**
5. **Team Building (1 day)**

Part IV: Field Training (2 Months)

Weeks 8 - 16: Field-Based Training & Structured Debriefs

Learning Outcomes

Before moving beyond the initial training period, responders should demonstrate that they are…

1. Effective in following Field Protocol in both primary contact and support/situational awareness roles.
2. Consistently doing well in executing the fundamentals of fostering a warm connection and offering support that is both empowering and useful.
3. Adaptable and able to think on their feet in changing circumstances while upholding the values and safety expectations of the team.
4. Able to accurately understand and explain the local legal frameworks around commonly discussed issues (e.g., noise complaints, parking complaints, pet complaints, loitering, etc.)
5. Living up to the team's goal of being perceived as a civilian support service and not an enforcement or "police-lite" service.
6. Able to receive and give constructive feedback in debriefs with teammates.
7. Interacting professionally with other response organizations and service providers.

General Activities

- Pairing with a more experienced person
- Structured debrief times with team lead; giving and receiving feedback
- Attention to: clear purpose, connection, empowerment, usefulness, safety

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Role Play Exercise Guidance

Training for a field response team will only be as strong as the practical exercises that enable the team to put what they learn into practice in a context where feedback is normal and welcome. In most cases these practical exercises will be role playing through scenarios while paying attention to the teaching elements in question.

Please use the scenarios below, or devise your own, to simulate walking through the steps in your Field Protocol.

Instructions

Select three scenarios that emphasize one or two parts of the Field Protocol that you would like to practice (e.g., safe arrival, options discussion, etc.). You may also select special circumstances (e.g., interacting with youth, interacting with people from different backgrounds, etc.). See inspiration in the "Specific Situations" list in the Field Protocol (chapter 7).

Roles

Each scenario will have three roles:

1. Two-person response team
2. Individual calling for assistance
3. Person called on (if present)

In more complex scenarios, there may also be friends, family, bystanders, or other responders who interact with the scene. Make up names for your characters (although the responders should use their own names).

At the start, the facilitator will state the elements everyone knows (e.g.,location). Then, the facilitator should privately state any elements only some actors will know at the start. This may include a twist to be introduced part-way through and/or guidance on how challenging (low, medium, high) the actors should make the scenario for the responders.

Exercise Duration

Expect 20 minutes per exercise, yielding three scenarios in an hour. These timelines can be adjusted as needed.

- 5 minutes: Set the scene, and give people prompts and a moment to think.
- 5 minutes: Run the scene.
- 10 minutes: Debrief as a group. Anyone who does not have a role in the scene comments first, then those who had roles, then any instructors present. Name strengths, discuss where there is room for improvement, and address open questions.

Facilitator Feedback

During the exercise, the facilitator should take notes and score the responder role players using a structured tool. During the debrief, the instructor or a note-taker should write down any questions the group has about how to proceed, legal issues, etc. that the instructor cannot immediately answer. The note-taker should also keep track of any elements that need more practice for individuals or for the group as a whole.

The Role Play Feedback Template can be used to provide structured feedback.

Facilitator Tips

- ✧ Focus on establishing a warm connection, listening, staying neutral, exploring options, safety, and closing out with clear next steps.
- ✧ Encourage participants to improve and make dialogue more realistic while staying focused on the primary training topic.
- ✧ Add gray-area call types and/or one the team should not handle by themselves.

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Scenarios Library and Scenario-Writing Template

Write your own scenarios or modify scenarios already in the Sample Scenarios Library below for call types and twists that reflect the focus of the current day of training:

Sample Scenarios Library

Scenario # and Name	Setting	Call detail	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
1: Noise Complaint – Baby and Party	Place: Apartment building Persons: A mother and her next door neighbor (optionally, the neighbor's guests).	911 caller is a woman with a baby who is trying to sleep at 8pm. Neighbors are throwing a loud party, and the baby is crying.	The woman has not yet asked the neighbors to be quieter.	A) Empowering: Do mediators help the woman speak directly with her neighbor? Mediators should avoid carrying messages for others. B) Legal: Do the mediators offer clarity (if needed) that the noise at 8pm is not against the law (although it may violate building rules)?
2: Neighbor Dispute – Damaged Fence	Place: Two adjacent yards Persons: Two adult neighbors and one teenage son	One man claims his neighbor's son dented his fence when using the lawnmower and won't pay for repairs.	The neighbor and son deny knowing how the fence was dented.	A) Unclear facts: How to handle it when stories conflict and you suspect someone may be lying? B) Youth: Does anything change in the interaction when a young person is involved?
3: Business – Man out Front	Place: Sidewalk in front of a 7-Eleven Persons: 7-Eleven female store manager and a man who appears homeless	7-Eleven manager reports that the man is scaring away customers by standing outside the door and muttering to himself.	The man is not fully coherent, but says he bought a bag of chips today from the 7-Eleven. The manager agrees this is true.	A) Co-occurring condition: Does the mental health element change what responders should do? B) Impartiality: We know what the store manager wants. Do the responders try to find out what the other man wants?
4: Parking Dispute – Disability Residential Space	Place: Sidewalk Persons: Grown man and his mother are outside of the mother's house together	Man is angry that someone parked in his mom's disability parking space, making it harder for her to park and get into the house	The person who parked there is not on scene, but they do have a disability license plate.	A) Practical help: Do the mediators offer to help the woman get into the house? B) Legal: Do the mediators offer clarity (if needed) that, legally, the disabled parking space is not reserved exclusively for the use of the residents at that address?

