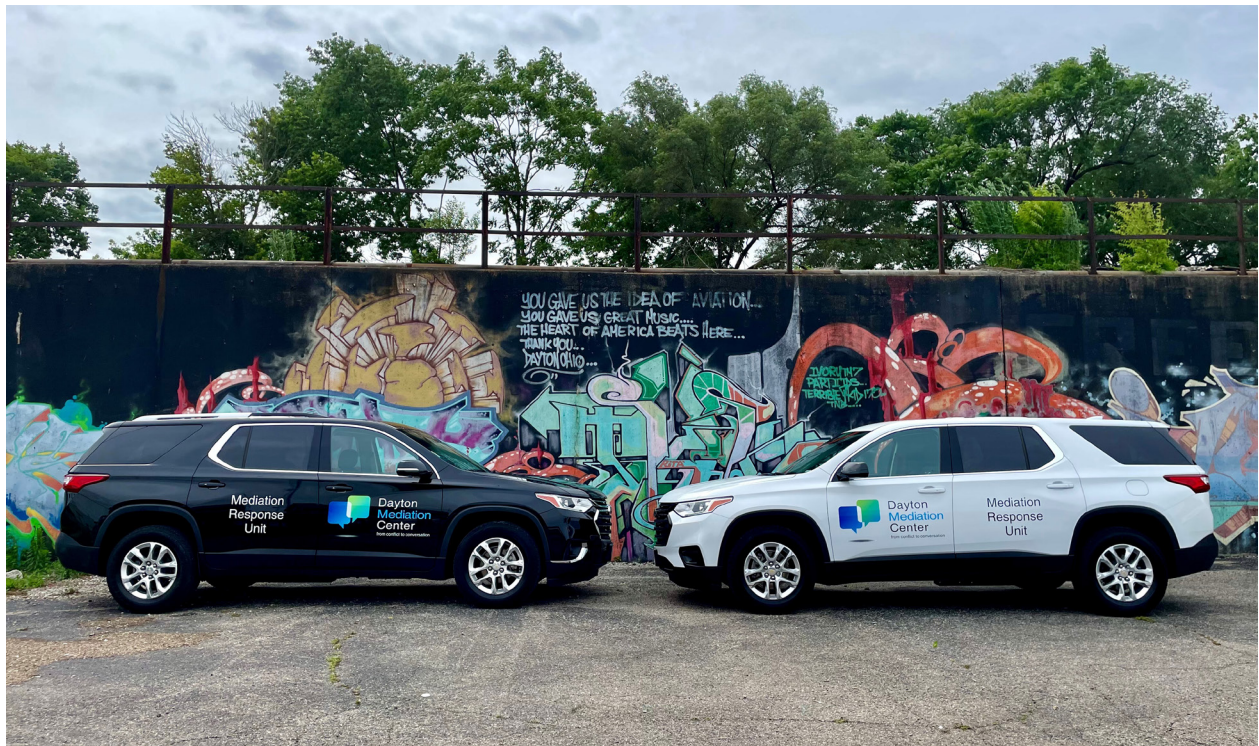

City of Dayton
Dayton Mediation Center

Mediation Response Unit

2024–2025 Evaluation Report



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Editorial Note

This report reflects the findings of the 2024–2025 evaluation period and is presented as a learning and documentation resource. Minor formatting, graphic, and data-verification updates may be incorporated in subsequent versions without altering the substantive findings, conclusions, or recommendations contained herein.

Abbreviations

- **ADR:** Alternative Dispute Resolution
- **CAD:** Computer-Aided Dispatch
- **CM:** Community Mediation
- **CRT:** Community Response Team
- **KPIs:** Key Performance Indicators
- **DMC:** Dayton Mediation Center
- **FMP:** FileMaker Pro
- **GIS:** Geographical Information Systems
- **LEAP:** Law Enforcement Action Partnership
- **MRU:** Mediation Response Unit
- **NAFCM:** National Association for Community Mediation
- **RP:** Reflective Practice
- **TCT:** Transformative conflict theory
- **TOC:** Theory of Change

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Executive Summary

The Mediation Response Unit (MRU) is a first-in-the-nation, mediation-based alternative response program that provides a non-police, non-coercive response to non-violent, conflict-related calls for service in the City of Dayton. Grounded in Transformative Conflict Theory and community mediation practice, the MRU was designed to reduce unnecessary police contact, particularly in Black and Brown communities, while increasing community access to a response that centers dignity, agency, and self-determination.

This evaluation examines the MRU's development, implementation, and early impacts during the 2024–2025 evaluation period. Using a mixed-methods approach that integrates developmental evaluation, evaluation capacity-building, and emerging impact evaluation, the study draws on administrative data, surveys, interviews, observations, and reflective practice processes.

Findings indicate that the MRU is operating as designed and is successfully integrated into the City of Dayton's first responder system. Police, dispatch, and fire personnel report strong buy-in, citing reduced workload on non-criminal calls, improved allocation of police resources, and increased confidence in the MRU as a reliable response option. Community members and participants report feeling heard, supported, and clearer about next steps—key indicators of effective transformative conflict intervention.

The evaluation demonstrates that mediation-based response offers a distinct and effective alternative to enforcement- and mental-health-driven response models. MRU responders consistently employ non-directive, values-based practices that support de-escalation, informed decision-making, and constructive engagement without relying on authority or coercion.

While long-term impacts related to reductions in repeat calls, arrests, and structural inequities require additional time and data to assess, early evidence suggests the MRU contributes to improved community trust, more equitable access to services, and a more humane public safety ecosystem.

This report concludes that the MRU represents a viable, scalable model for cities seeking alternatives to traditional policing that are grounded in conflict engagement, reflective practice,

and community empowerment. Recommendations focus on sustaining and refining the model through expanded hours, increased community awareness, strengthened data systems, and continued learning partnerships.

For the Dayton Mediation Center, this evaluation also functioned as a learning and capacity-building process, strengthening practice alignment, reflective decision-making, and organizational readiness to sustain and share a mediation-based alternative response model.

You've seen across the nation, sometimes there are situations where police may be called, and the situation is not always handled the best...

Our mediation center, those trained experts, can save time and energy and money. They can handle a problem without having the police and being able to use police now on something that's more serious and more demanding for them to do.

Jeffrey Mims Jr.
Mayor of Dayton, Ohio, 2021–2025

This section is intended to orient City leadership, funders, and system partners to the origins of the Mediation Response Unit, the conditions that made it possible, and the strategic decisions that shaped its design. It provides context for understanding why the MRU model looks the way it does and why mediation was selected as the foundation for this alternative response.

CHAPTER ONE

The Inception of the MRU

What made the MRU possible?

During individual and group interviews, stakeholders identified a confluence of factors that contributed to the creation of the MRU: community need, urgency, and strong political will.



Recognizing that a vast majority of 911 calls do not necessitate a police response (Dholakia, 2022) and could be better served by alternative interventions, and recognizing as well as the history of negative interactions between police and the Black community, the City of Dayton launched working groups to explore reform strategies following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020. In response, Dayton city leaders listened to the community and created five working groups to identify needs and solutions.

LEAP (Law Enforcement Action Partnership), informed by the Police Reform Working Group and guided by collaboration among the Dayton Mediation Center, the City Manager's Office, the Police and Fire Departments, and Regional Dispatch, developed a report with options for the City of Dayton. Over nine months, one recommendation stood out: build an alternative response to traditional policing. <https://www.daytonohio.gov/933/Recommendations>

Another essential element that made the MRU possible was the Dayton Mediation Center (the Center). Established in 1987, the Center has been a regional provider of conflict resolution services in Dayton, Ohio. It is one of the oldest and most robust community mediation centers in the United States, and perhaps is one of only a few community mediation centers located within local municipal government.

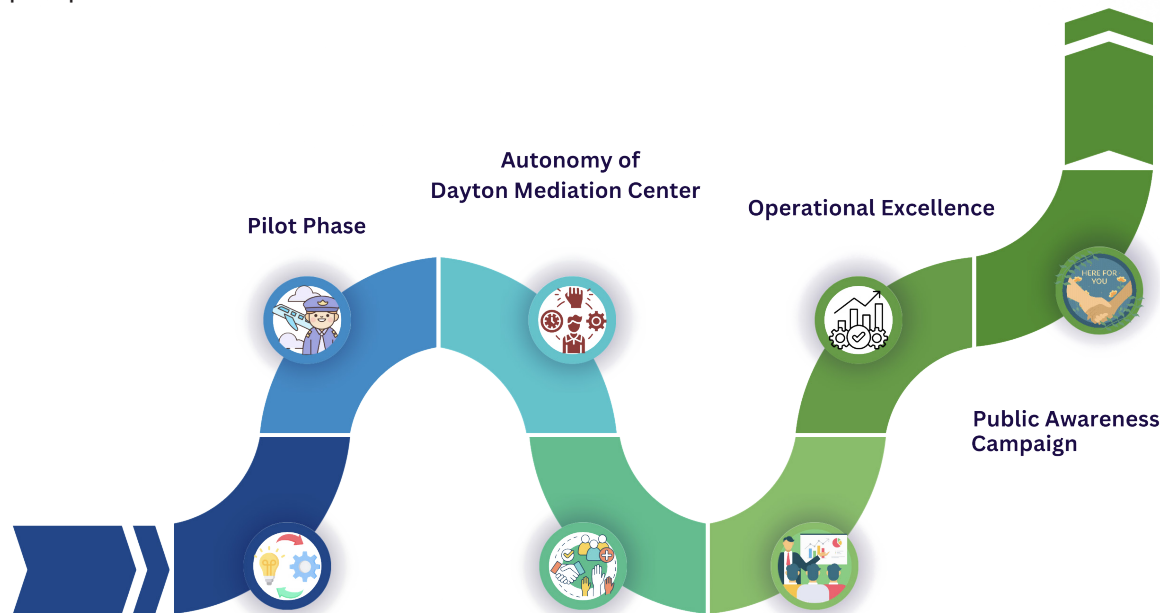
The Center's approach is explicitly grounded in transformative conflict resolution theory and practice that honors individual voice and choice. Transformative mediation is distinguished by its commitment to participant self-determination, with the mediator intentionally adopting a supportive,

non-directive role that enables individuals to define their own issues and solutions and to recognize one another's perspectives. This orientation is central to the MRU's philosophy and supports participants in moving from experiences of anger and frustration toward greater clarity and agency in their decision-making. The Center's expertise and longstanding engagement in the community made it an ideal host for the pilot program.

The City of Dayton's process emphasized alignment, structure, and capacity-building, with guidance from an external consultant. The initiative was characterized by strong political will, committed funding, and crucial buy-in from first responders, all built upon the Center's decades of community trust and credibility. The Center has built deep relationships with neighborhoods, law enforcement, and local courts — making it the natural home for MRU. Following a design phase, the pilot phase of the MRU launched in May 2022, fully funded by the City of Dayton's general fund. It should be noted that this did not defund the police — it created another option to serve the community.

What made the MRU work?

Since the MRU is a first-of-its-kind program, the pilot phase was vital for developing policies and procedures — everything from hiring to training to protocols to data-management. Although many alternatives to policing exist in the US, none use mediation as the foundation for intervention. The need to ground the MRU in the Center's transformative theory and practice became evident during the pilot phase.



Staffing the MRU was key. The Center learned that the right people — empathetic, patient, and skilled listeners — make all the difference. Grounded in values that honor each person's "voice and choice," MRU staff bring kindness and empathy to every call. Voice and choice are core principles of transformative conflict resolution, referring to individuals' ability to express what matters to them, articulate their experiences and priorities, and exercise self-determination in making informed decisions about how to move forward, rather than having outcomes directed for them.

Staffing focused on recruiting empathetic, quick-thinking individuals whose lived experience and multilingual abilities aligned with formative training in the transformative conflict-intervention framework.

Ongoing reflective practice supports operational integrity, ensuring responders remain grounded in their defined role and the program's conflict-centered purpose.

Collaboration with and independence from the police department were structural benefits: the MRU is housed in the City's Department of Planning, Neighborhoods, and Development under the Dayton Mediation Center — not the police. This gave MRU the autonomy to stay true to its mission and values, and to provide a community-based option that people could trust.

Buy-in for the MRU from law enforcement, fire, and dispatch was secured through the Center's long-standing history and establishment within the City of Dayton, which led to the MRU's deep integration into the first responder system, effectively placing the MRU "in their world." This included:

- Putting the MRU on the police radio system and computers.
- Having the MRU staff do ride-alongs.
- Making them feel like just another "crew number" for services, which helped overcome the initial skepticism and fears that the MRU was a "defund the police" program.

This integration was what "won them over so much over anything else," leading to police, fire, and dispatch absorbing the MRU quickly as a part of their first responder world. The initial reaction of many officers to the MRU, particularly during the "defund the police" protests, was one of skepticism. The officers immediately viewed the MRU as a "defund program to get rid of us." The representative and City leadership had to work hard to push the narrative that the MRU was "not going to replace a single police officer" and was only for handling non-violent, non-criminal 911 calls.

The Mediation Response Unit provides a caring and professional unarmed response to people who are in conflict, such as neighbor and family disputes and pet and noise complaints. This is especially important for members of our communities of color who have experienced individual and collective trauma in their interactions with law enforcement.

Shannon Isom
Working Group Co-Chair



Public awareness campaigns conducted in the summers of 2022 and 2024 helped clarify what MRU is and isn't, ensuring that residents, police, and dispatchers knew when and how to call for this alternative response.

In 2025, the MRU is growing stronger; thoughtful evaluation and continual learning has built a trusted model. The real success of MRU comes from the people — the team, leadership, and unwavering commitment to the values of community mediation and transformative conflict-intervention theory.

Every day, MRU responders meet community members in moments of crisis with compassion and help them navigate conflict in constructive, empowering ways. Every day, The MRU stays centered in quickly responding when the community calls.

The Mediation Response Unit: a community-based alternative that works — for Dayton.

CHAPTER TWO

The Mediation Response Unit Program's Theory of Change

Cherise Hairston

MRU Program Theory of Change

Police respond to millions of calls for service each year.

The majority of these calls do not require a law enforcement response.

Center for Innovations in Community Safety

According to the Center for Research Evaluation, a “theory of change” (TOC) explains how interventions lead to desired outcomes. A typical formula is “If we do X (actions), then we can expect Y (change) which contributes to larger goals (Mason, 2021).

The MRU program’s theory of change is that:

- If an alternative to police response — grounded in non-directive Transformative Conflict Theory (TCT) and informed by Community Mediation (CM) — is available in Dayton, Ohio,
- Then unnecessary and harmful police contact, particularly in Black and Brown communities, will be reduced.

In addition, the MRU will contribute to community-wide efforts among multiple partners to strengthen community and police relationships.

The theory of change for the MRU is depicted as a logic model in the table on the next page. The MRU logic model reflects multiple, complementary purposes. Some elements support operational accountability and service delivery; others support developmental learning as the program adapts within a complex system; and still others reflect transformative outcomes related to agency, dignity, and relational capacity. These purposes are intentionally held together to reflect the MRU’s dual role as both a public service and a learning-oriented, theory-driven intervention.

The MRU program theory of change rests on the premise that when communities are given access to an additional, more appropriate option for addressing interpersonal conflicts, they are better served.

