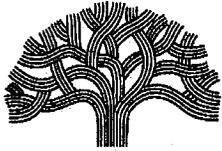


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CITY OF OAKLAND

## AGENDA REPORT

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**DATE:** 5/30/19  
**TO:** Members of the Public Safety Committee  
**FROM:** Councilmember Noel Gallo  
**SUBJECT:** Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Street (CAHOOTS)

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Councilmember Noel Gallo recommends that the Public Safety Committee:

**STAFF RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE RECEIVE AN INFORMATIONAL REPORT ON THE EFFICACY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE TO CERTAIN 911 CALLS, SIMILAR TO THE CAHOOTS MODEL IN EUGENE, OR.**

### **SUMMARY:**

Eugene, OR has had a program for 30 years to respond to certain emergency and non-emergency calls with a mental health professional and an EMT, instead of police and EMS/fire. Services include mental health crisis intervention and counseling, drug and alcohol-related de-escalation, family dispute mediation, welfare checks, basic-level medical care, and transportation to social services. The program currently responds to 17% of calls for service to police, saving the city millions of dollars and enabling officers to focus on other policing needs.

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### **BACKGROUND/ LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

In 1989, Eugene, OR began Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Street (CAHOOTS) which has expanded significantly subsequently. CAHOOTS shares a central dispatch with the Eugene police department and responds to behavioral emergencies, including family disputes, suicidal threats, and public intoxication. CAHOOTS is funded from the public safety budget.

CAHOOTS does not respond to violent situations or life-threatening emergencies. Police sometimes assist CAHOOTS in situations when danger may be present. The program is designed to provide an alternative to police action whenever possible for crises that are non-criminal in nature. CAHOOTS staff do not carry weapons and have no authority to arrest. They do carry and communicate with police radios. No CAHOOTS staff has ever been seriously injured.

Oakland and Alameda County currently have programs for crisis response. OPD has mental health professionals who respond to certain calls with police officers. These programs have been very beneficial for the community but do not create significant savings. The presence of uniformed police officers can act as a trigger for people in crisis.

Oakland and Alameda County currently have programs for crisis response. OPD has mental health professionals who respond to certain calls with police officers.

### **ANALYSIS:**

The Treatment Advocacy Center surveyed 355 US law enforcement agencies and found that in 2017, police officers spent 21% of their time responding to or transporting people with mental illness.

Although there is no statistic, many homeless advocates in Oakland say that they believe that over half of all arrests in Oakland are of homeless residents, many for low-level offenses.

Over 60% of clients are homeless and 30% live with severe and persistent mental illness. This population often interacts repeatedly with police and emergency services and sometimes with undesirable outcomes.

Relieving police officers of these calls would enable CRO officers to remain on their beat more often because they are less likely to be pulled away to respond to dispatch calls and would allow officers to address the city's more serious policing needs.

This program would create more community-oriented services consistent with the community policing/NCPC model which focuses on bringing community resources to address neighborhood problems rather than a law-enforcement approach.

The first step is for Oakland to assess the current resources and programs, engage stakeholders, and determine the efficacy of a CAHOOTS-type program and how to implement it.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The CAHOOTS program has saved significant money for the city of Eugene, Oregon. The CAHOOTS team answers many calls that are otherwise responded to by police or fire. The CAHOOTS team is considerably less expensive. Outcomes are also less expensive for the City. By providing minor medical assistance and rides, CAHOOTS prevents trips to the emergency room, ambulance rides, and full firefighter response for minor medical situations. By de-escalating situations and helping people in the middle of a mental health crisis identify and act on the best solution, CAHOOTS resolves situations at the lowest possible level. Such a model in Oakland will reduce arrests for low-level charges, which are very expensive and take officer time away from other police duties. Arrests often result in police overtime, since any arrest late in an officer's shift causes overtime for the officer to complete the paperwork and processing of the arrested resident.

Just factoring the expense of police, EMS, and fire response compared to CAHOOTS response and savings in diversions, Eugene has saved an average of \$8.5 million each year from 2015-2017. The budget for CAHOOTS (not including their response vans) is \$800,000 annually, although we anticipate the budget to respond to the same level of calls would be significantly higher in Oakland.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST:**

A Police Commission hearing was held on policing in the homeless community on February 16, 2019. Members of the unhoused community testified that many of their interactions with police officers were unhelpful and often demeaning and negative.

There has been significant interest and excitement across various communities in Oakland at the idea of forming an alternative to police responses to some calls.

Another recent survey of East Oakland residents found that many need an alternative to calling the police for some situations.

## **COORDINATION:**

This report was reviewed by the Office of Councilmember Noel Gallo-District 5 and members of the Coalition for Police Accountability. The Police Commission is requesting to meet with representatives of OPD and OFD.