Scenario # and Name	Setting	Call detail	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
5: Roommate Dispute – Bathroom Cleanup	Place: House Persons: Two male roommates who share a house	The caller says the other roommate, who works in car detailing, washes off his work materials and chemicals in the bathtub and never cleans up afterwards.	Both roommates are home watching TV together. The called-on person is surprised and angry to hear that a call to 911 was made. The roommate accused of making the mess is on a lease for the house. The caller is subletting from his roommate without a lease.	A) Asking permission to come in: Do the responders get permission from both house residents before entering (or remaining in) the house? B) Hearing separately: Rather than attempting to have the conversation jointly from the start, do the responders invite the parties to separate and be heard individually?
6: Parenting Challenge – Won't Go to Schoolt	Place: Caller's living room Persons: Father is the caller and his 12 year old son is the called-on	The caller's son refuses to stop playing his video game and go to school.	The boy has a bruise on his cheek. When asked, he says his dad slapped him. OR When asked, he says he got into a little fight at school.	A) Clarifying whether assault has taken place: Do the responders ask the boy in private how he got the bruise? B) Role clarity: Are the responders clear – to themselves and others – on whether they are mandated reporters?
7: Shouting Fight in Public – Library Park	Place: Park in front of the library Persons: A man and a woman in a romantic relationship, a librarian, and a security guard	Librarian calling to report that the man and a woman have been screaming at each other for over ten minutes.	The couple ignored library security who asked them to be quiet or leave the park. The security guard wants the police to respond.	A) De-escalation: Are responders able to interrupt the shouting and bring the temperature down? B) Responding to a demand for law enforcement: Do responders clarify that the guard may call 911 again if he requires law enforcement while also recommending a different path forward?

Scenario # and Name	Setting	Call detail	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
8: Disturbance - Kids on Motor Bikes in Park	Place: Public park Persons: An older caller sitting on a bench and two young teenagers riding loops through the park	Caller calling to report that juveniles are riding a powered mini-bike through the park.	The park has rules prohibiting motorized vehicles. The kids make a face at the mediators and keep riding when flagged down.	A) Youth: Is it important for the mediation team to try and find these kids' parents? Why or why not? B) Public Space Rules: How do mediators address violations of rules without appearing to be enforcers? C) Safety: Did the mediators note whether the way the bikes were being used seemed like a nuisance or a true safety threat?
9: Neighbor – Noise and Cannabis Complaint	Place: Apartment building Persons: Two neighbors	The team is contacted regarding a dispute between two neighbors regarding loud music and the suspected smell of cannabis. The caller says upfront that their neighbor has a history of mental health struggles and is a voucher recipient.	The caller shares that they called the police on their neighbor several times which has resulted in growing tensions. The called-on neighbor has had several encounters with law enforcement because of these calls. They typically resist discussion and ask officers to leave their apartment.	A) Two complaints: How should mediators engage with the two different concerns from the same caller? B) Frequent caller: How should mediators engage with someone who repeatedly calls 911 and with someone who repeatedly has 911 called on them? C) Possible attitude of scorn: How should mediators engage with someone who seems to have prejudice against someone else's class, race, or lifestyle choices?

Scenario # and Name	Setting	Call detail	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
10: Neighbor Dispute – Alleged Harassment	Place: Neighboring houses Persons: Two neighbors (female caller and a male neighbor called-on)	Caller reports her neighbor is harassing her. She says he keeps moving her trashcan onto her lawn and leaving notes threatening to report her to the city. She wants the neighbor arrested for moving her property.	The woman's neighbor is not home. OR The woman's neighbor is watching the interaction between mediators and the caller from his front porch.	A) Unable to hear from both parties: How does the neighbor's absence affect the response? Should mediators come back when he is home or leave a note? B) Maintaining neutrality: How can mediators maintain the appearance of neutrality in a conversation when the other party is watching? C) Demand for enforcement: How should mediators respond when someone says they want someone else arrested?
11: Welfare Check – Woman Walking in the Street	Place: A street Persons: A woman in the street and a driver who saw her	Caller is a driver who states a woman is walking down the middle of the street with no shoes on, in and out of traffic. States someone needs to come out and check on her. The driver did not remain on scene.	The street has heavy traffic . OR The street is not very busy. OR The woman is panhandling. OR The woman seems out of touch with reality.	A) Judgment about whether law enforcement is needed: How busy is the street? Are police needed in order to direct traffic and safely approach the woman? B) Judgment about whether EMS is needed: Do responders assess whether the woman seems severely intoxicated or is potentially experiencing a medical emergency?