Mediation Response Unit (MRU) Logic Model

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes / Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short	Medium	Long
What we invest What we invest Building relationships and collaborating with government and community organizations to improve a coordinated response for conflicted-related, non-violent situations Respond to MRU-appropriate calls from Regional Dispatch Center and direct call-ins Manage standard operating procedures, i.e., database, field response, CAD, etc.; monitoring and evaluation Staff training and continued education/ certification Funding from general fund and private grant funds R & D / mutual learning with other communities as a model for MRU services — need to describe impact to larger community regarding police relations Time	What we do Education — focused education with community members and organizations on how to utilize MRU services Outreach & Engagement — Formal (e.g., planned events) and informal (e.g., unplanned events) opportunities to broaden awareness of MRU services Field response to conflict-related, non-violent 911 calls and direct calls to MRU Telephone response to conflict-related, non-violent 911 calls and direct calls to MRU MRU employs transformative premises and core skills when responding Connecting clients with referrals and resources	Who we reach Callers-in Direct, indirect callers Community members Community organizations City of Dayton, Police, dispatch	Increased community use of MRU Increased partner recognition Awareness, understanding of best fit Increased internal (police) awareness Trained staff	Increased direct calls to MRU for service Fewer repeat calls Increased follow-up activities/ processes ISCT certification for staff Understanding MRU throughout	Improved police relations among the Dayton community Community members engage with and are exposed to conflict intervention to become aware of alternatives to build capacity to address future conflicts constructively More equitable 911 response, use of funds Understanding best practices, lessons learned, sharing knowledge
Assumptions Transformative model of mediation practiced and perfected by MRU staff; Supported by the Dayton Mediation Center and the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation; General fund monies available to fund MRU's annual operating budget; Program support from City Manager, City Commission, and local law enforcement			External Factors Supportive political environment; sufficient staffing; effective leadership; tax revenue impacting general fund; public opinion; MRU <i>not</i> being catch-all for lacking community support services, i.e., mental health services		
Adapted from: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicodelworksheets.html https://logicmodel.extension.wisc.edu/					

This is captured in research by the Center for Innovations in Community Safety, which found that the majority of calls for service to law enforcement do not require a police response. Historically, however, communities have had only one option for noncriminal and nonviolent situations — calling the police for help. While community mediation centers exist in more than 200 communities across North America (nafcm.com), not every community has this option.

The Dayton community has been fortunate to have the Center since 1987. During that time, the Center has received referrals from law enforcement and community members have also contacted the Center

directly. With the MRU program, however, the Center has been able to “scale up” its service through its partnership with the Dayton Police Department and other emergency response agencies, providing an alternative option for emergency calls to 911. The MRU model aims to provide a response that is the “best fit” for non-violent interpersonal and community conflict situations, particularly in situations that do not require police intervention.

An MRU response also offers additional impact and value by providing community members engaged by MRU teams with an opportunity to feel heard and to be provided space to discuss what matters to them in resolving their situation, accessing local resources, and understanding their next steps. This is facilitated by the way the MRU team interacts with community members, utilizing non-directive interventions that support community members feeling heard and trusting them to identify what services they may need. In practice, this is how MRU responders support “voice and choice” with every community member they engage with.

In this context, participant experiences of feeling heard, supported, and respected are not incidental measures of satisfaction; they are core indicators of transformative conflict intervention. These experiences reflect shifts in empowerment and recognition, key outcomes in Transformative Conflict Theory, where individuals regain clarity, agency, and the capacity to make informed decisions during moments of crisis. The MRU’s effectiveness lies not only in resolving immediate disputes, but in restoring individuals’ confidence in their own judgment and ability to navigate conflict constructively.

Transformative Conflict Theory

The MRU program is grounded in Transformative Conflict Theory (TCT), articulated by Bush and Folger (1994, 2005) and proposing that “conflict is a crisis in human interaction.” When conflict arises interpersonally between people or in groups, organizations, or a community, individuals often experience a temporary breakdown in their ability to cope, communicate, and act effectively. This destabilization can impair their sense of self and their perceived competence to manage the situation, often leading to destructive interaction patterns. From a relational perspective focused on social interaction between people, TCT recognizes the inherent needs of human beings for both autonomy and connection. A tension between these needs occurs and the individual may act in ways that are self-protective and defensive. Because the Transformative conflict practitioner understands this, and believes that when people are better able to express their needs and concerns freely, participants are able to restore their capacity to more effectively manage their conflict situation and act in alignment with their own values.

MRU responders are trained and work towards certification as Certified Transformative Mediators™ and work to consistently apply Transformative premises, principles, strategies, and intervention when supporting individuals experiencing conflict. As MRU responders use non-directive intervention that support constructive “shifts” in empowerment and recognition internally for each person and between those they are in conflict with, the interaction dynamic between them can move from negative and destructive to positive and constructive. Intervening in this way preserves each person’s agency, autonomy, and self-determination during any engagement with community members.

The development of the MRU’s Theory of Change was originally influenced by the experience of other alternative-to-policing programs, which were based in crisis response and trauma-informed theories and practices. While the MRU is informed by these areas, it is clearly grounded in Transformative Conflict Theory.

Dayton Mediation Center's Practice Model

The MRU program is one of several conflict intervention services provided by the Center. All aspects of the Center's operation, including the MRU program, are grounded in TCT. The Center's practice model is also informed by the values, principles, and practices of Community Mediation (CM) and Reflective Practice (RP).

Community Mediation

Community mediation (CM) is both a grassroots movement and a distinct approach from court-based mediation programs. Situated within the broader field of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), CM centers on the principle of community empowerment, equipping community members with conflict resolution skills — such as mediation — as a community resource. It also upholds the belief that those directly affected by conflict should have a voice in resolving it. In many community conflicts — such as those involving neighbors, families, organizations, local governments, or human service systems — dominant responses often include avoidance, violence, or reliance on law enforcement and the courts. CM offers an alternative: engaging conflict early and reducing structural barriers to accessing support. A hallmark of CM centers is their rootedness in the community. These centers rely on the talents of trained community volunteers, supported by professional conflict intervention staff. CM is guided by nine practice “hallmarks” ([National Association for Community Mediation](#)), emphasizing voluntary participation and the preservation of self-determination.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice (RP), initially described by Schön (1979) and later introduced to conflict resolution by Lang and Taylor (2000) and Lang (2019), provides a framework for initial training and ongoing practitioner development. RP involves learning through doing, reflecting, and re-doing, fostering a high degree of self-awareness. Reflective practice enables practitioners to align their actions with their core values and intentions. This approach not only strengthens individual effectiveness but also supports program evaluation by helping practitioners assess whether their interventions are guided by articulated values or carried out improvisationally.

This section is written primarily for practitioners, evaluators, and others interested in how theory and practice were intentionally aligned in both the design and evaluation of the MRU. It explains the theoretical grounding and evaluation approaches that guided decision-making and learning throughout the evaluation period.

CHAPTER THREE

MRU Evaluation Guiding Theories & Practice

The MRU Evaluation Team helped ensure that the evaluation was consistent with Transformative Theory, Dayton Mediation Center, and Mediation Response Unit practices. A specific area of congruence is in the importance of reflective practice in evaluation and community mediation. The MRU evaluation used a participatory framework, engaging with a broad range of stakeholders and incorporating practitioner, participant, and community perspectives. The evaluation attempted to model voice and choice: incorporating diverse perspectives and collaborative/group decisionmaking.

The MRU evaluation was framed as learning. Incorporating learning into everyday practice is critical to enhancing an initiative's effectiveness. By using monitoring and evaluation, programs can identify areas for growth, implement changes, and share their knowledge with other practitioners. Through this reflective process, organizations can strengthen their learning capacity and enhance their programs and services. Throughout the evaluation MRU staff have demonstrated curiosity, openness, willingness to learn, and reflective practice.

In addition to assessing program implementation and early outcomes, this evaluation was undertaken to support organizational learning, strengthen practice integrity, and build internal capacity for reflective decision-making at the Dayton Mediation Center. The evaluation examined alignment between the MRU's operations, theory, values, and practice model; identified areas for refinement as the program evolves; and generated knowledge to inform sustainability, replication, and field-wide learning about mediation-based alternative response.

The evaluation process yielded several internal benefits for the Dayton Mediation Center, including:

- Greater clarity regarding the Center's role and scope ("best fit"), strengthening philosophical, theoretical, and practice grounding and supporting more precise determination of appropriate call types while avoiding areas better served by other community resources.
- Deeper integration of Transformative Conflict Theory into field-based conflict intervention, alongside strengthened mediation practice, conflict coaching, case follow-up, and case review processes.
- Refinement of the MRU's Theory of Change, clarifying Transformative Conflict Theory as the primary grounding framework while recognizing the complementary influence of Community Mediation and Reflective Practice.

- Increased understanding of the role of trauma, mental health, and other social factors shaping conflict-related calls for service.
- Strengthened capacity to build and sustain relationships with the Dayton Police Department, community members, and social service agencies supporting community safety, stability, and well-being.
- Enhanced understanding of community needs related to conflict and their intersection with broader structural issues (e.g., housing instability, landlord–tenant conflict, family stressors), improving the Center’s ability to provide effective follow-up and referrals.
- Improved clarity regarding training, continuing professional development, responder wellness, and burnout prevention.
- Increased internal capacity for applied program evaluation, including clearer distinctions between budget-driven Key Performance Indicators and data relevant to transformative practice, service quality, and accountability.
- Deeper awareness of ongoing learning needs related to community outreach, staff retention, program sustainability, scalability, and the use of technology to support responder effectiveness.

The evaluation design was grounded in three types of evaluation: Evaluation Capacity-Building, Developmental Evaluation, and Impact Evaluation.

Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) is an approach for helping people learn how to conduct evaluation and think evaluatively in the process. It is designed to help people acquire evaluation knowledge, skills, and attitudes and apply them appropriately in practice. ECB involves efforts to develop and sustain practices within organizations and make the use of evaluation processes and practices routine. The goal of ECB is to increase evaluation capacity in order to increase the probability staff members will assess and document the implementation and impact of their programs (Fetterman & Ravitz, 2018).

One way ECB has been seen in practice is the ongoing development and coding of the Center’s FileMaker Pro case management database system to reflect the activities and outcomes of MRU staff in the field.

Developmental Evaluation (DE)...

supports innovation development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments. Innovations can take the form of new projects, programs, products, organizational changes, policy reforms, and system interventions.... Developmental Evaluation involves real time feedback about what is emerging in complex dynamic systems as innovators seek to bring about systems change. (Patton 2010)

Some describe DE as building the plane while it is in the air. The MRU staff has been creative and flexible in adapting the MRU as the environment and their learning changes. Significant examples include the revision of the MRU Theory of Change and of job descriptions and hiring practices, along with a change in protocol regarding follow-up in the field for noise complaints, a concern that surfaced in the participant surveys. These demonstrate the MRU’s willingness to learn and adapt.

Impact Evaluation (IE) goes beyond describing or measuring impacts that have occurred to seeking to understand the role of the intervention in producing these (causal attribution). It can encompass a broad range of methods and includes examining:

- Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?
- Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?
- Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?
- Efficiency: How well are resources being used?
- Impact: What difference does the intervention make?
- Sustainability: Will the benefits last? (OECD-DAC, 1991).

The MRU's evaluation questions attempted to incorporate IE concepts, leading to a formal impact evaluation over time. The following impact-evaluation questions helped frame the MRU Evaluation:

- Relevance: To what extent did the intended impacts match the stated priorities of the organization and intended participants?
- Effectiveness: Did the intervention produce the intended impacts in the short, medium, and long term? If so, for whom, to what extent and in what circumstances? What helped or hindered the intervention to achieve these impacts? What variations were there in the quality of implementation at different sites? To what extent are differences in impact explained by variations in implementation? Did implementation change over time as the intervention evolved? How did the intervention work in conjunction with other interventions to achieve outcomes?
- Efficiency: What resources and strategies have been utilized to produce these results?
- Impact: What unintended impacts, positive and negative, did the intervention produce?
- Sustainability: Are impacts likely to be sustainable? To what degree have impacts been sustained?

Given that evidence of impact happens over time, the evaluation focused on establishing internal capacity and tools for monitoring and evaluation that will lead to understanding the impact of the MRU.

This section is intended for readers interested in the operational performance, accountability, and effectiveness of the MRU, including policymakers, system partners, and evaluators. It presents the key evaluation questions, methods, and findings that inform decisions about sustainability, expansion, and replication.

CHAPTER FOUR

Key Questions, Methods, Data, & Results

In its first meetings, the Evaluation Team identified MRU stakeholders and questions to guide the evaluation (see Appendix A, page 63). The individual questions were streamlined and combined into eight overarching questions: four focused internally on the MRU and four with an external focus:

Key Questions

Internal

1. Implementation: To what extent is the MRU building capacity for responding to calls for service?
2. Best fit: What call types are the best fit with the MRU?
3. Evaluation capacity building: To what degree is the MRU building capacity for reflection, learning, monitoring, and evaluation?
4. Consistency in meeting goals: How well the MRU is aligning with its theory of change?

External/Relationships

1. Effectiveness in addressing community needs: To what degree is the MRU increasing access to alternatives to policing by community members? How is the community experiencing the MRU?
2. Participants: How are participants experiencing the MRU?
3. Partners: How are partners experiencing the MRU: helpful? benefits experienced?
4. National: What are lessons learned from the MRU that can be shared with others?

Methods

The team used a mixed-method approach, as it builds upon both qualitative and quantitative data and makes use of multiple methodologies for analysis. This type of approach can provide a better understanding of the dynamics and results of the intervention.

Data collection included surveys and questionnaires; structured and unstructured interviews; observations recorded through notes; geographical information; stories; and pre-existing documents and

data, including existing data sets, official statistics, project records. The Evaluation Team identified available data as well as creative ideas and methods for data gathering.

Surveys included paper questionnaires distributed during police roll calls and neighborhood group meetings to identify awareness and changes in perception.

Individual and group interviews were conducted with key partners, stakeholders, staff, and participants.

Mapping using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) illustrated the ZIP code locations of calls.

Internal Evaluation

Internal Question 1: Implementation

To what extent is the MRU building capacity for responding to calls for service?

The purpose of this question was to gather information related to the degree to which the MRU is building its capacity to serve the needs of Dayton community members, from design and implementation to expansion and growth. The team conducted a document review along with interviews with staff and stakeholders; results continue to be triangulated to identify the essential elements of the MRU. Theoretical literature on implementation science has also been incorporated to support the identification of the MRU's developmental phases.

As the first-of-its-kind mediation-based alternative-response program, the MRU was at first encouraged to base its program upon other alternative-response programs in the US, most of which were mental- or behavioural-health response models. Hiring, training, and procedures were initially based upon this premise. During the pilot phase, however, staff and leadership recognized a disconnect with the theoretical grounding of the Dayton Mediation Center. Job descriptions, the hiring process, onboarding and continuing education, and procedures such as case review were revised to fit the Center's model. Training of new MRU staff, for example, begins with mediation training, and case review employs reflective practice. Staffing has stabilized, and has been expanded from a team of two working 12 hours per day to two teams working ten-hour shifts. Research partner CICS is studying the formative stages of the development, and implementation of alternatives to policing programs and preliminary data shows that the MRU is consistent with other programs across the country.

Center volunteers and interns have been used to augment the work MRU staff; they make follow-up calls, write case stories, conduct surveys, and mediate cases.



Back row: Aldin Fafulovic, Mediation Response Specialist I; Isaac Renner, Mediation Response Specialist I; Trisha Werts, Mediation Response Unit Supervisor; Aaron Primm, Coordinator; Josh Bedink, Mediation Response Specialist II

Front Row: Teliah Coleman, Mediation Response Specialist I; Allison Pleasant, Mediation Response Specialist I; Nicole Fairburn, Mediation Response Specialist II

Four Stages of MRU Implementation		
Focus	Stage	Description
Should we do it?	Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of making a commitment to adopt and enact an alternative to policing program
Let's get ready to do it!	Installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring and training staff • Creating infrastructure required for successful implementation. • Involvement of stakeholders • Development of a core group/team to plan, implement, and collect data.
Let's do it!	Pilot program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of MRU into all systems • Staff are actively engaged in transformative practice • Re-tooling throughout as needed • Reflective practice and data collection are on-going.
Let's make it better!	Full implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data are collected and reviewed with all stakeholders. • On-going professional development for all staff. • Evidence of transformative practices is visible. • Community impacts are identified. • Adjustments are made as needed.