The Police Commission is sponsoring presentations from CAHOOTS representatives on June 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. A presentation for the community will be on Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> in the evening at St. Columba Church. There will be a separate presentation for representatives of OPD and OFD to address their specific interests and questions.

## **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Economic:** The CAHOOTS program has saved significant money for the city of Eugene, Oregon. The CAHOOTS team answers many calls that are otherwise responded to by police or fire. The CAHOOTS team is considerably less expensive. Outcomes are also less expensive for the City. By providing minor medical assistance and rides, CAHOOTS prevents trips to the emergency room, ambulance rides, and full firefighter response for minor medical situations. By de-escalating situations and helping people in the middle of a mental health crisis identify and act on the best solution, CAHOOTS resolves situations at the lowest possible level. Such a model in Oakland will reduce arrests for low-level charges, which are very expensive and take officer time away from other police duties. Arrests often result in police overtime, since any arrest late in an officer's shift causes overtime for the officer to complete the paperwork and processing of the arrested resident.

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**Environmental:** There may be some de minimis environmental advantage to having a van respond to some calls and transport instead of EMS vehicles.

**Social Equity:** The impact on social equity will be substantial. Not only is it very expensive to have police and fire respond to some calls, it has a deleterious impact on people's lives.

Respectfully submitted,

Councilmember Noel Gallo, District 5

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Noel Gallo", is written over a horizontal line.

Prepared by:  
Debra Israel, Office of  
Councilmember Noel Gallo, District 5

Attachments:

A – CAHOOTS Brochure

B - CAHOOTS Diverting Costs

C - Mental Health Responders - Wall Street Journal Article

# Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets

## *Eugene's Mobile Crisis Intervention Program*

### ***What is CAHOOTS?***

CAHOOTS is a mobile crisis intervention service integrated into the public safety systems of Eugene and Springfield. A 24/7 free response is available for non-emergency medical care or first aid, and for a broad range of non-criminal crises, including homelessness, intoxication, disorientation, substance abuse, and mental illness problems, as well as dispute resolution and conflict mediation. Transportation to services is also provided. The CAHOOTS van can be dispatched through the cities' non-emergency police-fire-ambulance call centers. Services are confidential and voluntary. Each team consists of a trained mental health crisis worker and a certified EMT. Staffed and managed by local social service agency White Bird Clinic, CAHOOTS was formed in 1989 as a collaborative project with the city of Eugene to address the needs of marginalized and alienated populations - people who were homeless, experiencing severe and persistent mental illness, or suffering from addiction often had needs public safety couldn't meet.

### ***What services does CAHOOTS provide?***

CAHOOTS provides many different types of services, including (but not limited to): mental health crisis intervention and counseling, drug and alcohol related de-escalation, family dispute mediation, welfare checks, basic-level medical care, and transportation to social services. As CAHOOTS is designed to provide community assistance for problems related to depression and other mental illnesses, substance abuse and homelessness, we do not respond to any violent situations or life-threatening emergencies. If there is no imminent danger of harm caused to themselves or to others, we will respect the right of our clients to refuse our services and do not inflict help upon people who do not want it.



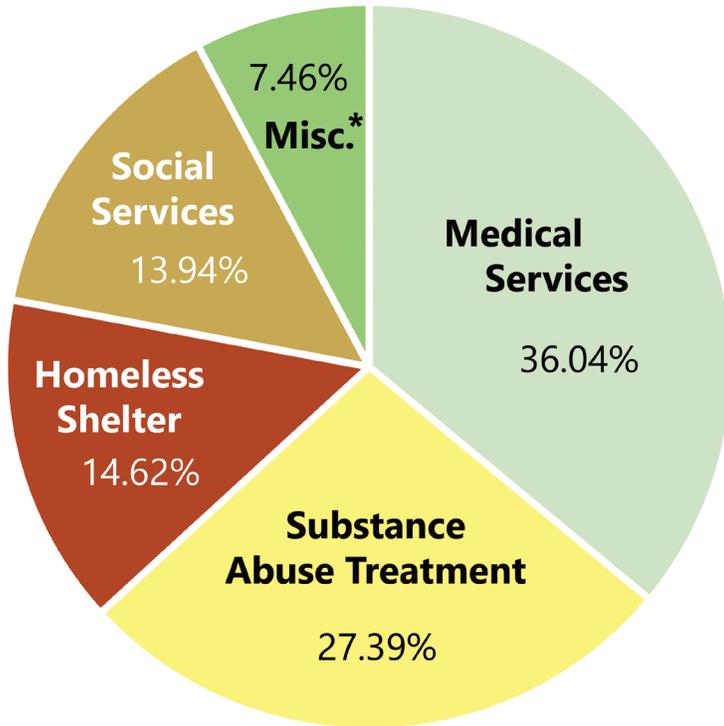
### ***What is the relationship between CAHOOTS and the Police Department?***

CAHOOTS shares a central dispatch with the Eugene police department, and responds to assist the police (and many other agencies) with certain types of behavioral emergencies, such as family disputes, suicidal threats, and public intoxication. Police sometimes assist CAHOOTS in situations when danger may be present. Our program is designed to provide an alternative to police action whenever possible for crises that are non-criminal in nature. The CAHOOTS staff do not carry weapons and have no authority to arrest or detain anyone against their will.