Scenario # and Name	Setting	Call detail	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
12: Disturbance – Man Yelling at Strangers	Place: Sidewalk in a commercial district with restaurants and clothing stores Persons: Man, another man who calls 911, and woman who is a bystander	Male walking down the street hollering and screaming at people walking past. No weapons seen. He hasn't touched anyone.	The man sounds angry, but is hard to understand because he is speaking a foreign language. OR The man's words are in English and sound threatening, but his body language is not aggressive. OR The man's words and body language are both aggressive.	A) Threat assessment: How do responders assess whether this man is a significant risk to others? B) Foreign language: How do responders interact with someone speaking a language that they don't understand?
13: Disturbance – Out of Breadsticks	Place: Soup kitchen Persons: Client of the establishment caller, at least one staff member, and at least one other client	Caller calls from the local soup kitchen to report that they have run out of breadsticks. Caller is very agitated.	The caller says that one of the staff members said he would get him breadsticks but then said they ran out. He accuses the staff member of lying and violating his rights.	A) Service location: How do responders interact with staff and other clients at the location? Ideally, ask for a quiet place to talk out of the main room/ public eye, listen respectfully and separately to each side. B) Seemingly very unreasonable expectations: How do mediators interact with someone who does not seem to be in touch with societal norms?

Scenario # and Name	Setting	Call detail	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
14: Business dispute – Coffee Shop	Place: Coffee shop Persons: Barista and a person who appears possibly unhoused (optionally other customers)	Caller wants a person removed from the coffee shop and reports that they are sleeping at a table and that they smell. The caller claims that this is disturbing the customers.	The barista gets angry when mediators explain that they do not play an enforcement role and says she is going to tell city council that this mediation program is a waste of taxpayer money.	A) Demand for enforcement: Responders should not enforce and should not call for police themselves (except when in danger of harm). See whether the caller will consider other options. B) Caller becomes angry at the responders themselves: Responders should remain respectful, explain themselves briefly, avoid getting into an argument about the value of their services, and offer to leave if their services are not wanted (in a non-retaliatory manner).
15: Landlord/ Tenant Dispute - Threatening Eviction	Place: Apartment building Persons: Landlord and two tenants residing in one unit	Caller has tenants who refuse to vacate the property but they haven't paid rent for months.	The tenants allege that the landlord illegally turned off electricity to their unit.	A) Lack or presence of full legal knowledge: What should responders do if they do not fully know how to answer questions about the applicable laws covering the situation? What should they do if they do know the relevant law? Should the response be any different? B) Threat of Eviction: How should mediators respond when someone is afraid they may be kicked out of where they live?
16: Welfare Check - A Bad Drug Trip	Place: House Persons: One man	Male caller states he needs help, states he has consumed synthetic marijuana called Bizarrio and that he can't stop doing jumping jacks. He has no weapons and does not know if he needs the ambulance.	By the time mediators arrive, the man is unconscious OR By the time mediators arrive, they find three local kids have gathered and are verbally taunting the man.	A) Judgment about whether EMS is needed: Do mediation responders err on the side of medical caution, calling EMS before they arrive themselves? B) No conflict: Given that there is no interpersonal conflict involved in this call, should mediators still respond to the call? Why or why not?

Scenario # and Name	Setting	Call detail	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
17: Pet complaint - Dog Frequently Barks	Place: Two houses with adjoining backyards Persons: A caller who is not very tall and a neighbor who seems large and strong.	Caller says that they would love to sit and read a book in the peace of their backyard, but every time they go out back the neighbor's dog loses its mind barking and doesn't calm down.	When mediators propose that the caller talk to the neighbor directly, they say the neighbor is "terrifying" and they are afraid. The neighbor says he would love for his dog to bark less, but he just can't control it.	A) Fear of confronting one's neighbor: How should mediators respond to fear to engage with the other? B) Pet complaints: How should mediators handle situations where a person says they cannot control their animal's behavior?

Note: These are editable and may be modified and reused. For example, the same scenario can be usefully rerun with a different twist.

Blank scenario-writing template

Scenario # and Name	**Setting**	**Call detail**	**Twist–discovered on arrival or later** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*	**Unique elements to watch for in this role play and debrief** *Not shared with responder actors ahead of time*
#: Scenario Name	Place: Persons:			
#: Scenario Name	Place: Persons:			
#: Scenario Name	Place: Persons:			

Role Play Feedback Template

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This template may be used for constructive self-assessment and feedback from others while conducting a scenario-based role play exercise (see related guidance in toolkit chapter 12).