Source: Adapted from Los Angeles County Office of Education and Riestenberg, N. (2015) and The Restorative implementation: Paradigms and practices. Restorative Practices in Action Journal, 1-21. New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children (2015).

Internal Question 1: Implementation			
Data Type	Data Collection & Analysis	Outcomes	Indicators
Background information	Document review LEAP Community Responder Report	The development of the MRU included diverse representation of stakeholder groups and interests	Planning meetings included representatives of key stakeholder groups.
Interviews with staff	Formal interviews and informal observation, meetings, review of notes	There is overlap between the theoretical literature on implementation science and program lifecycles and the data collected	Description and review of key decision points in the planning
Information on implementation science	Literature review		Consistency with other A2P programs

As part of Phase Three of the Center's Technology Plan, the Center's case management system — FileMaker Pro (FMP) — has been modified and expanded to incorporate MRU activities.

Challenges have included reconciling the FMP data with CAD data, adapting the FMP system to include MRU activities and outcomes that are different from DMC, working with both the mobile and office systems, and running timely and tailored reports.

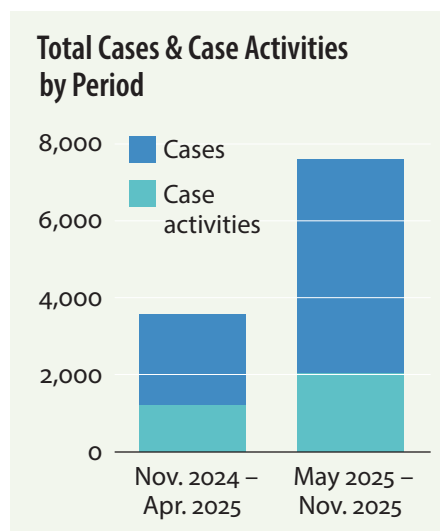
Cases, November 2024 – November 2025

From the first period (November 2024 – April 2025) to second period (May 2025 – November 2025), there was a noticeable increase in the number of cases, from **1,213** to **2,043**. This 68% increase may be attributed to the expansion of hours and having the full complement of MRU staff starting in May 2025.

The number of case activities rose 137% from 2,351 to 5,582, and the average activities per case rose from 1.93 to 2.73.

Top Case Types, November 2024 – November 2025					
Case type	Nov 2024 – Apr 2025	%	May 2025 – Nov 2025	%	Percent change
Neighbor Dispute	251	20.7%	322	15.8%	28.3%
Welfare Check	267	22.0%	319	15.6%	19.5%
Landlord/Tenant	20	1.6%	244	11.9%	1,120.0%
Juvenile Dispute	126	10.4%	126	6.2%	0.0%
Noise Complaint	31	2.6%	76	3.7%	145.2%
Roommate dispute	56	4.6%	39	1.9%	-30.4%
Condition Issues	5	0.4%	22	1.1%	340.0%
Disorderly Conduct	3	0.2%	18	0.9%	500.0%
Animal/Pet issue	14	1.2%	7	0.3%	-50.0%
Other	440	36.3%	870	42.6%	97.7%
Total	1,213		2,043		

Case volume and percentage changes are reported based on available administrative data at the time of analysis and will be updated as data reconciliation processes are finalized.



Internal Question 2: Best Fit

What call types are the best fit with the MRU?

The primary purpose of this question was to determine the types of 911 calls that are the best fit for the MRU. This included identifying case types that are not a good fit for the MRU or that the MRU is precluded from taking, along with the degree to which the MRU may be called to those cases.

Related to this was a review of case activities and outcomes, with the goal of increasing police time spent on appropriate calls and reducing negative interactions with police.

Internal Question 2: Best Fit			
Data Type	Data Collection & Analysis	Outcomes	Indicators
CAD Data	Reconcile data	Accurate data representing MRU activities and outcomes	Increased understanding of the “best fit” cases and those that require police response, as determined by both the MRU and the DPD MRU is a rapid, reliable response
FileMaker Pro Data	Review coding and data input	Identification of common outcomes and activity measures	
Quarterly KPIs	% of calls by call type responded to MRU, crossed with outcomes		
	Response times, % of calls referred and responded to		
	Identifying calls from 911 and 333		
Interviews with staff	Formal and informal interviews and informal observation		
Roll-call surveys, interviews	Roll call surveys DPD interviews		
Review of existing local data to monitor outputs and outcomes. Also review national trends			See the MRU Information page, here , and see the information dashboard by clicking the Dashboard button

“Best Fit” Call Types

The MRU has been working to clarify the types of cases that “best fit” the MRU. In the [2021 Community Responder Report](#), LEAP identified 10,739 calls that might be possible for the MRU.

Of the 2019 top ten call types, the MRU was statutorily prevented from responding to two types of cases: fireworks and trespass (although some trespass cases may be appropriate, enforcement is often requested).

Comparing the projected types with the actual calls that the MRU responded to from November 2024 to November 2025, four case types were consistent with projections.

Case Type Projections & Actual Cases			
LEAP — 2019 Projection		MRU Actual 2024–2025	
911 Call Types possible for MRU			
Peace Officer	3,957	Neighbor dispute	573
Noise	1,996	Welfare check	586
Juvenile	1,701	Landlord-Tenant	264
Trespass	1,055	Juvenile dispute	252
Neighbor	853	Noise complaint	107
Barking dog	568	Roommate dispute	95
Fireworks	272	Condition Issues	27
Party	113	Disorderly Conduct	21
Roommate trouble	107	Other	34
Loitering	71	Animal/Pet issue	21
Total	10,739	Total	1,980

New Significant Call Types in 2024 – 2025

Several high-volume call types appear in the 2025 list that were not explicitly listed in the 2019 Category 1 calls, including Welfare Check and Disorderly Subject. In these cases the MRU helps people make decisions: “how can we support you.” Although not verifiable, it is hypothesized that not only are these cases those that police were not able to respond to prior to the MRU, they may also be cases where negative interactions might occur.

The MRU spends more time per case and conducts significant follow-up, including coordinating case referrals to the Center’s mediation services. The MRU is now documenting the number of people served as well as The MRU also conducts significant follow-up activity for each call.

A goal of the MRU is to increase best-fit calls rather than expand to other, less-appropriate, call types.

When is Mediation the Right Fit? In response to non-violent 911 dispute calls	
MRU is Best Fit	Police are Best Fit
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict-based calls for service Neighbor Troubles & Noise Complaints Conflicts between families and friends Juvenile disturbances Loitering, begging, and minor trespassing Animal & Pet complaints 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Any violence Any weapon Credible threats Any injury A crime has been committed Calls inside vacant or abandoned structures or properties Any TPO or No Contact Order
Mediation, Police, and Fire EMS are connected via the police radio system to call for the other where appropriate.	

Sidewalk Mediations

We recently responded to a high-tension neighbor conflict involving a woman who reported that the teens next door were throwing trash into her yard and had dragged then abandoned a kiddie pool on her property.

When we arrived, she was extremely upset — frustrated by repeated disrespect and feeling that she was being targeted as a single mother living alone. Initially, she declined mediation, saying she just wanted the behavior to stop. But after we explained how she could voice her concerns with our support, she agreed to have a conversation.

We approached the home next door, where the stepmother of the teenagers greeted us. She agreed to talk, and we brought both women together on the sidewalk between their homes, i.e. equal ground.

The stepmother opened gently with, “Baby, what’s wrong?” — which immediately diffused the tension. The conversation that followed was honest and productive. The reporting person expressed her frustration about the trash and being disrespected, while the stepmother clarified that the kiddie pool wasn’t trash — it had simply been moved and left there unintentionally. She assured the neighbor she would talk to the teens’ father about their behavior.

By the end, both women had reached a clear understanding and agreed to speak directly if future issues came up. They ended with a hug.

Police Perspectives: Roll Call Survey

MRU staff began attending Dayton Police roll calls in late 2021 to build awareness and relationships. In 2022, a short, anonymous survey was distributed to assess awareness, use, and satisfaction. Unfortunately, these surveys were lost during staff turnover, so it is only known anecdotally that the police were aware and satisfied with the MRU.

In 2025, MRU staff again began attending roll calls, using a paper survey (see page 63). MRU staff attended all roll call shifts that fell within MRU hours and the new expanded hours. Most officers in the shifts MRU was working knew about the MRU, while many working from 6:00 pm– 8:00 am had not worked with the MRU and had limited awareness of their work.

To date, 97 surveys have been received; 98.9% of respondents indicate awareness of the MRU, with 71% indicating that they’ve interacted with the MRU, and 66% indicating satisfaction with MRU response.

As the MRU expanded its hours in May 2025, staff began attending second-shift roll calls and distributing the survey. Results showed less awareness of the MRU among second-shift police, and thus opportunities for education and partnership.

Police Roll Call Data (97 responses, 368 sworn officers)

Aware of how the MRU works:

- Very much: 54.6%
- Somewhat: 44.3%
- Not at all: 1.1%

I have interacted with the MRU:

- Yes: 71%
- No: 29%

How would you rate your satisfaction with the MRU response?

- Very satisfied: 21%
- Satisfied: 45%
- Neutral: 33%
- Dissatisfied: 1%
- Very dissatisfied: 0%

Benefits of the Mediation Response Unit Identified by the Dayton Police Department

From the interviews and surveys significant benefit to both the participants and the police were identified:

- **System integration:** The MRU was fully integrated into the police world, being “on our system, on our radios, on our computers.” This instant inclusion was cited as the key factor that “won them over.” This also enabled dispatch to ensure the safety of MRU staff, allaying another concern.
- **Officer buy-in:** Initially, there was skepticism, especially during the “defund the police” protests. However, the consistent success of the MRU in “taking work away from the cops” on non-violent calls converted officers. If the MRU were eliminated, officers “would actually defend them as an organization” because it reduces their workload. The MRU helps reduce the number of calls that the police are unable to respond to.
- **Time savings:** Patrol officers run up to 85% of their 10-hour shift on calls. Having the MRU “take the extra 20–30 minutes whatever it is and fix the problem” gives officers a vital “five minutes to take a breath”—a “huge win” on a nonstop shift. Specifically, officers spend less time responding to non-criminal calls, can rapidly respond to high-priority calls, have more time to re-center before the next serious call, and have more time to build strategies to address crime patterns.
- From a systems perspective, police responses highlight a secondary but significant impact of the MRU: the creation of relational and operational space within the first responder system. By taking time-intensive, non-criminal calls, the MRU enables officers to reallocate attention to higher-priority situations while reducing cumulative stress and reactive policing. This redistribution of labor supports safer, more intentional decision-making across the system and reinforces the MRU’s role as a complementary, best-fit response rather than a replacement for law enforcement.

I am grateful for the Mediation Response Unit and the City’s demonstrated commitment to service within our community. This innovative, forward-thinking approach ensures that the appropriate municipal resources are deployed where they are most effective, while allowing police officers to focus on addressing serious and violent offenses. It is a model that other cities should strongly consider adopting.

Kamran Afzal
Director and Chief of Police, City of Dayton

Internal Question 3: Evaluation Capacity Building

To what degree is the MRU building capacity for reflection, learning, monitoring and evaluation?

This question focused on building the MRU's internal capacity to reflect, to learn, and monitor and evaluate the program and adapt it as needed. The weekly meetings of the MRU team utilize reflective practice, incorporate case review, and use the database for case tracking and follow-up. The FileMaker Pro database is used by staff staff/mediators to manage cases more comprehensively and streamline and track follow-up activities.

Internal Question 3: Evaluation Capacity Building			
Data Type	Data Collection & Analysis	Outcomes	Indicators
Information and documents from MRU staff about the process used to reflect on their activities in the field and to review cases	Document review materials related reflective practice and FMP cases	Observed shifts in the readiness capacity of the MRU for evaluation	Willingness of organization to commit resources to evaluation and monitoring
Interviews with staff, partners, and key stakeholders	Interviews with key stakeholders	Development of processes and protocol for ongoing use of the case management system	Building upon reflective practice toward organizational learning
		M&E plan is created and understood	

Internal Question 4: Consistency in Meeting Goals

How well the MRU is aligning with its Theory of Change?

The two parts to this question were goal-focused: one looked at the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set annually as part of the budget process; the second asked about consistency with the MRU's Theory of Change.

Based upon the surveys and interviews with participants, partners, and police, the MRU is doing what it was designed to do. The MRU has been on track to meet the newly established 2025 KPI goals, despite challenges with the database and case definitions.

The MRU staff and Evaluation Team members developed a Theory of Change that shows Transformative Conflict Theory as the cornerstone of the MRU's work. The Transformative framework has been shown to be essential to the success of the MRU, as demonstrated by the grounding in transformative practice in MRU staff training, practice, and reflective case review.

Internal Question 4: Consistency in Meeting Goals			
Data Type	Data Collection & Analysis	Outcomes	Indicators
Interviews	Interviews with staff, participants, stakeholders, and partners	Responses over time	Overall satisfaction with the MRU express by individuals and across groups
Surveys		KPI comparatives	
KPI data (See Appendices G and H)	Qualitative data analysis using inductive and deductive coding.	Change # of calls from the same	Consistently meeting KPIs.
Observations	Surveys of participants, neighborhood groups, and police.	#New questions on 2025 survey, observations	"Listening," "Kindness" mentioned by participants.
	Qualitative data analysis using inductive and deductive coding.	To what extent did you feel heard, were you respected, did you have choice, a clear direction	
	Revision and explication of the MRU Theory of Change		

Stakeholders Individual and Group Interviews

During May, June, and July 2025, individual and group interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved with the creation and operation of the Mediation Response Unit (MRU); community partners; DMC and MRU staff. This summary highlights the successes, challenges, insights, and recommendations from these interviews.

Successes

The MRU has been instrumental in improving customer service by addressing calls that the police might not have been able to get to promptly. This has reduced the workload on police officers and improved customer service and community relations.

The MRU has successfully diverted calls from the police, allowing officers to focus on higher-priority tasks.

The positive feedback from the community and the police indicates that the MRU is seen as a valuable resource.

Concerns around the safety of the MRU responders were allayed over time and attributed to the use of the dispatch radio system for monitoring.

Challenges

There is a need for greater awareness, understanding, and use of the MRU among the community, to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of the MRU's services

Staff turnover and training were identified as areas that were addressed as part of program evolution.

Handling mental health calls remains a challenge for the community.

Sustainability and scalability are concerns, as the program requires substantial resources to operate effectively.

Recommendations

Expand operational hours: Several interviewees suggested expanding the MRU's operational hours to cover evenings and weekends. This would allow the MRU to better meet community needs and provide support during times when incidents may be more likely to occur.

Integrate with other city services: To create a more holistic approach to community safety and well-being, consider integrating the MRU more closely with other city services and departments, especially alternative programs such as fire and behavioral health. This could involve regular coordination meetings, shared resources, and joint training and initiatives to address community issues comprehensively and ensure seamless cooperation among different responders.

Enhance community awareness and engagement: To address the need for better awareness and understanding of the MRU among the community and stakeholders, consider implementing targeted outreach and education campaigns. This could include community meetings, informational brochures, and social media engagement to ensure that the community is well-informed about the MRU's services and benefits.

Leverage technology and data: Explore the potential for using technology and data to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the MRU. This could include implementing data analytics to identify trends and hotspots, using mobile apps for real-time reporting and communication, and leveraging social media for community engagement.