### ***...Between CAHOOTS and other social service agencies?***

CAHOOTS is able to refer clients to, and connect them with, social service agencies throughout the community. By being able to assess what a client may be in most need of, and by providing transportation to that service, we are able to facilitate the connection between clients and services. We also provide trainings and presentations in the community to improve client care. Additionally, we facilitate better coordination of care between agencies. We also function as client advocates at other agencies, providing mediation between staff and clients.

## Transportation Calls from 2014-2017



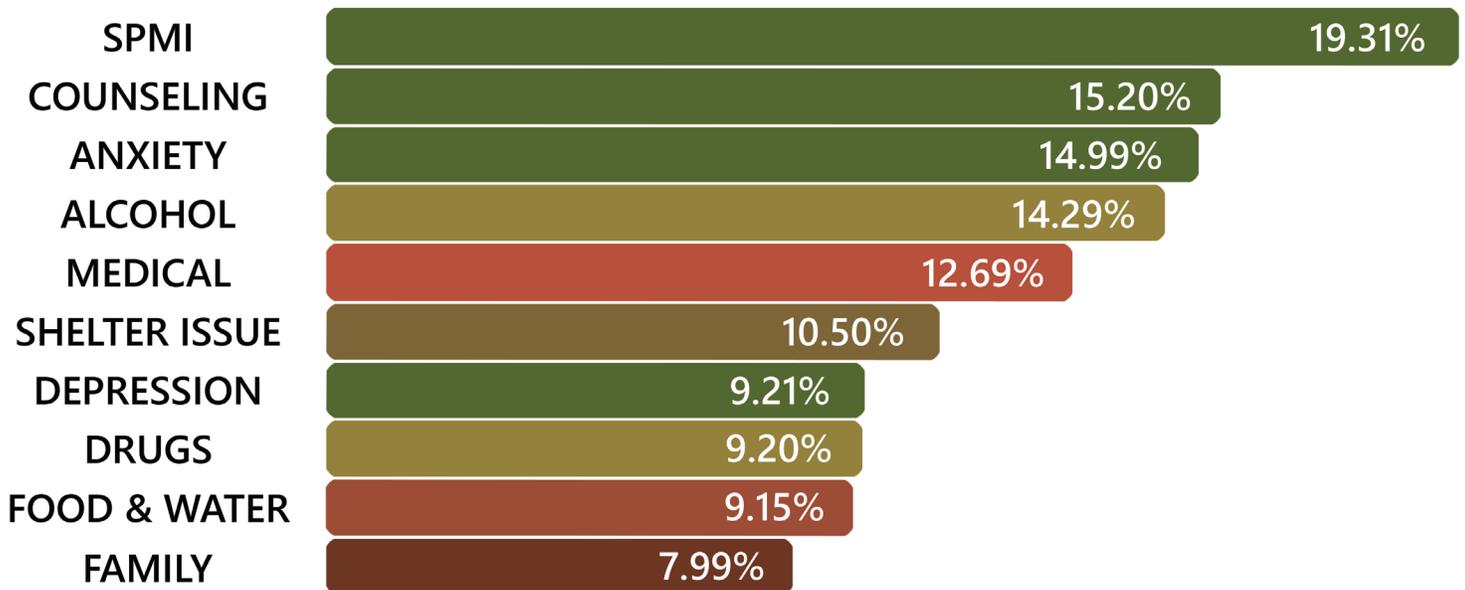
\* Other transport locations include group homes, pharmacies, downtown Eugene, etc.

## What sort of calls do we respond to?

Our calls are diverse, including requests for transportation to social services, homeless shelters, substance abuse treatment facilities, and medical care providers. We respond to calls for non-emergency medical care as well as assisting EMS. CAHOOTS provides counseling for people in crisis, and welfare checks in the community and at private residences. Over 60% of our clients are homeless, and 30% live with severe and persistent mental illness. The median age of our adult clients is 45.5 years old.

We receive over 15,000 calls a year, which averages to taking over 42 calls every day. In January 2015 we added a Springfield van, an expansion which increased our resources by 30%. The call volume in the following years has relatedly heightened. Extrapolating the call frequency trends since this expansion, CAHOOTS will take approximately 26,110 calls in 2018.