Instructions

Key Areas for Feedback

Paying attention to the following four practices in every feedback exercise is encouraged:

1. **Warm connection:** Have you listened and empathized well? Does the caller think that you care and you're there to help?
2. **Empowerment:** Have you helped the caller find their voice and choice? Have they been able to name some of their own options? Are you succeeding at de-centering your own voice/ perspective?
3. **Supporting recognition:** Have you been able to help gently, non-judgmentally, nudge a person in conflict to recognize where the other person may be coming from? To see them as a person, not just an obstacle?
4. **A practical next step:** Have you helped the client(s) to identify a concrete step – a new action and/or attitude – that is likely to help things go differently the next time this conflict arises?

Other more detailed areas may be brought into focus, one at a time, based on where you are in the training process or if there is a demonstrated need to highlight something specific.

Evaluation Scale

The following 4-point evaluation scale is utilized for this feedback template:

E) Excellent
G) Good
A) Acceptable
N) Needs Improvement

Using letters instead of a numerical value (e.g., 1-4) helps training participants separate self-judgment from their assessment. An organization may choose to adopt this template or may substitute in its own preferred scale.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework provided in this toolkit is based on the six recommended components of Field Protocol (see Chapter 7) for your Field Mediation Team.

Each component of the protocol (e.g., safe arrival, initial engagement, supportive listening, etc.) has its own scorecard which includes the following three columns:

1. **The practice:** Reflects the specific substeps outlined in the stage of protocol (e.g., safe arrival, initial engagement, supportive listening, etc). This column should correspond directly to the protocol. This column of the scorecard will need to be updated based on your specific protocol's stages and substeps. The column will also require updates whenever the underlying Field Protocol is updated.
2. **Evaluation:** The score corresponding to the trainee's level of performance, using the 4-point scale (Excellent, Good, Acceptable, Needs Improvement) or another preferred scale.
3. **Notes:** Specific feedback for the trainee.

Evaluation Approach

It is recommended that role play feedback have an explicit focus on no more than three sections of protocol at a time – not all sections at once. Facilitators may be transparent with participants about which sections of protocol will be in focus before an exercise begins.

In addition to the core chronological components

of protocol, there are particular considerations and situations that deserve their own attention, such as:

- Safety
  - General safety practices and situational awareness
  - Threats and escalation towards harm
  - Inappropriate interactions with responders
- Particular situations
  - Demand for law enforcement or refusal to engage
  - Public space complaints (e.g., trespassing, panhandling, indecency)
  - Requests for a ride
  - Requests for clarification about what is and is not legal and potential consequences of violations
  - Youth, consent, and parental notification
  - Tapping in for a fellow responder who is not at their best
- Co-occurring situations (where there is a conflict AND another issue)
  - Cognitive impairment (e.g., intoxicated or experiencing mental illness)
  - Interacting with other agencies, including notification of other concerns (e.g., child welfare, fire hazards)
  - Referrals

These types of contingency situations may be added transparently to begin with, or in more intermediate or advanced training, as a surprise twist.

Tip: *You can evaluate in any way you want -- this scorecard can be a consistent template/ formula, but reimagined for specific 'lenses' (i.e., by core competencies overall or broken down tactically to make sure tangible skills are mastered). The following template cards are intended to be adaptable to your needs.*

Scorecard Templates

Sample Scorecard: Core Competencies in Field Mediation

The following template has been filled out to assess field mediators based on their core competencies overall.

Practices in Focus	Evaluation (E, G, A, N)	Notes
Warm Connection Have you listened and empathized well? Do they think you care and you're there to help?		
Empowerment Have you helped them find their voice and choice? Have they been able to name some of their own options? Are you succeeding at de-centering your own voice/perspective?		
Supporting Recognition Has the responder been able to help gently and non-judgmentally nudge a person in conflict to recognize where the other person may be coming from? To see them as a person and not just an obstacle?		
A Practical Next Step Has the responder helped the client(s) to identify a concrete step – a new action and/or attitude – that is likely to help things go differently in the near term, or next time this conflict arises?		

Sample Scorecard: Focusing on a Section of the Field Protocol

The following template has been filled out to assess field mediators based on the criteria in the 'Safe Arrival' section of their protocol. Trainers can create a similar scorecard for other parts of the field protocol, as each section is taught and role-played.

Practices in Focus	Evaluation (E, G, A, N)	Notes
1. Receive call and gather information Did you... Gather initial information from 911 CAD and/or mediation call-taker; Confirm the call type seems appropriate; Call back the initial caller to attempt to establish a connection and learn more while on the way?		
2. Choose roles Did you... Decide which responder will lead contact, and which will keep their eye on safety?		
3. Mark on scene, conduct initial safety scan* Did you... Park at a slight distance; Notify via radio: arrived on scene; Confirm a manageable agitation level: no violence in progress, no weapons involved?		