Continuous feedback and improvement: Establish a system for continuous feedback and improvement by regularly soliciting input from the community, stakeholders, and MRU staff. This will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the MRU remains responsive to the needs of the community.

By considering these recommendations, the MRU can build on its successes, address challenges, and continue to provide valuable services to the community.

Definitions of Success

- Success was **defined differently by each stakeholder**
- Initially skeptical, but now sees the MRU as **working as intended**.
- Success = **reduction in dispatcher burden** and better allocation of police resources.

Increasing Access Through Technology

How Propio made a significant difference in helping the Mediation Center assist a community member

Yesterday, someone called our main line seeking help for their friend, who speaks Kinyarwanda. The friend had been the victim of a crime, injured, transported to the hospital, and later discharged. During the incident, his belongings, including his cell phone, wallet (with ID, cards, and money), and other essential documents, were taken as evidence. This happened on December 26th, and as of yesterday, he still had not recovered his items. He was understandably confused and distressed, especially because his wallet contained critical documents for both him and his wife.

Our case manager quickly stepped in and asked the Mediation Response Unit (MRU) to deliver a food box to the man and his family. The MRU then dedicated several hours to helping him gather enough details, with the help of Propio, to locate his belongings.

After numerous calls to three police departments and dispatch, we finally determined who had his items and where they were. Thanks to our established relationships with the hospital, DPD, and MCSO, we were able to navigate the system, gather information about his case, and retrieve his belongings.

This morning, we successfully returned his wallet and cell phone. After three weeks without them, he can now purchase food for his family and access their important documents. The relief and gratitude he expressed were immeasurable.

This experience reinforced just how challenging it can be to navigate these systems, especially for community members who don't speak English. It also emphasized the critical role Propio plays in ensuring we can communicate effectively and provide timely support.

The MRU has served people speaking 11 different languages through one in-person interpretation and 143 calls.

- **Workflow optimization and practical integration** into the dispatch system — a big win for police department.
- Success = **fewer charges, less detention, and restored relationships**, especially among youth.
- Success isn't just fewer 911 calls, but long-term **relationship restoration**, trust-building, and even **invisible prevention** of future incidents.
- Success is around **healing, education, prevention, and family empowerment** — making the justice system more humane.
- **Mediation transforms**ing emotional and social dynamics, not just legal outcomes.
- Impact to customer service, community

Measuring Success

The MRU's Key Performance Indicators serve distinct but related functions. Some indicators track operational performance and system integration; others support developmental learning and program

refinement; and others signal transformative impact on participants and the community. Together, these measures provide a more complete picture of effectiveness than any single category alone.

Proposed nuanced **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** such as:

- Referrals that result in transformative mediation
- Reduction in **repeat conflicts** or calls
- Increased awareness and willingness to use MRU
- Human connection vs. tech-only outreach (e.g., texting vs. personal calls)
- MRU's ability to **selectively pick calls**
- **Time-on-task per call**, ensuring proper attention
- **System tweaks** that improve fit with existing police/dispatch protocols
- **Diversion of cases from the justice system**, especially for: Domestic/family conflict, School-related issues, Juvenile "unruly" behavior.
- Communication strategy: who needs to know and how do we communicate it?
- Success includes observable shifts in participant agency, emotional regulation, and decision-making capacity during and after MRU engagement, consistent with the goals of transformative conflict intervention.

Notable Insights:

- "I definitely think this is working the way it was designed."
- "The community doesn't understand... I was so excited [about MRU] — it's perfect for our kids instead of getting them charged."
- Focusing on the future: "potential training measures that could ensure seamless cooperation among different responders" (adding behavioural health).
- One of the hardest things for community mediation is the absence of conflict. "How do you measure peace?"

The MRU saves tax money and police time by handling conflicts that aren't crimes. Many officers in the community now rely on the MRU. **Integration with first responders was key to MRU's success.** A police representative says putting the MRU "in our world" (on their radio system, computers, doing ride-alongs) was crucial for getting buy-in from cops, fire, and dispatch. They were initially skeptical, especially during the "defund the police" protests, but now cops actually defend the MRU because it takes a workload off of them. **The MRU is viewed as just another "crew number" for services** by officers, not as a replacement for police. **The perfect world would have 4 or 5 different responder groups** (Police, Fire, Mediation/Conflict Response, Mental Health, and Social Services/Drug Abuse) all working in the same "world" and picking the best tool for the job. **Mental health integration is still a challenge** for alternate response programs because they tend to be outside the existing first responder system and police are reluctant to wait 30-40 minutes for them to show up. The MRU succeeded by integrating deeply.

External/Relationships

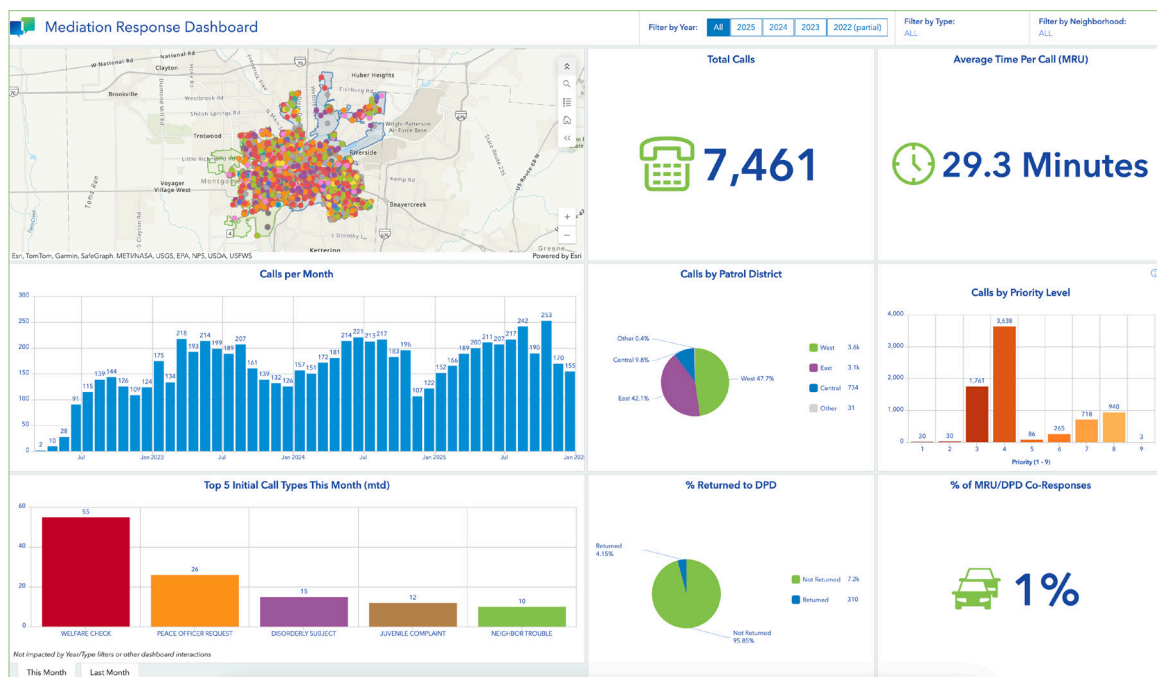
External Question 1: Effectiveness in addressing community needs

How is the community experiencing the MRU? To what degree is the MRU increasing access to alternatives to policing by community members (by demographic or geographic area?)?

The MRU has increased access to alternatives to policing by community members across the City of Dayton, as evidenced by the distribution of cases shown on the MRU Dashboard (access the Dashboard by going to the [MRU homepage](#) and clicking on View Dashboard). Neither the dashboard nor other data collected identify barriers to use or usage by underserved/marginalized groups.

External Question 1: Effectiveness in Addressing Community Needs

Data Type	Data Collection & Analysis	Outcomes	Indicators
LEAP Community Responder Report, impact analysis Neighborhood Association survey Business survey Citywide survey Social media surveys	Surveys and interviews of neighborhood groups, partners	MRU Dashboard	The map on the MRU dashboard shows even distribution of cases across the city.



External Question 2: Participants

How are participants experiencing the MRU? How effectively do MRU activities address the presenting/core issues in each case?

The combination of field responses, case management efforts, and mediation sessions created favorable experiences for participants, despite the challenging circumstances. Connecting participants to resources added value. Follow-up calls were appreciated, and a shift to direct Center calls is happening.

MRU Participant Surveys

External Question 2: Participants			
Data Type	Data Collection & Analysis	Outcomes	Indicators
2022–23 and 2024–25 participant surveys	Analysis outcomes of field responses, case management efforts, and mediation sessions.	Results across all survey types show and appreciation for the MRU.	Positive responses to surveys (text and phone) and interviews show the MRU’s value. Negative responses have resulted in improvements/changes to MRU operations, where appropriate.
Citywide survey			
Lived-experience interviews			
911 text survey	Literature review		
Information on Implementation Science			

Two phone surveys with MRU participants have been conducted: one in 2022–2023 and the other during 2025. The 2025 survey duplicated the questions from the first survey, and incorporated questions focusing on participants’ experiences with transformative practice: “Felt Heard,” “Felt Supported,” and “Clear About Next Steps.” This provided a more structured way to assess specific aspects of the participants’ experience.

Within a transformative framework, these indicators represent meaningful evidence of impact. Feeling heard and supported reflects a restoration of voice, while clarity about next steps reflects renewed choice and self-determination. Together, these shifts signal movement away from crisis-driven interaction toward more constructive engagement, even when underlying issues remain unresolved. These findings suggest that MRU interventions are functioning as intended: supporting human interaction under stress without directing outcomes or imposing solutions.

The timing of the surveys’ administration varied: the first survey captured most of the participants during the pilot phase of the MRU, within six months of their experience with the MRU. The second process also surveyed those who had used the MRU within the prior six months, and has evolved into weekly follow-up calls. This not only resulted in a greater response rate, but also served as a check-in with participants. The MRU team is considering whether to continue to check-in with participants via text or phone calls by volunteer mediators. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan incorporates an annual point-in-time phone survey of MRU participants.

Comparison and Key Differences

- Both surveys indicated a generally positive sentiment towards the MRU, with high ratings for helpfulness and likelihood to recommend. Quick response times were also consistently highlighted as a positive aspect in both years, though some respondents in both surveys noted issues with delayed responses or a desire for quicker follow-ups.
- A recurring theme across both surveys is respondents expressing frustration when the MRU couldn't enforce rules or when issues persisted after their intervention. This has been identified as part of determining the types of cases that are the "best fit" for the MRU.
- Similarly, both surveys show a preference for the MRU's calm and less aggressive approach compared to traditional police responses, although some respondents still felt police intervention was necessary for some issues.
- Follow-up was explicitly mentioned as an area for improvement in the 2022 survey and was also noted as a missed opportunity by a respondent in the 2025 sample, suggesting that it remains an area for consistent improvement. This feedback resulted in a change in MRU practice regarding communication with participants, particularly in situations regarding neighborhood conflicts such as noise; this is an indicator of both evaluation capacity and developmental-evaluation practice.
- A notable difference is that the 2025 survey includes more specific examples of situations (e.g., music continuing, animal issues, persons in crisis), providing more granular insights into the MRU's impact in various scenarios.

Recommendations

- **Address specific situations with tailored approaches:** Given the 2025 survey's more granular feedback on specific situations (e.g., music complaints, animal issues, persons in crisis), future surveys could include questions that delve deeper into the MRU's effectiveness in these varied scenarios. This will help in developing more tailored and effective responses. This would also be coordinated with the deeper-dive of the lived-experience interviews.
- **Continue transformative practice questions:** The "Felt Heard," "Felt Supported," and "Clear About Next Steps" questions in the 2025 survey provide valuable structured feedback. These should be maintained and potentially expanded to cover other aspects of the respondents' experience that contribute to overall satisfaction and perceived effectiveness, as well as evidence of transformative conflict-intervention theory in practice.
- **Gather more detail on "worse" and "same" police comparisons:** While many respondents prefer the MRU, understanding the specific reasons behind "worse" or "the same" comparisons to traditional police responses can provide insights into areas where the MRU might need to refine its approach or where police intervention remains essential.
- **Incorporate demographics:** Future surveys could explore specific needs and challenges related to different demographics, particularly youth and individuals in crisis, and how the MRU and the City of Dayton can better serve them.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Periodic comparisons of these data with results of the DPD 911 surveys, the Dayton city-wide survey, and lived-experience interviews are incorporated into the M&E Plan.

Participant Post-911 Text Survey — Dayton Police Department 911

Following each 911 response, the Dayton Police Department (DPD) sends a brief text survey to the caller. This includes all MRU responses. Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were 163 comments that mentioned the MRU.

The DPD text survey responses parallel those of the participant phone surveys, indicating satisfaction with the MRU and confirming the ongoing challenges of identifying the best-fit responses. Comments have included the following:

- The two young women from the Mediation Center were caring and helpful. Response time was excellent.
- The staff was very polite and calm with me, I didn't feel rushed while talking
- The mediator team were very helpful and I will be meeting with them again to resolve my issue
- Everyone was so kind
- We had mediation come to assist in getting in a house and the responders were very helpful and professional. They gave me phone numbers of who to call to try to find my deceased ex husbands property. Everything went as smoothly as possible and kudos to them. I can't remember their names
- Didn't know of the Mediation Team. They were great and diffused the situation more than if police had shown up.
- I wish to COMMEND the Mediation Team Staff for addressing my concerns. I have settled the issue personally between my Neighbor downstairs and I. Although I no longer need to use this option, it is good for the Community to be AWARE that this Department is striving for Neighbors to address their problems between themselves. That is Community Based Policing in ACTION.

Trash Can Interpretations

Allison and Josh responded to a neighbor dispute involving an elderly woman and a newly arrived immigrant family across the street. The family, who only spoke Swahili, consistently had parties that accumulated so much trash they had to use the neighbors once theirs was full.

The trash was stinky! The reporting person was a ten in anger. Tossing trash into her can made her feel frustrated and disrespected.

We approached the family, using Propio One, the phone interpreter service to explain the concern and offer a chance to speak directly with the neighbor. The mother of the household was excited for the opportunity to converse with her new neighbor.

We facilitated a conversation at the edge of the driveway. It became clear there was a cultural difference in expectations — as the family believed that trash cans were communal. Once this was explained, the mother started crying. She was so embarrassed for having offended her neighbor and ensured that it would never happen again.

The elderly woman's tone softened, and the conversation ended with a hug between the two.

Comments regarding the best-fit response included the following:

- I needed the police not a meditation response unit.
- The mediators were very helpful but my neighbors are harassing us walking in our driveway whenever they feel like it and now the teens are throwing trash in our yard, which I caught on our security cameras. I refuse to allow them to take over. And although this isn't a police matter, I believe police presence at their door may deter their activity of trespassing and harassment. IMHO I do appreciate the mediators and the service they offer. Thank you! :-)

External 3: Partners

How are partners experiencing the MRU: helpful? benefits experienced?

The MRU works with inbound referral partners (e.g., shelters, soup kitchens, libraries, cultural centers) and outbound referral partners (e.g., intimate partner violence hotlines, shelters, outpatient MH support), and makes referrals for further support in areas that are not in its domain area.

Some partners identified deep relationships with the MRU, building upon the Center's history.

External Question 3: Partners			
Data Type	Data Collection & Analysis	Outcomes	Indicators
Group and individual interviews	Transcript review and analysis	Partners know of the MRU and appreciate the services. They both refer to and receive referrals from the MRU.	The MRU builds and expands the DMC's 37 years of experience and trust with partners, and has resulted in new or expanded partnerships with providers such as Goodwill.
Surveys	Survey analyses, comparisons		
		Partners identified areas of further need beyond the MRU	

Community Partner Perspectives

A group of community partners met over lunch to share their experiences with and hopes for the MRU. Participants included representatives from the Dayton Library and Easter Seals, a group home manager, a dialysis provider, and the DMC's juvenile court mediation program coordinator.