## Common Call Factors from 2014-2017



In the bar graph above, the percentage of calls for each factor reflects the frequency of that factor being at least one of the motivations for calling CAHOOTS, out of total CAHOOTS calls. The factors are not mutually exclusive with each other. These reflect both transport-and non-transport calls.

# Why Have a Mobile Crisis Intervention Program?

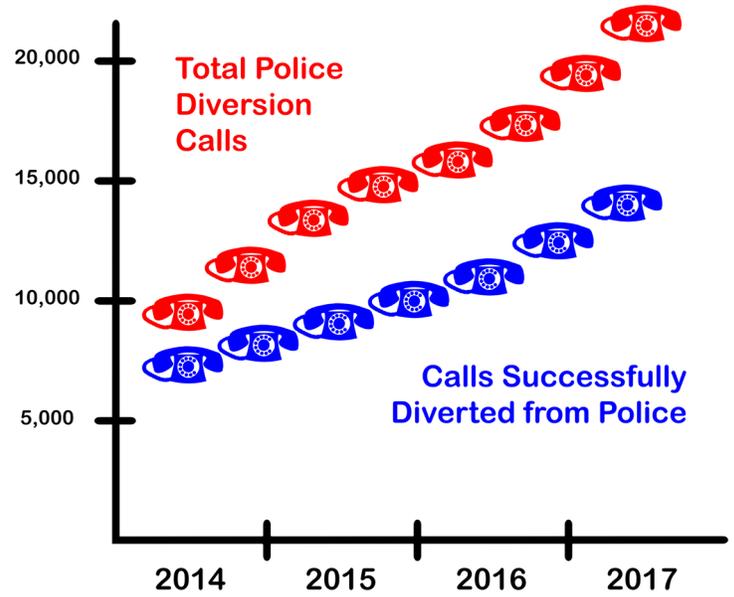
## CAHOOTS saves police time and money.

CAHOOTS is not meant to replace the police, instead, it offers a service that responds to non-emergency crises so police don't have to. Looking at CFS dispatch data from 2014-2017 (see graph at right), CAHOOTS regularly handles more than half of these cases, taking a sizable load off of the Eugene Police Department.\*

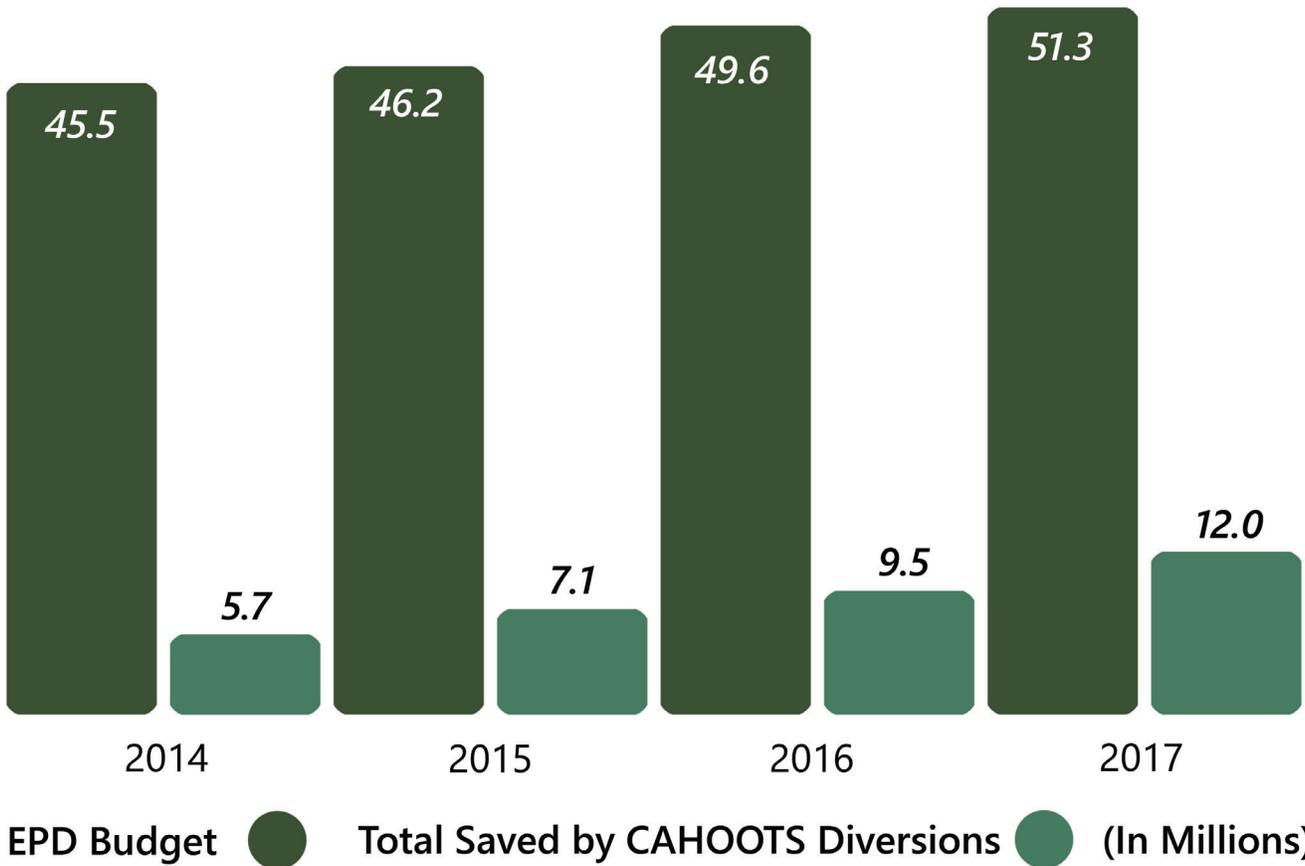
Three common types of calls CAHOOTS will divert from police are welfare checks (32.5% of all CAHOOTS calls), public assistance (66.3%), and transportation to services (34.8%).