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Practices in Focus	Evaluation (E, G, A, N)	Notes

13. Reach Out to Referral Partners

Knowing who calls the team – and who they call

Purpose

This chapter outlines how and when to begin outreach to referral partners – organizations that may either call the Field Mediation Team (FMT) or receive referrals from them. Building these relationships early, during training and soft launch, strengthens coordination, clarifies roles, and ensures the team is integrated into the broader support network.

Key Insights

- **Cultivate both inbound and outbound:** Referral partners include both those who can be encouraged to call the team and those who the team recommends during response.
- **Keep ongoing contact:** Outreach starts during training,continues through early implementation, and is refreshed periodically thereafter.
- **Maintain consent and transparency:** All referrals must be voluntary. Programs should clarify responders' responsibilities around mandated reporting.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Outreach to Referral Partners	Introduces the importance of referral relationships and explains the timing of and approach to initial outreach efforts. Use this section to structure early engagements during training and soft launch.
Types of Referral Partners	Defines inbound, outbound, and dual-role partners. Helps teams think through which local organizations fit each role and how to engage with them.
Ethical Considerations	Offers practical guidance on making consensual, non-coercive referrals and understanding local mandatory reporting obligations. Use this section to align team practices with legal and ethical standards.

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Common Pitfall:** Treating outreach as a one-time event can undermine long-term partnerships. Build relationships gradually and revisit them often.
- For information on integrating getting to know referral partners into training processes, see **chapter 12**.

Laying the Foundation for Collaboration

Why do referral partners matter?

Field Mediation Teams (FMTs) operate most effectively as part of a broader ecosystem of human service organizations which refer to each other. Referral partners help the team know where they're most needed and where their work might end. Some partners may want to call the team when a conflict arises. Others may be better equipped to step in after a mediation, when participants need help beyond the conversation.

These relationships strengthen the mediation ecosystem and help set realistic expectations on all sides.

When should outreach begin?

Outreach starts during training and continues throughout implementation. Early visits help teams build familiarity with referral partners before they respond in the field. These introductions also give partners time to ask questions, express concerns, and understand what the mediation program offers.

Site visits can be informal. Teams can visit partner locations, host small gatherings if space allows, or even invite partners to observe a role-play in a public park. The goal is to build trust, not pitch a program.

Types of Referral Partners

Who might call the FMT?

Inbound referral partners are community organizations that may contact the team during or after a conflict. They often serve people navigating interpersonal tension – sometimes beyond their capacity to resolve – but not yet violent.

Example Inbound Referral Partners

- Recreation centers and youth programs
- Libraries, museums, and other public institutions
- Community-based nonprofits and resource hubs

Some agencies are contractually expected to handle their own internal conflicts (e.g., group homes, inpatient facilities, or halfway houses). If they call, teams can still respond, but the emphasis may shift to supporting staff or offering conflict coaching.

Who might the team refer community members to?

Outbound referral partners offer services that go beyond the scope of field mediation. Teams may recommend these services when needs emerge during a response. These referrals should be optional, consensual, and based on what's most useful to the person – not what's most convenient for the team.

Example Outbound Referral Partners

- Community mediation centers for longer-term resolution
- Shelters and food access providers
- Behavioral health services (e.g., mobile crisis, clinics, sobering centers)
- Hotlines (e.g., intimate partner violence, sexual assault)
- Support groups or identity-based community orgs
- Government services (e.g., housing, parks, animal control, EMS)

It helps to understand how each referral partner is viewed in the community – especially by those who have used their services – so teams can recommend

options with confidence.

Can an organization be both?

Yes. Some organizations, like YMCAs or resource hubs, may call the team when a situation escalates and may serve as a referral destination depending on the needs of the people involved.

Ethical Considerations

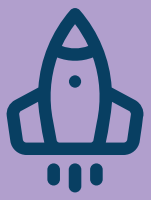
How should the team offer referrals?

Referrals are always made consensually and as a purely optional recommendation to a mediation client in the field. It is important that the person receiving the referral feels empowered to accept or reject the option to pursue it.

Are there exceptions to consent?

Since the FMT is not an enforcement agency, mediators should not be reporting anyone to another organization against their will except under extreme circumstances (e.g., a serious violent crime has been committed).

The program should clarify mandatory reporting obligations with local leadership and legal counsel. In most cases, these only apply to specific circumstances – like suspected child abuse or threats of serious harm.



IV. Launch
(for Team Supervisor)

14. Prepare to Go Live

From Final Preparations to a Successful Public Launch

Purpose

Understand the benefits of a soft launch prior to a public launch and craft a careful operational checklist to ensure readiness to begin taking calls for service.

Key Insights

- **Focus on operational readiness, not a splashy headline:** A strong launch doesn't begin with a press release; it begins with quiet clarity and operational readiness.
- **Encourage and answer staff questions prior to launch:** The entire team (staff, supervisors, dispatchers, and referral partners) needs to be aligned on how the work will unfold day to day, before the launch begins.
- **Start with a "soft launch," and set clear expectations during the public launch:** Allow the team a quiet period between three weeks and two months to work out kinks once they begin taking calls. Carefully craft the public launch announcement to set reasonable expectations.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Laying the Groundwork for Launch	Learn which protocols, staffing, and logistics components you should finalize to ensure your team is operationally ready to begin field response.
Making the Most of Soft Launch	Use this section to design a limited rollout that surfaces real-time learning and builds team confidence.
Moving to Public Launch	Learn how to structure a public debut that sets clear expectations and reinforces continuous improvement.