The relaxed-format group interview allowed community partners to share their perspectives and experiences with the MRU. One highlight was that the transformative mediation approach is valued for its restorative, non-judgmental intervention, focusing on "voice and choice" for community members.

Value and Impact

The group identified numerous ways in which the MRU has had a positive impact.

- **Alternative to 911:** Success stories of the MRU's involvement in de-escalation, transporting individuals to hospitals, and life-saving interventions in medical emergencies highlight a positive shift from relying solely on 911.
- **Transformative model:** The mediation approach is valued for its restorative justice and healing model, contrasting with the court system. It focuses on non-judgmental, neutral third-party intervention and helping people come to their own decisions ("voice and choice").
- **Client linkages and social work:** The group agreed that the MRU is critical in linking vulnerable clients (the elderly, those who are unhoused, and those facing eviction) to necessary social services. Jeanette, a social worker from Goodwill Easter Seals working with the MRU, provides comprehensive follow-up assistance that includes linkage to services (setting up behavioral health appointments and connecting clients with housing), basic needs (providing access to a clothing closet, a food pantry, and facilities where clients can shower), and transportation (providing or coordinating transportation for clients to reach needed services).

Navigating Denial, Trust, and Housing Transition

John had lived in his apartment for over 35 years. He was completely blind, dealing with chronic health conditions, and struggling with untreated mental health issues. His entire sense of autonomy was built on knowing how to move through that space. He didn't just live there — he memorized every corner, every path. That apartment was his orientation to the world.

When we met John, he was on the brink of eviction. Without intervention, he would have ended up on the street or in the shelter system — which, frankly, would have been devastating for someone with his needs.

From the beginning, the situation was emotionally charged. John was furious — not just upset, but deeply angry. Angry at the property manager. Angry at the process. Angry at the idea that anyone could take this space from him.

But underneath the anger was fear. And a kind of refusal to accept what was happening. He kept telling us, "I'll just go back to my apartment." It became clear that he was in denial — and that denial was protecting him from total collapse.

What helped shift things, eventually, was slowing the whole situation down. Instead of pushing decisions or talking at him, we made space to explain — again and again — what was happening, and what the immediate consequences were.

We were careful to be clear and concrete: "The bailiff is coming tomorrow." "This apartment is no longer an option."

That clarity — repeated with patience — created just enough ground for us to introduce the idea of a referral. We asked if he'd be open to talking to Jeanette, a caseworker we trust. We explained who she was and what she could offer, and asked again later, when his answer was unclear. Eventually, he said yes. But even then, we had to keep circling back to the reality of his situation, because he would revert to thinking he could return to his apartment.

It wasn't a straight line. He needed time, consistency, and choices — not pressure. We presented what his options were, made them manageable, and kept walking through them with him until he could really hear them.

And then, with support from our whole team — including Josh — we physically helped him move. We walked with him through every part of the transition. Not just the logistics, but the emotional shift of leaving the only place he knew, and entering a new environment he couldn't yet imagine.

Today, John is in assisted living. He has the care he needs. It wasn't the path he wanted — but it's one he's settled into. And more importantly, it's one he had agency in choosing, even under pressure. That was our goal: to help him stay in the center of the decision, even as the ground was shifting under him.

- **Juvenile diversion:** The unit is essential for the juvenile diversion system, offering mediation referrals from the juvenile court for low-level offenses. This helps keep youth out of the criminal justice system by bringing mediation directly to under-resourced families at their location.
- **Pre-eviction intervention:** The ability to intervene in eviction cases before they reach the courts is seen as an ideal way to help vulnerable people avoid becoming unhoused.
- **Keeping kids out of the system:** The case manager for the juvenile diversion program uses MRU for mediation referrals from the juvenile court for children with low-level offenses. The goal is to bring mediation directly to the family where they are located, which is "just another step and making sure that kids don't get criminal charges on their record."
- **Specific life-saving intervention:** A partner referenced a blind man who was being evicted downtown. MRU members were able to "intervene very fast" so the man "has a long life now" due to the collaborative effort between mediation, Goodwill, and others.

- **Community trust and direct community access:** The community, particularly women of color, quickly built a relationship with the MRU and started to call the MRU number directly, bypassing the police, because “the fact that they’re being heard by somebody else is huge.”
- **Mediation and training:** The role of mediation units was compared to co-responder models, stressing the importance of trust-building, confidentiality, and proper training for mediators in a transformative framework, including skills like listening and conflict coaching.
- The key benefit of the MRU compared to patrol officers, according to the police representative, is the **MRU’s ability to take the time to “fix the problem.”** This is highlighted by the fact that the MRU can spend **20–30 extra minutes** on a call, whereas patrol officers are “running constantly” and spend **75–85% of their shift on calls**, meaning they don’t have the time to dedicate to resolving non-crime issues. The MRU takes that workload off the police.

Mediation in the Midst of Family Crisis

Responding to a vague welfare check, MRU arrived at a family home in deep crisis. Inside were two parents, their adult daughter with a baby, and a nonverbal, severely autistic child who was visibly distressed — shaking on the floor.

Everyone in the family was in conflict with each other: the daughter had physically assaulted her mother; the father was angry at the daughter; and the mother, despite injuries, was defending her daughter.

Initially, they all insisted, “This is a private matter,” and refused mediation. By remaining calm, and using reflection, we helped reduce the emotional intensity. Without realizing it, the family began to engage in a guided conversation, allowing them to hear each other in new ways.

Layers of tension emerged — past domestic violence, unresolved trauma, and fear of losing contact with the grandchild.

First we developed a safety plan by identifying where the daughter and her baby would go to for the day. This relieved the parents enough to discuss their own issues. At which point, they were standing nose to nose yelling from the top of their lungs. Mediators matched their intensity until eventually the people calmed down.

By the end, the family was expressing gratitude, offering hugs and fist bumps — thankful it was MRU that responded and not police. They didn’t need arrests or judgment. They needed to be heard, understood, and supported through one of their most difficult moments.

Challenges and Future Expansion

- **The discussion highlighted several areas for growth and improvement for the MRU.**
- **Expanded coverage:** Stakeholders expressed a desire for expanded hours, days, and locations to increase accessibility across the community.
- **Proactive eviction prevention:** A key goal is for the MRU to intervene in eviction cases before they are finalized, potentially by having an office near the court bailiff, to help vulnerable people avoid becoming unhoused.
- **Increased public awareness:** There is an ongoing need for community education to:
 - Promote the MRU and its status as the “first in the country.”
 - Let the public know they can call the MRU directly instead of 911.
 - Increase awareness among other key stakeholders, like doctor’s offices, of MRU’s availability for welfare checks.
- **Mental health component:** Participants noted that many calls have a mental health component. While the MRU is not a mental health unit, a clearer protocol for connecting clients to specialists or better integration with existing services is needed to avoid police delays. Members noted the need for a robust mental health component, whether through a specialized unit or better integration with existing services that can quickly come on-scene and take over a crisis without causing police delays.
- **Foster/group home issues:** Case managers reported that staff feel constrained regarding children who are Absent Without Leave (AWOL). Legally, a child has the right to leave regardless of their age, which creates safety challenges, especially for younger children, with staff essentially powerless to stop them.
- **Eviction cases:** The MRU could help with eviction cases by intervening before people are put on the street.
- **Staffing challenges:** A related discussion mentioned the difficulty of hiring and retaining staff in crisis response roles, underscoring the need for competitive pay, supportive environments, and thorough vetting.
- **Specialized response system:** The ultimate vision is a comprehensive first responder system with 4–5 distinct, integrated tracks of expertise: Police, Fire/Medical, Mediation/Conflict Response, Mental Health, and Social Services, ensuring that the best-suited resource is dispatched to any given call.
- **Services:** Group participants, particularly Jeanette (who facilitates the DDI program and social work follow-ups for MRU referrals), emphasized the importance of linking MRU clients to internal and external services like showering facilities, clothing closets, pantries, and behavioral health appointments. This follow-up is critical for clients, especially the elderly and those facing eviction or homelessness.
- **Community awareness and education:** Several participants noted the ongoing need for broader community education and outreach about the MRU’s existence, its services, its direct phone number (which can be called instead of 911), and the value of mediation as a conflict resolution tool.
- **Welfare check:** Members noted the importance of having a non-police response to concerns regarding clients and family members.

This section is directed toward national audiences, including community mediation centers, alternative response programs, policymakers, and researchers interested in replication or adaptation of the MRU model. It highlights lessons learned, enabling conditions, and structural barriers relevant to other jurisdictions.

External 4: National

What are lessons learned from the MRU that can be shared with others?

Lessons Learned, Recommendations, Barriers

The evaluation highlighted some of the lessons learned:

- The importance of having CAD access.
- How to approach engagement with clients in the field to increase chances of having a positive reception and outcome: transformative grounding.
- Being able to self-dispatch, which increases volume.
- Identifying “best fit” cases.
- Strong relationships of trust with the police, City, partners, and community.
- Feeling and being safe: dispatch radio monitoring.
- Flexibility and adaptability as key outcomes emerge.
- Ongoing data collection and analysis.
- Reflective practice.

Recommendations included:

- Sustain and expand MRU hours with attention to second-shift awareness
- Refine “best-fit” call definitions with dispatch and police
- Improve data precision, especially outcomes beyond satisfaction
- Increase community awareness outside police channels
- Protect transformative mediation integrity as MRU grows
- Invest in staff wellness and retention
- Prepare a national-facing companion brief
- Continue lived-experience interviews, adding demographic and other characteristics
- Identify and meet with targeted groups (e.g., Black LGBTQ+) for outreach and data
- Develop feedback loops to share results with callers, funders, and participants

Barriers to other community mediation centers or jurisdictions creating a program like the MRU include the unique structure of the Dayton Mediation Center within municipal government, the history of positive relationships, the Transformative framework, and the implementation and operational costs.

MRU staff and partners have presented at several conferences and workshops and are building an agenda for further dissemination of information.

- 2025 Convening: Advancing the Field of Alternative Response, Policing Project, NYU Law, Georgetown Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety, and Alternative Mobile Services Association (AMSA)
- June 9–10 2025 Alternative Mobile Services Association Virtual Conference
- National Mediation Conference 2025 Sydney, Australia

Impact Evaluation

What is the long-term impact of the MRU? What is the long-term impact of the MRU on communities of color?

An assessment of the impact of the MRU is multi-faceted and will require additional time and data. This is also true for determining the degree to which the MRU is reducing unnecessary or negative interactions with police, keeping people alive, and addressing structural racism. It has been noted, however, that every 911 response by the MRU eliminates the possibility of negative police interactions.

Investigations into two areas — arrests and use of force — garnered insufficient data to be significant. LEAP is conducting a quantitative impact evaluation, with findings anticipated in early 2026.

Since the City of Dayton is to a large degree racially segregated, geography has been used as a proxy for race when looking at the distribution of cases. Participant demographics should be collected in surveys and interviews going forward. A local university has been identified as a possible research partner to continue participant surveys and lived-experience interviews.

Other possible areas of exploration include increasing trust; how public systems provide useful help; and decreasing loneliness, despair, and entrenched conflict.

Across methods and data sources, the evaluation findings converge on a central conclusion: the MRU is working as intended and filling a critical gap in the public safety response system. By treating conflict as a relational and developmental moment rather than a problem requiring enforcement, the MRU offers a model that is both effective and humane. The lessons emerging from this evaluation provide a strong foundation for continued refinement, deeper impact assessment, and knowledge-sharing with other jurisdictions seeking to build mediation-centered alternatives to policing.

CHAPTER FIVE

Mediation Response Unit Research Partners

The MRU evaluation benefitted from the nation-wide interest in the program. Several notable universities, and organizations, students, and scholars have included the MRU in their work. Since most of these relationships were in place before the evaluation, the design was adapted to incorporate their expertise. Data-sharing and confidentiality agreements were executed where appropriate.

1. Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI), School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University; an initiative that focuses on community safety and de-escalation.

A key learning for the MRU is that the commonly accepted concept of de-escalation — which is dominant in the alternatives-to-policing world — is not how the Center views their interactions. Instead, the MRU is working with the concept of “diffusion,” building upon Transformative conflict theory.

2. Center for Innovations in Community Safety, Georgetown University Law Center

Key Informant Interview Protocol — Program Staff

Key Informant Interview Protocol — Program Leadership

Advancing the Field of Alternative Response, 2025 Convening

Ongoing research by the CICS includes cost-benefit analyses and hiring/staffing protocols.

3. Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)

MRU LEAP Initial Findings

LEAP-Dayton MRU Analysis Proposal

LEAP was instrumental in the inception of the MRU and continues to study aspects of the program, including “best fit” cases and arrests. Unfortunately, their data did not show any change in arrests in Dayton attributable to the MRU.

4. Dignity Best Practices (DBP)

Participant Perspective Survey

DBP contractor Margo Kulkarni developed, piloted, and conducted the lived-experience interviews. DBP also assisted the development of the MRU and created an implementation toolkit, found [here](#).

5. Evidence for Action

A study examining alternatives to policing from a health-equity perspective, Evidence for Action had its activities embargoed by the federal government.

6. Other

In addition to these formal partnerships, representatives from Evanston, IL, Washtenaw County, MI, and Oklahoma City, OK, and doctoral students in anthropology and political science are researching the MRU.

Just wrapped an incredible site visit with the Dayton Mediation Center, specifically their Mediation Response Unit (MRU), and we are still energized by what this team has built.

The MRU is one of the most thoughtful, community-centered approaches to alternative responses we've seen. Their responders bring deep skill in conflict resolution, de-escalation, and connection, meeting people with dignity at moments of crisis. What struck out the most was how naturally they weave mediation principles into real-time crisis response by helping neighbors, families, and community members navigate conflict without enforcement, without escalation, and with a real path forward.

Dayton is proving that when you trust communities, invest in people with lived and professional expertise, and build systems rooted in care, you can transform outcomes. Their model is a testament to what's possible when cities center healing and communication as first response tools.

Grateful to the entire Dayton team and the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office 911 Dispatch Center for their openness, their brilliance, and their commitment to this work.

Mariela Ruiz-Angel, Director of Alternative Response Initiatives,
Georgetown Law's Center for Innovations in Community Safety

CHAPTER SIX

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

This monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan outlines the approach to systematically track and assess the activities, outputs, and initial outcomes of the Mediation Response Unit (MRU), leading to an understanding of the MRU's impact. The plan aims to ensure the MRU is operating effectively, identify areas for improvement, and inform ongoing evaluation efforts.