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 \* EPD data was collected at <https://www.eugene-or.gov/archivecenter/viewfile/item/4801>

## Police Diversion



## EPD Diversion Savings Per Year



The EPD quotes \$800 per police response.\* Using the number of calls that would otherwise be handled by police, including suicide risk, homicide risk, self harm, intoxication, rage, welfare, and transport, CAHOOTS has saved the EPD an average of \$8.5 million each year from 2014-2017.

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 \*[www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10635](http://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10635)

## CAHOOTS saves EMS time and money.

Similarly, CAHOOTS is able to attend to non-emergency medical calls that would have otherwise fallen to EMS. CAHOOTS can respond to suicide or self-harm calls, calls for basic medical treatment such as wound cleaning, and provide assistance for clients who are presenting as disoriented or delusional with an alert and oriented level of less than 4, or who have other symptoms of psychosis. Treating these symptoms in the field prevents infections, which are common among homeless populations (as many have no way of keeping wounds clean). This in turn also keeps patients out of the ER in the long term.

In 2013, The Wall Street Journal reported the average price per ER visit as \$1,233, meaning that CAHOOTS saves the public sector over \$2 million annually in emergency medical costs.\* With the inclusion of ambulance rides, which are at least \$1,600 each in Eugene, this raises savings by a further \$2.9 million per year from 2014-2017.\*\*

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\*1 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/03/02/an-average-er-visit-costs-more-than-an-average-months-rent-/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.fb50243caf8b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/03/02/an-average-er-visit-costs-more-than-an-average-months-rent-/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.fb50243caf8b)

\*\* <http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/.../ambulance-springfield-says-eugene-fire.csp>

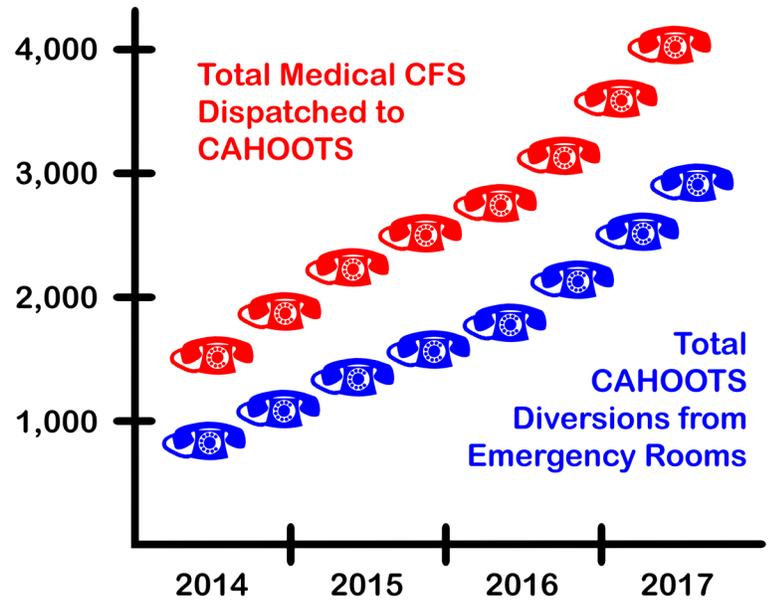
### How is CAHOOTS funded?

CAHOOTS is funded through Eugene's Public Safety, including the cost of vans, salaries, and equipment. Support is also provided by Lane county for the Metro van, which operates in Springfield and Glenwood.