Related Resources and Limitations

- **Public launches often depend on political timing** – be prepared to adjust your ideal timeline based on external factors outside the team's control.

Laying the Groundwork for Launch

Why is internal readiness so important?

Before field response begins, the entire team – staff, supervisors, dispatchers, and referral partners – needs to be aligned on how the work will unfold day to day. A strong launch doesn't begin with a press release; it begins with quiet clarity and operational readiness. The smoother the internal handoff from planning to action, the better positioned the team will be to build early momentum.

This phase also marks the final opportunity to address issues that have been deferred during implementation. Misaligned expectations, protocol gaps, or unclear ownership can undermine a successful launch if left unaddressed.

What needs to be finalized before going live?

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Launch Readiness Checklist

Internal Readiness Checklist: The week or two before soft launch should be used to confirm that all foundational pieces are in place.

- ☐ **Protocols and documentation** are ready and reflect any final updates from training or simulation.
- ☐ **Dispatch systems** are configured and tested. Operators and dispatchers know when and how to route calls to the team.
- ☐ **Schedules and supervision** are in place, with clarity around who is on shift and who is providing oversight.
- ☐ **The team lead is prepared** to participate in the first wave of calls and check staff readiness.
- ☐ **Referral partners** and other internal city or county departments are notified that soft launch is beginning.

This is also the right moment to identify who will be responsible for reviewing early cases, monitoring staff performance, and leading team debriefs. Launch readiness isn't just about the team – it's also about whether leadership is set up to learn quickly from what's coming.

Making the Most of Soft Launch

What is soft launch and why do it?

Soft launch is a learning period – typically a few weeks – where the team begins to respond to live calls during limited hours without a formal public announcement. The goal is to test systems, build confidence, and adjust protocols in real time before external expectations are set.

This period allows the team to:

- Troubleshoot operational or procedural gaps
- Strengthen internal rhythms like debriefs and feedback
- Gather early stories and observations
- Decide when and how to move toward full launch

Soft launch is not a beta test. It is a deliberate and structured early phase of operations that emphasizes **learning over visibility**.

How do we structure early debriefs and learning?

Debriefs should happen at the start or end of each shift for at least the first two weeks. These can be informal, but they should give space for every team member to reflect on what went well, what felt unclear, and what should change.

The team lead should listen for:

- **Protocol adjustments.** Small changes (e.g., how the team introduces itself) may be made immediately; larger changes should be noted and revisited once patterns emerge.
- **Tips and informal learnings**. Small insights or field-based wisdom could benefit the whole team.
- **Culture and morale**. Is the feedback culture working? Do people feel safe giving and receiving coaching?
- **Reporting practices**. Are reports complete, timely, and useful?

What role does the team lead play?

Team leads should be fully embedded in this phase. During soft launch, they should:

- ☐ Personally respond to at least the first 10 calls to see how well the field model is functioning.
- ☐ Ride along with or shadow every team member at least once before authorizing them to respond without oversight.
- ☐ Offer real-time coaching and support to help staff refine their approach.
- ☐ Track any emerging concerns about staff performance, including attendance, attitude, and rapport-building.

Soft launch is also an opportunity to begin collecting feedback from callers or community members – either in the moment or through follow-up calls a few days later. These insights can be powerful both for internal learning and future public storytelling.

> *These early weeks are where the team culture is shaped. What is encouraged, adjusted, or ignored now will likely stick.*

Moving to Public Launch

When is the team ready to go public?

Public launch should only happen once the team has operated smoothly for at least two weeks. That doesn't mean every detail must be perfect, but protocols should be functioning, dispatch should be reliable, and team members should consistently be upholding the model.

There should be no major unresolved concerns about safety, culture, or communication. Ideally,

you've already seen early signs that the work is resonating – like successful mediations, positive feedback, or referrals made with consent and care.

What should the public launch include?

A strong public launch does more than generate headlines – it sets expectations. Work with your city or county's public information office to prepare messaging that is honest, clear, and aligned with the team's actual hours and capabilities.

Elements of a successful public launch may include:

- **A press release or media event** featuring local leadership, local traditional responders, and community supporters.
- **Notification to referral partners** and local agencies who might field questions from the public.
- **A public webpage** with team hours, contact info, leadership, and a way to share feedback or concerns.
- **A plan** to hold a public feedback session in the months following launch.

Depending on the local context, it may also be helpful to prepare talking points for elected officials or department heads who want to publicly endorse the team's work.

What early practices should continue?