1. Reflective Practice and Grounding in Transformative Theory

- **Objective:** Incorporate reflective practice and transformative framework
- **Monitoring Activities**
 - Document the reflective practice framework used with responders.
 - Explore including guiding questions and tools for reflective practice in the evaluation process
- **Metrics:** Documentation of reflective practice, integration of guiding questions
- **Frequency:** weekly
- **Who:** MRU Supervisor and MRU Team

2. Case Activity Tracking and Outcomes

- **Objective:** Track case activities and outcomes.
- **Monitoring Activities**
 - Ensure responders start recording outcomes for each case activity
 - Focus on forward-looking data entry for case activities and outcomes.
 - Monitor to ensure that case outcomes are logged when cases are closed.
- **Metrics:** Percentage of cases with recorded outcomes, completeness of activity data.
- **Frequency:** weekly
- **Who:** MRU Supervisor and MRU Team

3. Data Reporting and Reconciliation

- **Objective:** Identify and address any data reporting discrepancies and ensure accurate case numbers.
- **Monitoring Activities**
 - Review and reconcile weekly reports from CAD and FMP
 - Monitor adjustments to data to exclude non-public interactions (e.g., staff meetings, lunch breaks) to resolve case number discrepancies.
 - Review dashboard data
- **Metrics:** Accuracy of case numbers in reports, resolution of data discrepancies, progress on FileMaker Pro dashboard integration.
- **Frequency:** weekly
- **Who:** MRU Supervisor and MRU Team

4. Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Review

- **Objective:** Streamline evaluation processes and manage KPIs effectively.
- **Monitoring Activities**
 - Share quarterly KPIs with the MRU team and Advisory Board
 - Monitor the reconciliation of CAD data with FMP
 - Compare resolution rates over time
 - Monitor Case Types for Best Fit
- **Metrics:** KPIs comparisons - YTD, prior years
- **Frequency:** quarterly
- **Who:** DMC Director

5. Feedback: Participants, Partners (including DPD), Community

- **Objective:** Enhance participant, partner, and community satisfaction and strengthen relationships through timely follow-ups. Monitor the collection and analysis of feedback.
- **Monitoring Activities**
 - Monitor the value and frequency of follow-up calls regarding customer service and data collection.
 - Ensure follow-up calls and DPD text results are shared with MRU Supervisor and staff.
 - Track improvements in processes (e.g., addressing issues like noise complaints)
 - Incorporate evaluation component in outreach activities — police roll calls, neighborhood presentations. Collect and analyze data.
 - Partner with higher education to continue participant interviews.
 - Continue to collect narrative examples of cases.
 - Participants Lived Experience — annually
 - 911 text survey — per call
 - MRU text survey — per call

- **Metrics:** Participant satisfaction, follow-up calls, resolution rates, police and community awareness and feedback
- **Frequency**
 - DPD Roll Call: quarterly outreach, yearly survey
 - DPD Academy: outreach to each class
 - Neighborhood Groups: quarterly outreach, yearly survey
 - Neighbor Presidents Forum: yearly
 - Dayton residents: yearly survey put out on social media
 - Business associations: quarterly outreach, yearly survey
 - Outreach to and surveys of targeted groups: faith-based, LGBTQ+, disability, Black, Latino, immigrant: as scheduled
 - Questions/comments from Dashboard, Social Media, MRU/DMC website: as received
- **Who:** DMC Director and designated staff

6. Program Evaluation and Reporting Strategies

- **Objective:** Streamline program evaluation and reporting, and identify seasonal trends.
- **Monitoring Activities**
 - Compare seasonal data year-over-year to identify trends.
 - Incorporate monitoring in strategic planning
 - Report to Commission, Advisory Board
- **Metrics:** Identification of seasonal trends, completion of evaluation activity summary,
- **Who:** DMC Director, MRU Supervisor
- **Frequency:** Annually

This evaluation documents a mediation-based alternative response model that is operationally viable, theoretically grounded, and responsive to community needs. The MRU's continued success will depend on sustained investment, cross-system collaboration, and ongoing learning as the program evolves.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Focusing the Evaluation: Identifying the Purpose, Stakeholders, Objectives, and Key Questions

Purpose

The purposes of the evaluation included continued development and improvement of the MRU, community impact/long-term systemic change, and evaluation capacity building (evaluation as learning).

Stakeholders

The team listed the stakeholders for the evaluation along with questions of particular interest to them, looking at what each group might want to learn, who would be using the evaluation results, who might be affected by them, and how they might be affected.

Stakeholders	Questions
Primary stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community members• Participants• City of Dayton Leadership• Police Chief, police department• County Leadership• DMC, MRU staff• DMC, MRU volunteers• Partners- faith orgs, NPOs, educational institutions, mental health• Community engagement group/working groups/task force• Critics	<p>To what degree is the MRU increasing access to alternatives to policing by community members (by demographic or geographic area?)?</p> <p>How are partners experiencing the MRU: helpful? benefits experienced?</p> <p>How are participants experiencing the MRU?</p> <p>follow-up calls</p> <p>How is the community experiencing the MRU?</p> <p>awareness - 37 years</p> <p>barrier(s) to use</p> <p>awareness - marketing campaign - social media clicks, billboards</p> <p>Process</p> <p>To what extent is the MRU building capacity for responding to calls for service?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• challenges to building capacity• hiring/training

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and Existing MRU Staff: Mediation Response Specialists like Isaac Renner and Teliah Coleman, along with acting MRU Coordinator Aaron Primm, could provide insights on both fieldwork and case management. Their recent hiring suggests they may offer fresh perspectives on operational strengths and improvement areas. • Community Referral Sources and Police Representatives: Given the high referral numbers, community organizations, the Dayton Police Department, and entities involved in the Professional Standards Bureau complaint process are essential stakeholders. • Montgomery County Juvenile Court: With the recent contract renewal and the RECLAIM grant awarded, their perspective on MRU's role in supporting youth and family-related cases would be valuable. • Volunteer Mediators: Newly trained volunteers and part-time contractors like Carly Evans and Amber McCurdy should be included, as they could provide insights on volunteer recruitment, training quality, and the impact of volunteer contributions to MRU outcomes. • International and External Partners: Organizations involved in unique initiatives, such as the Bosnia-Herzegovina program, could offer insights on how the MRU's work translates to different contexts and how DMC's reputation and methodologies are perceived outside Dayton. 	<p>To what degree is the MRU being called out on calls that are not its call type, specifically mental health calls?</p> <p>What call types, fit with mediation, outcomes - basic assessment - what can we learn from that - are we doing what the program was designed to do.</p> <p>Best Fit</p> <p>How is the MRU operating in collaboration with the Police (police perceptions/relationships)?</p> <p>To what degree is the MRU building capacity for monitoring and evaluation? reflective practice -</p> <p>lower priority -What are the cost/benefits of the MRU to the City of Dayton?</p> <p>less contact with police, better alternatives</p> <p>What is the long-term impact of the MRU?</p> <p>-on communities of color?</p> <p>Effectiveness in Addressing Community Needs: Based on the impressive activity stats (2,352 referrals involving 3,887 participants and 3,582 case-related activities), the evaluation could measure how effectively MRU activities address the core issues in each case. This could include analyzing outcomes of field responses, case management efforts, and mediation sessions.</p> <p>Impact on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Since the MRU's KPIs are now trackable in detail through the new database, the evaluation could examine if these measures align with actual community outcomes. For example, does the data accurately reflect improvements in safety or reductions in conflict recurrence?</p> <p>addresses, duplicate addresses</p> <p>Database Utilization for Case Tracking: Since the FileMaker Pro system now allows tracking of case activities, an evaluation might assess the effectiveness of this new feature. Is it improving case outcomes or helping mediators manage cases more comprehensively?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • streamline, tracking <p>Long-Term Impact of Volunteer Training: Given the significant investment in volunteer training (14 new volunteers beginning apprenticeships), the evaluation could assess the effectiveness of this training pipeline. How do these volunteers contribute to the center's overall performance and quality of mediation services?</p> <p>Volunteers not doing MRU - pipeline to attracting people to the work - volunteers work with responders-</p> <p>MRU refers a case to the center -</p> <p>then, more direct calls</p> <p>Consistency in Meeting Goals: Evaluate how well the MRU is aligning with the theory of change and if the current trajectory allows for meeting 2025 goals, particularly for the newly established KPIs.</p>
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Secondary stakeholders NAFCM Other units of government Funders	What are the lessons learned from the MRU (that can be shared with others)? Implementation — Dignity’s Tool Kit
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Objectives

Objectives	Possible lines of inquiry/key questions
Hire and train transformative personnel; provide continuing education. What types of backgrounds and experiences are a best fit for the mediator-based alternative response?	How has the MRU impacted the police department? How have police complaints been affected by the MRU
Build relationships and collaborate with government and community organizations to improve a coordinated response for conflicted-related, non-violent situations	With what groups is the MRU collaborating and to what degree? What are their perspectives of the MRU?
Respond to MRU-appropriate calls from Regional Dispatch Center and direct call-ins Raise awareness through marketing and communication	To what degree is the MRU responding to appropriate calls? To what degree has awareness been raised through the awareness campaign?
R & D Mutual learning with other communities as a model for MRU services – need to describe impact to larger community regarding police relations	How is the MRU collaborating with other alternative programs?
Manage standard operating procedures, i.e., database, field response, CAD, etc. Regularly monitor activities via reports	How is the MRU managing operations? When, how, and what reports are generated and who monitors them?

APPENDIX B

Comparison of Mobile Response Unit (MRU) Survey Data

Two surveys regarding the Mobile Response Unit (MRU). While both surveys show generally positive sentiment, they highlight key differences in engagement and intervention rates.

	Police Roll Call, n=97	Neighborhood/Business Associations, n=88
Aware of how the MRU works		
Very much	54.6%	37.5%
Somewhat	44.3%	46.6%
Not at all	1.1%	15.9%
I have interacted with the MRU		
Yes	71%	30.7
No	29%	69.3
Overall satisfaction with MRU		
Very satisfied	21%	26.7
Satisfied	45%	36.7
Neutral	33%	21.7
Dissatisfied	1%	10
Very Dissatisfied	0	5

Metric	Neighborhood/Business Association Feedback (N=61/89)	Roll Call Survey Data (N=97)	Key Comparison Point
Overall Satisfaction	Strong: 63.9% were "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied." Most frequent ratings were "Neutral" (21) and "Satisfied" (21).	Strong: Approximately 66% were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied." Most frequent rating was "Satisfied" (44).	Satisfaction levels are comparably high in both groups (around two-thirds reported satisfaction).
Awareness / Assistance	High Awareness: 84.3% reported being "Very much" or "Somewhat" aware of how the MRU works.	High Assistance: Approximately 99% felt they were assisted "Very much" or "Somewhat."	Both surveys indicate a very positive perception, whether in general awareness or in direct experience of assistance.
Direct Use / Intervention	Low Direct Use: 68.5% of respondents indicated they have not interacted with the MRU.	High Intervention Rate: Approximately 71% of respondents answered 'Yes' when asked about an intervention.	This is the most significant difference. The Neighborhood/ Business feedback is largely based on general knowledge (low direct interaction), while the Roll Call data reflects a high rate of actual intervention, suggesting the Roll Call respondents are more likely to be direct users of the service.
Dissatisfaction	Very Low (Only 1.6% reported being "Dissatisfied").	Very Low (Only 1 respondent reported being "Dissatisfied," with no "Very Dissatisfied" responses).	Dissatisfaction is minimal in both survey groups.

APPENDIX C

Key Stakeholders

City of Dayton Commissioner, Chris Shaw

City of Dayton City Manager, Shelly Dickstein

City of Dayton Director of Planning, Neighborhoods & Development, Steven Gondol

Montgomery County, Ohio Sheriff's Office Dispatch- Jay Wheeler

City of Dayton Police Major Christopher Malson

Montgomery County Juvenile Court Administrator Tiffany Dulin

City of Dayton Fire Chief Andrew Braun

City of Dayton Policy Advisor to the City Manager, Erin Ritter

Staff of the Dayton Mediation Center and the Mediation Response Unity

APPENDIX D

MRU Participant Perspectives — 2025

Margo Kulkarni

Background

This work was conducted as part of a collaboration between Margo Kulkarni, researcher working on behalf of Dignity Best Practices, and Dr. Jeanne Zimmer, lead of the Dayton Mediation Response Unit's 2024–2025 evaluation. It builds on work done in 2022–2023 by team members in Dayton, who conducted approximately 60 surveys with people about their experiences using MRU services.

Goals

- **Understand what matters to a participant when thinking about an MRU visit:** What makes an interaction with the MRU successful or valuable from a participant's perspective?
- **Understand how the participant felt about their specific interaction(s) with the MRU:** This may include specific parts of the interaction, e.g., the 911 call, the arrival, what happened when the MRU arrived, and what happened after the MRU left.
- **Understand which factors contributed to that feeling:** e.g., something the team did, something the other person/people in conflict did, something about the situation.
- **Understand what the impact of that interaction was beyond the visit itself, if any.**

Transformative Conflict Theory in Action

The Dayton Mediation Center practices Transformative Mediation (see this [video](#) for an introduction), and that approach informed our effort to gather participant perspectives and understand the program's impacts.

Specifically, we implemented this approach by:

1. **Using statements or questions that center the internal experience of the participant** rather than the role of the responder (e.g., "I felt heard," "I felt listened to," "I knew what my next steps were." See [Phone Survey](#)).
2. **Allocating additional time and space for participants to direct the conversation and share whatever they felt moved to, beyond just the question being asked.** This allowed us to get a much richer sense of participants' experiences, in their own words. In the surveys, this

meant incorporating open-ended questions and having free text boxes after every question for surveyors to collect additional thoughts shared. It also meant allocating sufficient buffer time for a five-minute survey to turn into a 20-minute conversation for those who chose to speak more.

3. **Keeping an ear out for evidence of transformative values, namely empowerment and recognition,¹ in how people described their experiences.** For example, one participant mentioned that a team member asked them, “Would you prioritize safety or convenience?”, which helped the person access their own resources and exercise agency in deciding on next steps after a distressing interaction. This provided evidence of the mediator supporting a shift in *empowerment*.

In future work, it could be valuable to consider how a transformative approach could be more fully incorporated into collecting participant perspectives, especially focusing on evidence of participants experiencing recognition of the other person.

Initial Insights

These insights, based on the experiences of 15 people, should be viewed more as a collection of perspectives than as a representative sample of people’s experiences with the program. As such, the findings below attempt to call out a few themes which should be validated in further work.

All quotes are drawn from conversations with participants (in either interviews or phone surveys) and “practical notes” are included to highlight concrete considerations for practice or protocol.

A Practical Note: It’s challenging to get a full perspective on the conflict when you only have access to one perspective. Due to the nature of data collection from 911 calls, contact information is often only available for one person — usually the one making the call. This means that the perspective on the conflict is limited. In the future, it would be helpful to gather contact information from additional people involved in the call. This could be used for follow-up, possible mediation sessions, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

What made a difference in how people felt about their MRU experience?

- **Follow-up:** Follow-up seemed to really matter to people. Whether this was a follow-up with additional resources or a follow-up to ask how the next steps in the interaction went, people noticed when this was done and noticed when it not was done (if it was expected).
- **A Practical Note About ‘Complaint’ Calls:** When someone lodges a complaint against a neighbor (e.g., a noise complaint or pet complaint), the MRU may intentionally avoid going to the location of the person who filed the complaint to maintain their anonymity. **This can, however, create a dynamic where people are unsure whether there was any response to their call.** Some callers reported this being a break in trust: “Never saw them out there — they never called me.” **To address this, it is likely important that the team follow up by phone with the original caller to let them know their call was responded to.**

¹ See Robert A. Baruch Bush and Joseph P. Folger’s *The Promise of Mediation: The Transformative Approach to Conflict*, and read a summary [here](#).