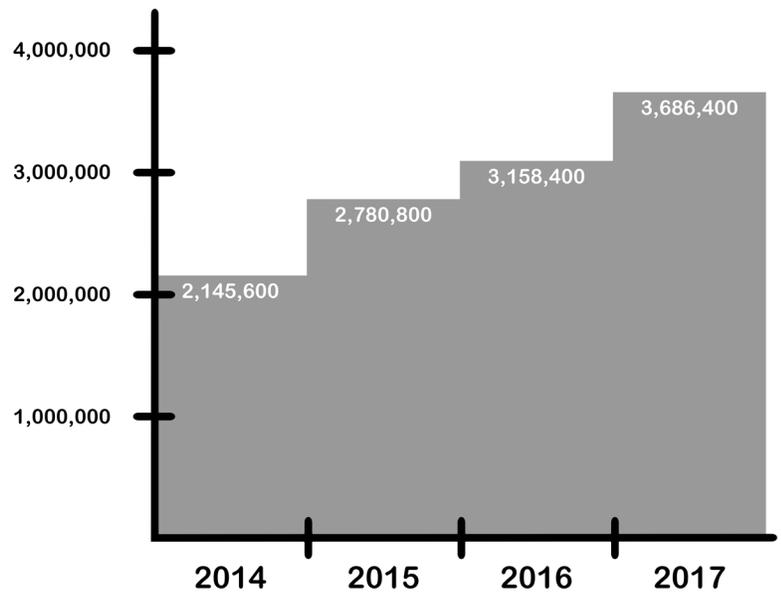
### What does the training program entail?

Training to become a CAHOOTS worker typically requires at least 500 hours of field work in addition to classroom time. A non-judgmental and client-centered approach to communication and service delivery is emphasized. Trainees begin as observers, watching trained team members handle a variety of calls. They also attend weekly debrief sessions to promote better client care as well as address issues of boundaries, rescuing, and worker self-care in order to avoid burnout. Workers must also pass an extensive background check.

## Emergency Room Diversion



## Ambulance Diversion Savings



# What is the Community Response to CAHOOTS?

## Satisfied First Responders

"[Without CAHOOTS], it would be really tough because there would be calls that we would have to deal with that would tie up more time, and it would be tough for the citizens because they wouldn't be getting the level of service that they'd like to get."

- Officer Rankin, EPD

## Satisfied Service Providers

"CAHOOTS has not only been a pleasure to work with over this past year...they are highly informed, and I feel do an excellent job. They accurately assess the health and mental stability of our clients and communicate important information in an effective way...along with truly caring for the people we all serve. I am thankful for all they do."

-Claire Seminara, Hourglass Program Director

## Satisfied Employees

"It's not an easy job by any means. It's very challenging. Each intervention and each client are different and present their own set of challenges. But it's a very unique opportunity to connect with someone and their experience, and I honestly feel it's an absolute honor to be allowed to be a part of this and to be a part of these people's lives."

- Amy May, CAHOOTS worker

## Satisfied Clients

"The staff I have interacted with are kind, reassuring, and helpful. You know they are always there if you need them. On the whole, this is a great community-supporting service."

-G, CAHOOTS client



Photo by Todd Cooper / Eugene Weekly

# CAHOOTS

## (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets)

Serving the City of Eugene, Oregon since 1989, CAHOOTS is now integral to Eugene's public safety response, proving that its **civilian-trained, crisis response model** is effective.