Even after public launch, the team is still in a critical learning phase. Some soft launch practices should continue during the first month:

- **Weekly debriefs** to review difficult or illustrative calls
- **Ongoing ride-alongs or shadowing** by the team lead
- **Field-based coaching** that reinforces protocol and culture
- **Continued protocol refinements** as patterns emerge

This phase is also a good time to begin drafting content for the team's early reporting efforts – highlighting both individual stories and measurable impact. That work continues in the next chapter.

15. Build Credibility through Reporting and Continuous Improvement

Learning, Reporting, and Sustaining the Work after Launch

Purpose

Once the program is launched, the team lead must juggle multiple priorities: keeping the day-to-day on track, ensuring the team is learning, and engaging in public reporting that continues building good will for the program.

Key Insights

- **Sustain a coaching and feedback culture:** A team that's operating in real-time, unstructured environments has to rely on judgment. That judgment improves with regular reflection and that reflection only works when the team feels safe giving and receiving feedback.
- **Set weekly, monthly, and quarterly reflection rhythms:** It is far too easy for busy teams to give themselves a pass on regular reflection unless something has gone badly wrong. High performing team leads build reflection into their rhythms.
- **Release an Early Experiences Report:** Once launched, many people will be eagerly anticipating word on how field mediation is going. Rather than waiting a year, release early findings, such as through a first three months report, in order to keep generating goodwill while also reiterating reasonable expectations.

Chapter Contents

Section	How to Use It
Build a Feedback Culture	Use this to establish regular reflection and coaching rhythms that strengthen trust, skill, and team cohesion.
Capturing Early Impact	Learn how to communicate your story early to decision makers. This section offers tips to capture key signals of progress and credibility.
Planning for What Comes Next	Use this for guidance on sustaining momentum and keeping your team oriented toward long-term growth and adaptation.

Related Resources and Limitations

- **For help defining success and identifying early indicators** to track, see **chapter 9**.
- **This chapter emphasizes internal learning rhythms.** It does not cover how to establish formal evaluations or how to conduct external research studies.

Build a Feedback Culture

Once the program has emerged from its high-focus launch months and begins to hit its regular operating stride, it's essential to build a culture that supports continuous improvement. **This doesn't mean formal evaluations or long reports – it means making time for discussion, coaching, and honest feedback** about what's working and what needs to shift.

A team that's operating in real-time, unstructured environments has to rely on judgment. That judgment improves with regular reflection and that reflection only works when the team feels safe giving and receiving feedback. **A strong feedback culture includes both affirmation and constructive critique.** If the team stops pointing out what's going well, it's harder to talk about what's not.

Leaders should be modeling both affirmation and critique. If that feedback isn't happening – or if it isn't being received well – that's not a minor issue. It needs to be addressed directly before it undermines the culture.

One way to anchor these habits is through a simple set of recurring practices.

EDITABLE

Continuous Improvement Rhythms Calendar

Continuous Improvement Rhythms	
Weekly	☐ Review tough or interesting cases as a team ☐ Normalize reflection and shared learning ☐ Provide coaching and real-time feedback ☐ Spot small patterns before they grow ☐ Reinforce team norms and protocol alignment
Monthly	☐ Review key stats (call volume, response times, outcomes) ☐ Share data transparently with the full team ☐ Track shifts in call types or referral patterns ☐ Flag emerging trends (note but don't fix yet) ☐ Identify any protocol inconsistencies
Quarterly	☐ Reflect on top patterns from both data and experience ☐ Choose 1–3 areas to focus on improving ☐ Set SMART goals for the next quarter ☐ Adjust protocols or training as needed ☐ Invite partner agencies if trends involve them

These rhythms are more than process – they're how a team stays honest and connected. Weekly conversations create space for peer learning and coaching. Monthly reviews help the team notice patterns that might otherwise go unspoken. Quarterly reflections are a chance to pause and ask: are we still doing what we set out to do?

That's where your SMART goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) come back in. During quarterly reviews, revisit the metrics and commitments laid out in Chapter 9. These aren't just for reports – they're the benchmarks for whether the team is delivering on its promise. Which goals are on track? Which ones need adjustment? Are the outcomes matching the intention?

If that reflection isn't happening – or if feedback is only happening when something goes wrong – it's time for a reset. A positive feedback culture includes both affirmation and accountability. Team Leads should be naming what's going well just as often as they coach what needs to shift. If the team starts tuning out or growing silent, that's a signal worth paying attention to.

A responder's judgment is shaped in conversation, reflection, and shared practice. These rhythms are what make that possible – not once a quarter, but every week as the work continues.

Capturing Early Impact

The first few months after launch are more than just operational – they're political. Leadership is watching. Partners are curious. Skeptics are waiting to decide what they think. This is the window to shape how the program is perceived and to build trust before assumptions harden.

An early experiences report gives the team a way to tell its own story. It can be formal or informal – something shared with city council, used in leadership briefings, or adapted into talking points. What matters most is that it combines narrative and evidence: real stories from the field and real signals that the program is delivering.