- **Quick Response:** Multiple people cited fast arrival time as a benefit, and several said that the MRU gave them estimates but arrived faster than expected, which was (pleasantly) surprising to them (with several respondents citing 30–45 minute arrival time).
- When compared to a typical 911 response, many people stated that the MRU typically **arrives faster than the police**, especially for these types of calls. Several noted that from their experience, police would not have even responded in the past.
 - “They were much quicker than Dayton PD. They gave me an estimated time of 2 hours and showed up in about 45 minutes.”
 - “[The MRU] may have shown up maybe 30 minutes later — which was good given police don’t come out for hours or at all.”
 - “We’ve had issues with [DPD] not showing up for 6 hours for something deemed a non-emergency.”
 - “We don’t get a police response over here in [the person’s neighborhood].”
- **A Practical Note:** Fast or faster than traditional response times should not be taken for granted. When launching programs in new jurisdictions, it’s worth understanding the current response times of responders for the call types being considered and how a new team may need to be staffed and dispatched to ensure speedy arrival times.
- **Time to Talk:** MRU has **more time** to talk through the situation at hand than law enforcement and is perceived as **listening**.
 - “Police don’t have a lot of time”
 - “[The MRU] really let me explain, [they were] patient with me. [...] At first I was scared a little, with what I’ve been through — they were comforting, patient, they took their time and helped [me], so where I wasn’t scared”
- **Approachable & Kind Demeanor**
 - “They looked like just ordinary people [...] in regular clothing. [...] They looked like a couple of individuals who were dedicating themselves to what they do”.
 - “The way that they approached it with the soft approach, sweet voice and the basic human dignity they showed — that was phenomenal.” [when talking about a situation with an unhoused person]
 - “I appreciate the kindness and the resources they gave me.”
 - **A Practical Note:** MRU’s **appearance** — being in plain clothes and having ordinary cars (vs. flashing lights) — seemed to help people feel more comfortable interacting with the MRU and knowing that attention wouldn’t be drawn to them by a police presence.
 - “I mean, I think it was less threatening not have a whole bunch of cops around and it looks like it was some big, dangerous situation afterwards, after everything calmed down,”
- **Building Credibility:** Most people we spoke with were unfamiliar with MRU before they arrived, but many cited ways that MRU built credibility on site.

- **A Practical Note on Showing Credentials:** Multiple people mentioned that the MRU presenting official badges/identifying materials helped them trust that they were professionals.
 - “I didn’t know who they were when they came up, so I had to identify them also.”
- **Explaining the Program and What They Could Do:** Several people mentioned that after hearing about what the MRU did, they could see the benefit for the community, even in situations when the MRU was not able to address their specific concern (with some even giving a higher score to their likelihood to recommend the MRU than to the utility of the service for their specific situation). Some even mentioned being surprised that the MRU existed but enthusiastic about its possibilities.
 - “This is great for the community!”
 - “You guys were actually phenomenal! I didn’t know you all had a mediation unit.”
 - “I’m very happy with it. I wouldn’t have believed in it 2–3 years ago. I would have thought they would need to be armed and properly protected for any call.”
 - **A Practical Note:** Take the time to not just introduce the team members but share what the program does and what kinds of situations it can support to set the stage for a lasting connection.
- **Memorable Direct Line:** The MRU has an easy-to-remember direct line (937-333-2333), which multiple participants mentioned as valuable, as it allowed them to easily know how to reach the MRU in the future.

Challenges people voiced about their MRU experience

Below are a few complaints or challenges mentioned by participants. As these are meant to surface themes for further inquiry, challenges mentioned by a single person are also included. These should be discussed collaboratively with the team and, if necessary, validated with further perspective gathering to assess how common each challenge is, understand any needed action, and brainstorm values or mission-aligned shifts, which could include shifts in practice, messaging, operations or training.

- **Follow-Up:** A few participants mentioned that they had not received the follow-up that they expected from the MRU, either in the form of resources or a follow-up call.
- **Perception that “mediation” may not be the right response for their concern or is not effective for certain types of complaint calls.**
 - **Desire for Legal or Enforcement Solutions:**
 - In a situation with a neighbor dispute around parking: “They wanted me to use mediation but it was really a legal matter.”
 - “Didn’t help too much because she couldn’t give me legal advice”
 - “I didn’t want mediators, I wanted the police”
 - “It didn’t last after they left. A male officer may have had better luck.”
 - “I said worse because they do not have the authority to do something about trespassing like the police do. They handled the situation with much care and respect and that was good.”

- “I don’t think that the police could have done anything either but they make a bigger presence and that might have made the people quit for awhile.”
- **Concerns about Effective Response to Complaints:** “While they were there the music stopped, but when they left the music continued.”
- **Other Person in Conflict Didn’t Want to Engage:**
 - “Very informative; really tried to engage me — think it is a useful tool if needed. In my case, didn’t apply. Mediation is very helpful if you have agreeable parties that are reasonable.”
 - “They came and offered help but the other people would not talk to them. [...] I would love to have had mediation but the people refused.”

Practical Note: It’s worth understanding these cases (perhaps in further interviews) to understand what factors may make people rule out mediation or conflict coaching as a support.

Success Stories

Note: These are stories where the people themselves describe the response as a success.

Story 1: Managing feelings of safety after street harassment

Situation: The person experienced being harassed at a bus stop by a woman they did not know late at night on their way home. At that moment, they were “eager to get home,” but they decided to call to report the incident the next day or a few days later, after consulting with one or two other people. This person is relatively new to Dayton, after having moved to the city due to their strong shelter system. They also said they are used to calling either a “talk line” or 911 when they run into issues (in general).

If you had to use one word to describe how you felt about the situation, what would it be? Frustration, discomfoting, awkward. Either frustrated or uncomfortable more than anything else.

MRU Intervention: After calling 911 to report the incident, the person was counselled to reach out to the MRU and was given the direct line number to call them. The person set up a time for the MRU to visit them at their workplace. They talked with the MRU team for ~30 minutes and the MRU team supported them in considering alternatives for how they might get home late at night or after dark. The person ended up implementing the plan discussed with the MRU the same day they had the interaction with the MRU and has done that ever since then, though they did express it being unfortunate that they could not take the more convenient route home.

Evidence of Transformative Approach in Practice: When discussing alternatives, an MRU team member asked, “Would you prioritize safety or convenience?” and the person said they opted for safety. The MRU team followed up to ask what they had chosen for themselves and they shared their plan.

Impact:

- When asked about the impact of the interaction, the person described it as a minor change in their transportation. They also noted that they would perhaps have gotten to this new plan themselves eventually.
- “I was maybe just kind of consoling and comforting, having them to talk to and them to, like, back me up.”

- The person also said they were encouraged to call the MRU again if they needed and expressed that they would “probably be more comfortable talking to them than an actual police officer.”
- It seems like the experience may have made an impression on the person, based on them remembering clearly the name of the team member who arrived and the direct line number of the MRU by heart, even one year after the incident.

Story 2: Feeling supported in navigating an ongoing conflict with a neighbor

Situation: Over the course of a year or so, the person has been experiencing an ongoing conflict with a neighbor that has had an impact on them and their family. The conflict has had different presentations — loud music (with noise complaints), barking dogs (with pet complaints), smoking under the person’s child’s window — but has been persistent. Their initial attempt to discuss an issue with the neighbor was met with aggression, and now they primarily rely on calling the police when issues arise (either the non-emergency number or 911, depending on how escalated the situation is). The person had moved to Dayton in the last few years after living in a different city across the country. They mentioned that they left that city, at least in part, due to safety concerns.

If you had to use one word to describe how you felt about the situation, what would it be? Rage.

MRU Intervention: On the day of the MRU visit, the person had a direct confrontation with their neighbor during which they felt in danger, which led to them calling 911. The 911 call-taker did not communicate that the MRU would be responding to the call instead of police, but the MRU introduced themselves and the program when they arrived. The person’s other neighbors also responded (by coming out of their homes), which the person said helped de-escalate the situation, as the neighbor with whom they were in conflict began walking away from the site of conflict.

When the MRU arrived, team members spoke with the person in their home and spoke with the neighbor separately. The person reported that the MRU listened to them speak about their interactions with the neighbor and offered resources.

- The person reported no change in their relationship with their neighbor and stated that they have continued negative feelings about the neighbor. They did say that they had not had any recent incidents, but did not identify the MRU visit as a cause for the change. Nevertheless, they cited several impacts of the experience:
- “I think it was good for me, because the interaction made me calmer.”
- “I think it had a positive impact to know that Dayton does have something besides always calling the police out and things get escalated too much. So I think it has a calmer impact on the community.”
- The person did not describe any change in their relationship with their neighbor (and seemed to view it as unlikely to change, due to the level of hostility and perceived lack of respect, though they did express that they would “show up” if there were a mediation scheduled).
- The person learned that there were additional resources for dealing with disgruntled neighbors. (Note: the MRU did not speak about the resources in depth, so it is unclear whether the resources the person mentioned as helpful were restorative or punitive in nature.)

- The person said they would add the MRU to their list of people to call when experiencing conflicts again and requested the direct line phone number.

How did participants feel about their experience with the MRU?

Due to limited representation and small sample size at the time of writing (14 total survey responses and two interviews), it's not yet possible to draw broad conclusions about how participants at large feel about the MRU and its impact on their lives. **However, the Center is continuing these efforts, and the information below from the original 14 surveys will be updated after more data has been gathered.**

- **Felt heard and comfortable:** talking Approximately 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I felt heard" (43% strongly agreed).
 - "They were very good listeners."
 - "I just felt natural about talking to them."
 - "They understood my concerns and what I wanted accomplished and they listened to every issue that the male in question had, where he was trying to go and why."
- **Felt supported:** Approximately 70% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I felt supported" (50% strongly agreed).
 - "Absolutely. They showed up and were immediately doing their job. No questions asked. They jumped right into it."
- **Knew what my next steps were:** Sixty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I knew what my next steps were" (29% strongly agreed).

Reflections on Gathering Participant Perspectives

- **Align your research to your values.** It's easy to use out-of-the-box research tools to gather participant perspectives, but the work will be more meaningful and valuable if you take the time to align your key questions and approach to the values of the team and program. For example, Dayton's MRU is focused on transformative mediation, so the approach to gathering participant perspectives was conducted with an eye towards centering the voice and choice of participants instead of the researcher's agenda (see [Transformative Conflict Theory in Action](#); Chayn's resources on Trauma Informed User Research).
- **Understand that the operational side of the user research process will take time, and set your expectations (and those of your partners) appropriately.** Conducting this kind of research is more operationally complex than it seems at first sight, and it requires collaboration and alignment across a variety of stakeholders, in addition to managing a lot of implementation details. Assume this work will take, at a minimum, several months to complete, and that some steps (especially recruitment of participants) may be much slower than you expect and may only be somewhat within your control. Allocate time for the unexpected things that may come up and time to iterate on your approach as you learn more. Other key areas to pay attention to that can impact timeline include securing permissions and approvals and setting up tech and data collection.
- **Be mindful about overloading your response team partners with requests.** Be clear and concise with your asks, and prioritize inviting partners in for meaningful collaboration on goals and learnings over logistics. Even things like participant recruitment may take time away from

-
- their core responsibilities as responders, so being in communication with your partners about their interests and capacities for involvement is key.
- **Script the process where you can so that you can focus your efforts on giving participants the space to speak.** Making your resources for data collection or notetaking easy to use can be hugely helpful for onboarding new surveyors/interviewers, ensuring consistency and making it easier to conduct outreach. See [MRU Feedback - Participant Survey - Google Forms.pdf](#) for an example of a standardized form with an intuitive flow and embedded scripting for survey calls.
 - **Plan for extra time when speaking with participants.** People may want to share more than you initially allocated time for (e.g., a 5-minute survey could turn into a 20-minute conversation), and some of the most valuable learnings can come in that “overtime.” Make sure to bake in some flexibility so you can continue the conversation.
 - **Have more than one person involved in talking to participants and debriefing about findings, if you can.** This is work that benefits from collaboration. As this is an emerging field, different perspectives are necessary to make meaning, especially as participants come from a variety of backgrounds and social contexts.
 - **Bake in regular checkpoints to discuss findings with your response team partners, as their reflections can help you contextualize what you’re hearing and iterate on your approach.**

MRU Participant Perspectives — 2025

Materials

- [Phone Survey](#)
- Interviews
 - [\(Live\) Consent Form - MRU Participant Perspectives](#)
 - [\(Live\) Participant Perspectives - Interview Template](#)

Data Collection

These insights are based on 2 formal interviews and 14 phone surveys (including one longer-form conversation) for calls for service from Oct 2024-May 2025. Participants who completed formal interviews were given \$50 incentives for their time.

Calls were made to participants whose names and phone numbers were available from CAD data. We intentionally skewed towards contacting people who experienced calls about neighbor conflict cases (call types: Neighbor Disputes, Noise Complaint, Animal/Pet Issues; ~50% of respondents) to better understand a core, original intended use case for the MRU. In future work, it would be helpful to understand cases for other common call types, including ‘Disorderly Subject’ and those outside of conflict calls (e.g. Welfare Checks, Peace Officer, etc.)

As of July 2025, an MRU mediator is conducting these calls on a weekly basis, which will provide additional insight as to the value of the calls as a possible service protocol and/or the frequency of calls for evaluation purposes.

APPENDIX E

Sector Review and Analysis

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd in 2020, many alternative forms of policing have emerged. While there are many different approaches to alternative policing programs, most are rooted in similar motivations. These programs are seeking to prevent harm, promote equity, and commit to anti-racist practices (Desiree, 2023). Many programs offer alternative first responders to disputes that do not require police officers. LEAP has developed a comprehensive map of alternative first responder programs in the United States.

As Hoggard and Lutchman (2024) identified, there is a historic root to racism within policing that has developed into a health crisis in BIPOC communities. Intense trauma has been inflicted on these communities from the police and the criminal justice system. Therefore, many communities have begun to investigate alternative forms of violence prevention outside of traditional policing.

Cities across the country have launched programs to send unarmed responders to 911 calls historically handled by police. These include: Behavioral Health Responders, Community Service Officers, Peer Responders, Co-Responder, and Mediation Response Units. Additionally, a variety of institutions and collaboratives have focused their research on these alternatives to policing.

Frameworks, best practices, tools and theories of change in evaluating these types of programs.

Traditional policing analysis often depends on quantitative information, such as crime statistics (Posch et al., 2021). Alternative responses require more qualitative techniques, concentrating on the engagement of the community, reduction of harm, and satisfaction.

Research by Palenski (1984) highlights the foundational information on how mediation can be induced in policing strategies. This research article highlights the early usages of mediation implemented by police, providing historical aspects for modern-day initiatives such as DMC's MRU. It presents the potential and capabilities of mediation to boost the improved relationship between the communities and enforcement, thus suggesting parameters like conflict resolution rates and societal feedback.

The Best Practices in Evaluation

Identifying the best practices in evaluation is compounded by the contexts in which they function.

Rayburn (1995) discusses Neighborhood Justice Centres and their usage of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques. This research emphasizes the significance of societal involvement and

local embankment in the analysis procedure. It advises that successful analysis incorporates feedback loops that permit ongoing enhancement based on societal input.

The research of Verona et al. (2024) describes the formulation of a civilian-based crisis reaction/response model, highlighting a useful case study on analysis tools. They signify the importance of equity and accessibility in crisis response, offering indicators examining inclusivity and effectiveness (Kyprianides et al., 2021). This presents the requirement for analysis to assess outcomes and ensure that every member of the community has equitable accessibility and availability to mediation services.

Spolum et al. (2023) highlight an insightful perspective on public health that discusses decreasing police violence. They intend to propose an analyzed structured framework encompassing health outcomes as indicators of the program's success, advocating for interdisciplinary techniques for measurement. This tends to align with the evolving trend of using public health parameters in the social justice analysis, which can offer a more understanding perception of societal well-being (Capellan et al., 2020).

Volpe (2013) explored the underpinnings of mediation among police, suggesting that proactive mediation must lead to decreased recidivism of conflict and enhance community connections. This theory has the potential to inform the development of particular indicators linked with community engagement and trust, as well as the frequency and nature of disputes solved through mediation (Adi, 2021).

Analyzing the engagement and trust of ARUs in avoiding violence and enhancing the confidence of the community can offer critical insights for practitioners and policymakers.