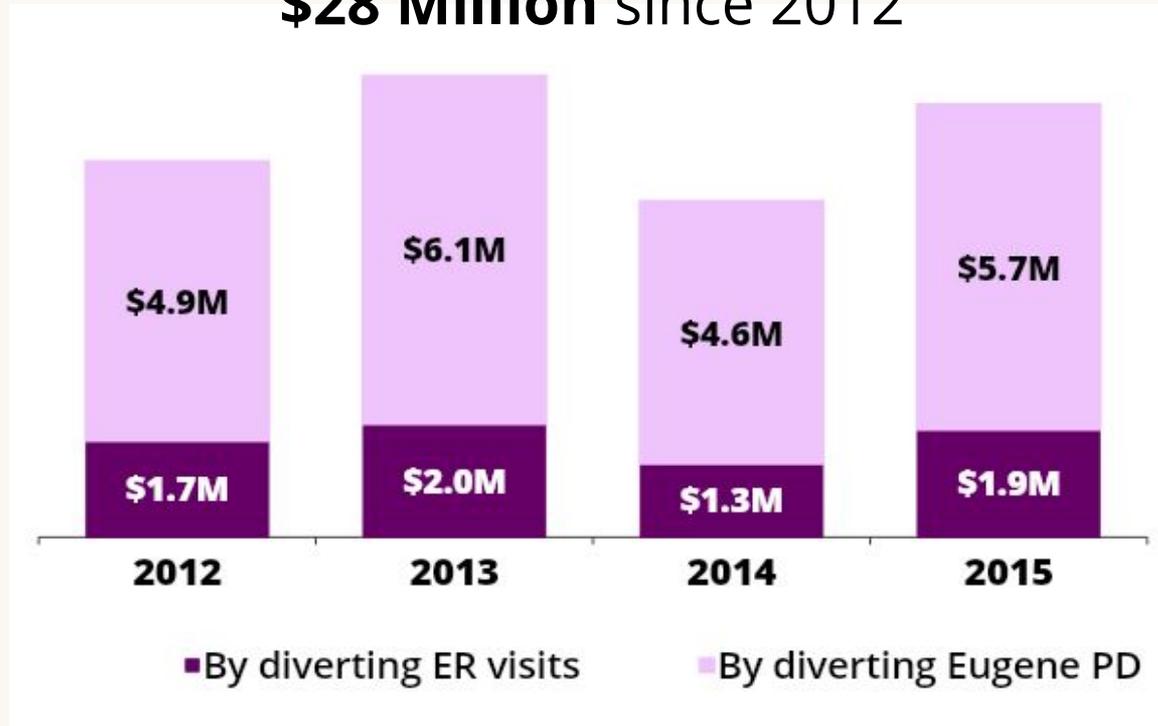
*"[Without CAHOOTS], it would be really tough because there would be calls that we would have to deal with that would tie up more time, and it would be tough for the citizens because they wouldn't be getting the level of service that they would like to get."*

*Officer Bo Rankin  
Eugene Police Department*



# Is CAHOOTS effective at diverting costs?

It has saved the City of Eugene  
**\$28 Million** since 2012



2015 data extrapolated from Jan 1 – Jun 8



U.S.

## When Mental-Health Experts, Not Police, Are the First Responders

Program in Eugene, Ore., is viewed as a model for reducing risk of violence

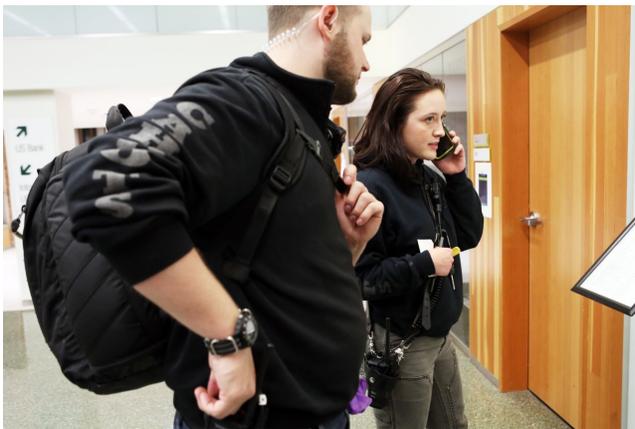
*By Zusha Elinson / Photographs by Thomas Patterson  
for The Wall Street Journal*

Nov. 24, 2018 10:00 a.m. ET

EUGENE, Ore.—They are the kind of calls that roll into police departments with growing regularity: a man in mental crisis; a woman hanging out near a dumpster at an upscale apartment complex; a homeless woman in distress.

In most American cities, it is police officers who respond to such calls, an approach law-enforcement experts say increases the risk of a violent encounter because they aren't always adequately trained to deal with the mentally ill. At least one in every four people killed by police has a serious mental illness, according to the Treatment Advocacy Center, a nonprofit based in Arlington, Va.

But in Eugene, Oregon's third-largest city, when police receive such calls, they aren't usually the ones who respond. Here, the first responders are typically pairs of hoodie-wearing crisis workers and medics driving white vans stocked with medical supplies, blankets and water.



Ms. Barnhill Hubbard and Mr. Hawks respond to a call Nov. 15 at the University of Oregon in Eugene, as part of a program called Cahoots, which stands for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Street.

They work for a nonprofit program called Cahoots—which stands for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Street—and they spent a recent November night calming tense situations, offering medical aid, and pointing people

toward shelters. Launched by social activists in 1989, Cahoots handled 17% of the 96,115 calls for service made to Eugene police last year.

“When I’m talking to a more liberal group of people, I’ll make the argument it’s the compassionate thing to do, it’s the humane thing to do,” said Manning Walker, a 35-year-old Cahoots medic and crisis worker. “When I’m talking to a conservative group, I’ll make the argument that it’s the fiscally conservative thing to do because it’s cheaper for us to do this than for the police and firefighters.”

In 2017, police officers spent 21% of their time responding to or transporting people with mental illness, according to preliminary data from a survey of 355 U.S. law enforcement agencies by the Treatment Advocacy Center.