This isn't about evaluation. It's about showing that the team is responding, adapting, and tracking toward the goals it set at the start. Think of it as a first checkpoint: ***What's working? Where are we seeing traction? What questions do we need to keep asking?***

What to include in an early experiences report

- ☐ Program summary and timeline
- ☐ Key metrics from the first few months (call volume, response times, outcomes)
- ☐ 2–3 field stories that reflect the team's value
- ☐ Quotes from responders, partners, and community members
- ☐ Reflections on goals and KPIs – what's on track, what's evolving
- ☐ Recommended next steps or requests for support

Where possible, include testimony from partner agencies – especially if they reflect trust and/or relief. A simple statement from a police supervisor or dispatch lead can carry real weight, especially with elected officials who want to know how this fits into the larger system.

Practical Example: *At the report to Dayton's City Commissioners, the police major who had participated in the cross-agency working group to help launch the Mediation Response Unit also reported about supportive uptake among his fellow officers, including their frequent requests for the MRU over the radio. Following the presentation, Dayton's Chief of Police voiced support for the program and said he would be happy to see it expanded.*

This is also the moment to bring goals and KPIs back into public view. The program doesn't need to have hit every target, but the team should be able to say: ***here's what we set out to do – and here's what we're seeing so far.*** Even partial alignment reinforces that the work is intentional, measured, and responsive.

If any major challenges have come up, resolve them quietly before releasing a report. If they've already gone public, name them directly and show how the team responded.

Transparency builds credibility. It also models the kind of learning posture the team wants to embody.

Done well, this kind of report doesn't just document success – it builds momentum. It reminds leadership why they backed this program in the first place and gives them a story to tell others. That story is one of alignment, adaptation, and work worth continuing.

Planning for What Comes Next

How do we carry early momentum into long-term sustainability?

A strong launch gives the program visibility – but long-term support comes from consistency, credibility, and connection. As the team settles into regular operations, the question isn't just "How are we doing?" It's "What do we need next and how do we keep building trust?"

That trust is built not just through outcomes, but through how the team learns, adapts, and advocates for itself over time. The internal tools covered in this chapter – reflections, KPIs, and reporting – aren't just helpful for team development. They're also the building blocks of long-term sustainability.

What does the team need at this point to stay strong?

After the Early Experiences Report, leadership will naturally ask what comes next. Teams should be ready with clear, grounded answers: What's missing? What would allow the team to expand, improve, or stay healthy?

The answers might be operational – like requests for more consistent supervision, better data tools, or adding clinical support. They might also reflect system needs, like more formal partnerships, stronger referral coordination, or more aligned dispatch protocols.

Use your rhythms to make the case. Pull from weekly learning, monthly trends, and quarterly goals. The best sustainability requests are those that emerge naturally from what the team is already noticing.

When is it time to seek formal evaluation?

Chapter 9 emphasized that formal evaluation comes later – once the program is stable and delivering services at full scale. But early documentation and intentional reporting are what set the stage for formal evaluation.

If the program eventually seeks evaluation, funders or researchers will want to see that core systems are in place: clear goals, baseline data, consistent tracking. The more you lean into early practices, the easier it is to take that next step when the time comes.

Think of evaluation not as a separate track, but as the next level of the learning culture you're already building.

How do we maintain relationships with decision-makers?

Sustainability isn't just about funding – it's about alignment. That means keeping city or county leaders informed, engaged, and connected to the team's purpose.

Invite them to visit the team. Share short updates or reflections from the field. Highlight not just what's going well, but what the team is learning. The goal isn't to overwhelm them with data – it's to keep them invested in the story.

Tips for Keeping Decision-Makers Close

- ☐ Send regular (quarterly or biannual) one-pagers with key updates
- ☐ Extend invitations to team debriefs or ride-alongs
- ☐ Highlight stories that show cross-agency impact
- ☐ Ask for feedback and listen

What does long-term sustainability really mean?

It's not just about surviving – it's about growing with purpose. Sustainability means having the systems, relationships, and narrative in place to keep adapting over time. It means the team isn't dependent on one champion, one grant, or one moment of goodwill. It means the work has roots.

And that starts now – not by doing everything at once, but by using the tools you already have. Your rhythms. Your goals. Your ability to learn out loud.

Contact Us

We would love to hear from you! Especially if you or your organization are:

1. **Using this toolkit**, or considering it, and have any questions or comments
2. **Deploying** a field mediation capability, and would like to be in touch with others involved in this space
3. **Willing to provide feedback, a story, or a tool to submit** (grounded in experience) that could strengthen a future iteration of this toolkit
4. **Interested in learning more** about Dignity's other work at the intersections of public safety and public health
5. **Considering partnering** with us on a project
6. **Convening an event** and would like us to be a presenter

Write to us at **contact@dignitybestpractices.org**

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