Observation of Trends and Challenges

As the focus on the mediation process as an alternative to traditional policing grows, various trends have evolved. Societal input into the analysis process is increasingly identified as very important. In addition, there is a significant shift towards interdisciplinary methods that combine social justice, public health, and conflict resolution frameworks. A mixed-methods approach including reporting data, surveys, and interviews provides the optimal perspective

There is an absence of standardized parameters for measuring the success of mediation-based programs, thus making it complex to compare the results. This presents the requirement of continuous dialogues and collaboration among practitioners, evaluators, and community members to develop detailed analyzed strategies that adequately capture the impact linked with mediation (Mourtgos & Adams, 2020).

Tapiwa Samantha Tshuma and Christopher Hart, George Mason University 2024

DMC Partners

- [Evidence for Action](#)
- [Alternative Response Initiatives, Center for Innovations in Community Safety, Georgetown Law](#)
- [Dignity Best Practices](#)
- [Law Enforcement Action Partnership](#)
- [Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab, Essential Metrics for Alternative Emergency Response Programs](#)
- [Vera Institute](#)

- [International Association of Chiefs of Police](#)
- [Arnold Ventures](#)
- [Transform 911](#)
- [Policing Project at New York University School of Law](#)
- [Alternative Response Models](#)
- [The Appeal](#)
- [Justice Center, The Council of State Governments](#)

The Council of State Governments has compiled examples and other resources related 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, 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, Boston, Massachusetts

Community Engagement Survey

- **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)
- [Public health alternatives to policing and incarceration | County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#)
- **Podcast:** ["The Fifth Branch" Tradeoffs](#)
- **Resources:** [The Fourth Branch Institute](#)

Program Evaluations

Alaska, US (2022). [Crisis Now Mobile Crisis Team implementation updates](#)

Albany County, NY (2022). [ACCORD pilot implementation evaluation report](#)

Albuquerque, NM (2022). [Albuquerque Community Safety monthly reports](#)

Aurora, CO (2022). [Aurora Mobile Response Team end of pilot report](#)

Cincinnati, OH (2022). [ARC dashboard](#)

Connecticut, US (2019). [Mobile crisis service annual, quarterly, & monthly reports](#)

Denver, CO (2022, 2023). [STAR 6-month program evaluation. Transforming Denver's first response model](#)

Durham, NC (2022). [HEART program data dashboard](#)

Eugene, OR (2020). [CAHOOTS program analysis](#)

Half Moon Bay, CA (2022). [CARES quarterly reports](#)

Fairbanks, AK (2021). [Mobile Crisis Team monthly reports](#)

Madison, WI. (2021). [CARES annual report](#)

Minneapolis, MN (2022). [Unarmed Public Safety Response pilot update Q1](#)

Missoula, MT (2021). [Mobile Support Team pilot evaluation](#)

New Haven, CT (2021). [COMPASS Team service reports](#)

New Orleans, LA (2023, 2024). [MCIU implementation & first 90 days summary; MCIU First Nine Months Summary; MCIU First Year Evaluation](#)

New York City, NY. (2021, 2021, 2022). [B-HEARD first six months of operation B-HEARD data for Jul to Dec 2022 B-HEARD data on operations for Fiscal Year 2022](#)

Oakland, CA (2022). [MACRO impact reports](#)

Orange County, CA. (2021). [Be Well OC Mobile Crisis Response dashboard](#)

Portland, OR. (2021, 2021 2022, 2022). [PSR Dashboard PSR 6-month evaluation PSR Year 1 evaluation PSR Year 2 evaluation](#)

Rochester, NY (2023). [Person In Crisis Dashboard](#)

San Francisco, CA. (2021, 2022). [Street Crisis Response Team Monthly Updates Street Crisis Response Team Pilot Final Report](#)

Toronto, ON. (2022, 2023, 2023). [Progress on the Toronto Community Crisis Service Toronto Community Crisis Service 6 Month Evaluation Toronto Community Crisis Service 1 Year Evaluation](#)

APPENDIX F

Key Performance Indicators 2024

Data for Quarterly Reporting	Q1 (Jan – Mar)	Q2 (Apr – Jun)	Q3 (Jul – Sep)	Q4 (Oct – Dec)	Year-End Results
# of 911 calls dispatched to Mediation Response	848	709	710	503	2,770
# of MRU calls addressed at time of service	777	612	517	472	85.8%
# of MRU calls referred to the Mediation Center	32	22	14	8	2.7%
# of MRU calls requiring Police Response	4	7	18	5	1.2%
# of MRU responses that provide resource connections	82	108	140	58	388
# of new MRU responses	314	405	390	263	1,372
# of direct calls to the MRU	145	48 calls with 129 activities	67 calls with 141 activities	47 calls with 107 activities	145
# of repeat contacts	30	41	79	45	195
# of of 911 Neighbor Trouble calls MRU responded to	212	203	186	45	
Total # of 911 Neighbor Trouble calls		361	457	361	54.8%
Avg. time spent on MRU calls per quarter	33	29	31	29	31
# of community outreach events	10	15	10	2	37
# of community members receiving support for Police complaints	29	27	19	12	87
# of client contacts	2521	4714	1978	2178	11,391
# of referrals	1638	1288	1194	2178	6,298
# of referrals resulting in an intervention	900	700	735	800	67.3%
Total # of referrals		1288	1194	2178	
# of direct community calls for conflict intervention	214	252	241	254	961
# of MCJC interventions with successful diversion	57	49	51	38	48.4%
Total # of MCJC interventions	29	183	148	43	
# of juvenile clients with repeat MCJC referrals	3	22	5	0	2.4%
Total # of juvenile clients referred from MCJC	141	202	517	371	
# of volunteer occurrences	43	251	146	233	673
# of volunteer training hours	322.5	52	60	85	519.5
\$ value of volunteer service	\$10,226.48	\$1,648.92	\$1,902.60	\$2,695.35	\$16,473.35

APPENDIX G

Key Performance Indicators 2025

Data for Quarterly Reporting	Q1 (Jan – Mar)	Q2 (Apr – Jun)	Q3 (Jul – Sep)	Q4 (Oct – Dec)	Year-End Results
# of 911 calls dispatched to Mediation Response	628	779	842	602	2,851
# of MRU calls referred to the Mediation Center	9	10	2	18	1.4%
# of MRU calls requiring Police Response	8	12	14	10	1.5%
# of MRU responses that provide resource connections	288	238	298	97	921
# of new MRU responses	330	420	423	389	1,562
# of direct calls to the MRU	51	206	105	71	433
# of interations from direct calls to the MRU	1137	1303	437	296	3,173
# of repeat contacts	47	89	83	41	260
# of of 911 Neighbor Trouble calls MRU responded to	273	160	144	278	44.3%
Total # of 911 Neighbor Trouble calls	628	464	443	397	
Avg. time spent on MRU calls per quarter	33	31	35	36	34
# of community outreach events	10	20	19	16	65
# of community members receiving support for Police complaints	16	33	22	38	109
# of client contacts	2,037	2,590	2,452	4,009	11,088
# of activities for DMC referrals	4,416	5,879	5,104	6,038	21,437
Total # of referrals	1,011	1,474	1,242	1,318	5,045
# of referrals resulting in an intervention	662	865	843	422	55.3%
# of successfully completed cases	646	786	928	713	65.5%
Total cases	985	1247	1311	1151	
# of direct community calls for conflict intervention	214	1474	1014	1278	3980
# of MCJC interventions with successful diversion	43	111	51	45	89.3%
Total # of MCJC interventions	48	120	60	52	
# of juvenile clients with repeat MCJC referrals	1	8	11	4	3.6%
Total # of juvenile clients referred from MCJC	108	217	175	176	
# of volunteer training hours	175	14	0	28.5	217.5

Data for Quarterly Reporting	Q1 (Jan – Mar)	Q2 (Apr – Jun)	Q3 (Jul – Sep)	Q4 Oct – Dec)	Year-End Results
# of volunteer occurrences hours	178	197	225	179	779
\$ value of volunteer occurrence hours	\$3,840.48	\$7,716.52	\$0.00	\$940.50	\$12,497.50
\$ value of volunteer service (occurrence hours)	\$6,329.68	\$7,005.32	\$15,188.00	\$7,943.10	\$36,466.10

APPENDIX H

Feedback Survey: Police Roll Call, Neighborhood and Business Groups

Mediation Response Unit (MRU) Survey

I am aware of how the Mediation Response Unit works.

- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Not at all

I have interacted with the MRU.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please describe your experience with the MRU:

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the MRU?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

Please share any comments, suggestions, questions, or concerns about the MRU:

APPENDIX I

Participant Survey 2022–2023

Good day (name or salutation)!

This is (your name) from the City of Dayton's Mediation Response Unit. It looks like we responded to a call for assistance on or about _____ (date/timeframe). As we continue to offer services to the community, we are looking for feedback from those who have interacted with the MRU.

I wanted to follow up and see if I could ask you 5 questions about your experience. This will give us feedback and let us know how we are doing or if there are ways we can improve our services.

(If asked) Your personal information will NOT be used but we will utilize feedback information to report to our funders and the City in a summary report that will be accessible to the community in the near future.

"On a scale of 0–10, where 10 is most helpful, how helpful did you find your interaction with the Mediation Response Unit?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please tell us what was helpful about the Mediation field response.

Is there anything you believe could have been better? If so, what?

Do you feel that the Mediation field response to your dispute was better, worse, or the same for you compared to a traditional police response, and why?

Better: _____

Worse: _____

The same: _____

"On a scale of 0-10, where 10 is most likely, how likely are you to recommend the Mediation Response Unit to someone else if they are in need of assistance?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you have anything else you would like to offer today?

For Office Use Only: Case #

0009Type of Incident NEIGH

APPENDIX J

Participant Survey 2024–2025

When dialing, enter *67 first. This will hide your phone number.

Today's date: _____ For Office Use Only: Case # _____ Call type:

Caller's phone number:

Voicemail Message

If you cannot reach the person, read this script and notate in the spreadsheet:

Hello I'm calling to reach _____ (name or salutation).

My name is _____ and I'm a volunteer calling from the Dayton Mediation Center to follow up on the Mediation Response Unit. We're a new city program, and we're looking to get feedback from people who have used the service to better understand how it's working for residents and how we can improve.

I'll call back later this week or you can leave a message at (937) 303-7147 with a good time for us to call. Thank you

Call Script

Hello _____ (name or salutation)!

This is _____ (your name) from the City of Dayton's Mediation Response Unit. It looks like we responded to a call for assistance on or about _____ (date/timeframe). As we continue to offer services to the community, we are looking for feedback from those who have interacted with the MRU.

I wanted to follow up and see if I could ask you a few questions about your experience. This will give us feedback and let us know how we are doing or if there are ways we can improve our services.

(If asked) Your personal information will NOT be used but we will utilize feedback information to report to our funders and the City in a summary report that will be accessible to the community in the near future.

1. "On a scale of 0–10, where 10 is most helpful, how helpful did you find your interaction with the Mediation Response Unit? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Please tell us what was helpful about the Mediation field response.

[Internal Use] To Interviewer — if any of these options are mentioned above, please check them here.

- ☐ A. Respectful
☐ B. Arrived Quickly
☐ C. Resources Given
☐ D. Listened to me
☐ E. Spent time with me

Other:

3. Is there anything you believe could have been better? If so, what?

4. Do you feel that the Mediation field response to your dispute was better, worse, or the same for you compared to a traditional police response, and why?

Better:

Worse:

The same:

4a. Is there anything you would like to add?

5. I'm going to give you three statements that I'd like you to rate them depending on how strongly you agree or disagree with them, going from "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neither Agree Nor Disagree", "Agree", "Strongly Agree"

I felt heard by the MRU team

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree

Other: _____

5a. Additional Information

6. I felt supported by the MRU team. (1 - Strongly Disagree, 5 - Strongly Agree)

- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree

Other: _____

6a. Additional Information

7. After the MRU response, I was clear about my next steps. (1 - Strongly Disagree, 5 - Strongly Agree)

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

Other: _____

7a. Anything you would like to add about those responses?

8. "On a scale of 0-10, where 10 is most likely, how likely are you to recommend the Mediation Response Unit to someone else if they are in need of assistance?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you have anything else you would like to say or offer today?

Is there anything else (you would like to say? / That we should know)

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your time!

APPENDIX K

Community Engagement Working Group

Co-leads

Commissioner Chris Shaw and Shannon Isom

Members

Officer Byron Branch
Alana Brookshire
Gwen Buchanan
Youseff Elzien
Ari Rose Divine
David Greer
Lt. Col. Eric Henderson
Verletta Jackson
Major Brian Johns
Jo'el Jones,
Helen Jones-Kelly
Shawn Kerley
David Lawrence
Serida Lowrey
Bishop Mark McGuire
Amy Mitchell
Andrea Oladi
Reverend Dormetria R. Thompson
Dion Sampson, Amaha Sellasie
Marcie Sherman
Scott Silver

Police Reform Working Groups

Evaluator Background and Positionality Statement

Background

Jeanne F. Zimmer was trained in transformative mediation in the mid-2000s by Dan Simon and Kristine Paranica, and incorporated transformative theory into the community mediation program where she served as Executive Director for 17 years. She served two terms on the board of the National Association of Community Mediation (NAFCM), of which the Dayton Mediation Center is a member. Jeanne also collaborated in the design and facilitation of a visioning and planning process with the Institute for the Study of Transformative Mediation.

She has a doctorate in Evaluation Studies from the University of Minnesota, with a supporting field of conflict management. She has designed and conducted workshops for the American Evaluation Association, the Canadian Evaluation Society, and the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute, and has served as the evaluator for projects on the national, state, and local levels.

Positionality Statement

I am embedded in the cultures of community mediation and program evaluation communities; I acknowledge my positionality as a believer in and an advocate for both. I see the potential benefits of the MRU and hope that the desired outcomes can have positive effects on the community.

My inherent bias may be perceived as a disadvantage for some evaluation approaches, but my connection to the communities can be an advantage and even an integral component of capacity-building and participatory evaluation processes. This is similar to empowerment evaluation, where the evaluator is a “critical friend” and works closely and continuously with program personnel to help “maximize their potential and unleash their creative and productive energy for a common good” (Fetterman et al., 2015). An evaluator who has similar social identities and shared interests

and experience with the program can provide more effective facilitation and build relationships throughout the evaluation.

My intent is to not present my personal perspective (this emic understanding) as an etic perspective without validation through the data-collection process and triangulation. Triangulation, “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126), was used when analyzing and interpreting data. Individual viewpoints and experiences of participants were coded to identify commonalities among them (Shenton, 2004). Triangulating data across the different contexts in which participants experienced conflict increased confidence in the credibility and confirmability of findings (Shenton, 2004).

The Dayton Mediation Center holds self-determination, empowerment, and recognition as core values, and strives to be transparent in training and communication, to meta-communicate: communicate about what, how, and why they’re communicating. Peers are used as coaches to help guide reflection and provide feedback, insights, and a forum for discussion. Inherent in the co-mediation model, self-awareness and self-reflection are aligned with community mediation values (Bailey & Zimmer, 2014).

This evaluation process worked to model this commitment to transparency and provided the opportunity for the co-construction of the process and the findings. There was also the potential for me to relate participants’ experiences to my own, which could lead me to interpret their responses based on my own perceptions, beliefs, and ideas. Throughout the evaluation I worked to identify and reflect on my biases and question the decisions and interpretations I made, which might have influenced design, data collection, and analysis.

APPENDIX M

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Additional Resources

Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation:
transformativemediation.org

National Association for Community Mediation: nafcm.com

ABT White Paper: How We Model Matters

Better Evaluation: betterevaluation.org

Impact Evaluation: worldbank.org/en/news/video/2016/06/08/what-is-impact-evaluation