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- 911 Emergency: Call Centers Can't Find Workers
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More police departments across the country are training their officers in techniques to deal with the

mentally ill. Los Angeles, Houston and Salt Lake City pair officers with mental-health workers with police officers to respond to certain calls. Still, the Center found that in 45% of the agencies polled the majority of officers haven’t received crisis-intervention training.

Last month, a 36-year-old man died after being repeatedly tased by San Mateo County Sheriff’s deputies responding to calls about a person walking in traffic. Chinedu Okobi, who struggled with mental-health issues, was unarmed. The sheriff’s office said he assaulted an officer, but his sister, a Facebook Inc. executive, said video of the incident shows he wasn’t a threat.

“They started shouting at him, they chased him and they tased him,” said Ebele Okobi, Facebook’s head of public policy for Africa. “None of that is how you interact with someone in crisis.”

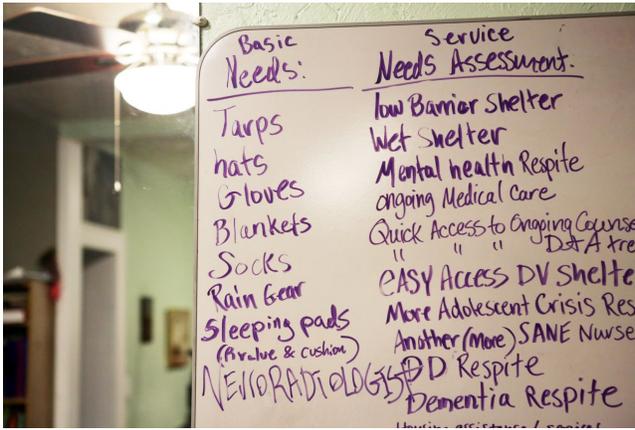
The district attorney is investigating the incident.

Public anger over police killings has pushed law-enforcement leaders in California to discuss how to replicate Eugene’s program in their state, said Brian Marvel, president of the Peace Officers Research Association of California, which represents more than 70,000 public-safety union members.

“If someone is having a mental issue then let’s send the pros who actually deal with this,” said Mr. Marvel.

In Olympia, Wash., police are setting up an \$800,000-a-year program inspired by Cahoots as the city grapples with a growing population of homeless people who suffer from mental illness, said Lt. Paul Lower.

The program in Eugene is unique because Cahoots is wired into the 911



An informal wish list in the Cahoots office in Eugene, listing the various needs for the homeless population, many of which suffer from mental-health issues. PHOTO: THOMAS PATTERSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

system and responds to most calls without police. The name Cahoots was intended to be a humorous nod to the fact that they are working closely with police. Cahoots now has 39 employees and costs the city around \$800,000 a year plus its vehicles, a fraction of the police department’s \$58 million annual budget. They are also paid to handle calls for a neighboring Springfield.



Manning Walker in a Cahoots van in Eugene, Ore. Cahoots employees dress in black sweatshirts and speak in calm tones with inviting body language. ‘I’ve learned ways to make myself smaller,’ the 6’ 2” Mr. Walker says. PHOTO: THOMAS PATTERSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“It allows police officers to...deal with crime, but it also allows us to offer a different service that is really needed,” said Lt. Ron Tinseth of the Eugene Police Department.

In contrast to police officers who typically seek to project authority at all times, Cahoots employees dress in black sweatshirts, listen to their police radios via earbuds, and speak in calm tones with inviting body language.

“I’ve learned ways to make myself smaller,” said Mr. Walker, a bearded, 6’ 2” former firefighter.

Gary Marshall, a 64-year-old who previously lived on the streets of Eugene, said the police approach was “name, serial number and up against the van.” In contrast, when he was having one of his frequent panic attacks, Cahoots counselors would bring the him inside and talk him down, he said.

When Mr. Walker and his partner Amy May, a crisis counselor, approached a man lying in the middle of the sidewalk on a busy street, they sat down on the cold cement at eye level and asked what he needed. He was thirsty and cold, so they gave him water and a tarp. They suggested places to sleep and the man moved along.

That same night, they arrived at the home of a teen who had been punching her mother. The air was thick with tension. They listened to the girl's story —adults were always trying to control her—as she stood above them on the porch steps. They talked with the mother. After an hour and a half, they brokered a peace treaty devised by the warring parties.

“We believe that people are the best experts in their own lives,” said Ms. May.



Ms. Barnhill Hubbard helps to clean up a camp for the homeless along the Willamette River and transport a woman in crisis to a shelter in Eugene.

**Write to Zusha Elinson at [zusha.elinson@wsj.com](mailto:zusha.elinson@wsj.com)**

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