

Progress on the Toronto Community Crisis Service

Date: July 12, 2022

To: City Council

From: City Manager

Wards: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25

SUMMARY

At its February 2, 2022 meeting, Toronto City Council approved the Toronto Community Crisis Support Service pilot, and requested a report back on the implementation status. This report provides an update on the implementation to date and identifies key next steps.

The Toronto Community Crisis Service has launched in four areas of the city. The new service will test a Toronto-specific, community-based approach to mental health crisis calls to 9-1-1 and 2-1-1, including those involving persons in crisis and wellness checks. The pilot is one of SafeTO's first year priority actions focused on reducing vulnerability in Toronto through proactive mental health support strategies and community-based crisis support models.

The Toronto Community Crisis Service was launched in two phases, starting with the pilots in the downtown east and northeast on March 31 and April 4, 2022 respectively. This report will provide preliminary program data from these two pilots. The next phase of the pilots was launched in the downtown west pilot on July 11, and the northwest pilot on July 18.

Preliminary program data from March 31 to June 18, 2022 demonstrates that the Toronto Community Crisis Service is successfully diverting person in crisis calls from a police-response to a community-based response, connecting those in crisis to appropriate community-based services, completing follow-ups and supporting clients who need ongoing case management.

While additional time is needed to effectively assess the pilot's performance and impact, the Toronto Community Crisis Service has been recognized nationally, and internationally, as a transformative step in reimagining an alternative to police-response to person in crisis calls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to adjust Toronto Community Crisis Service pilot boundaries if required within existing resources to enhance local coordination and service availability and to negotiate and enter into any agreements or amendments required to achieve this outcome.

2. City Council forward the Progress on the Toronto Community Crisis Service report to the Toronto Police Services Board for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no immediate financial impacts in 2022 arising from the recommendations in this report.

Sufficient base funding is available in Social Development, Finance and Administration's approved 2022 Operating Budget for the implementation of the Toronto Community Crisis Service initiative at this stage. Any financial adjustments for operating the Service in 2023 will be considered in the 2023 Operating Budget process along with other Council priorities.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

EQUITY IMPACT

The Toronto Community Crisis Service will have a positive equity impact on Indigenous, Black, racialized, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. The new service may help build confidence in community safety efforts, and potentially lead to better outcomes for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities that face over-policing and concerns about police interactions. This service may reduce police engagements, and increase community-based solutions that connect people in crisis to much needed mental health and wellbeing programs and services. This community-based service will prioritize the community safety and wellbeing of Toronto's most vulnerable populations.

DECISION HISTORY

At its February 2, 2022 meeting, City Council adopted with amendments EX29.1 from the City Manager on the 2022 Launch of Community Crisis Support Service Pilots and Policing Reform Updates. The directions included a report back to City Council in July, 2022 on the implementation of the Toronto Community Crisis Service Pilots to date. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EX29.1>)

At its February 18, 2021 meeting, City Council adopted with amendments EX21.2 2021 Capital and Operating Budgets. Directions in EX21.2 included a report back on 9-1-1 call centre operations, Community and Safety Wellbeing work, and additional non-police interventions. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX21.2>)

At its February 2, 2021 meeting, City Council adopted with amendments EX20.1 Community Crisis Support Service Pilot. Additional amendments included a request for a report back by end of 2021 on the Community Crisis Support Service pilots, an analysis of 9-1-1 operations, intergovernmental requests, directions on mental health and supportive system coordination, and changes requested to policing services and budget.

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX20.1>)

At its August 18, 2020 meeting, the Toronto Police Services Board adopted 81 decisions related to policing reforms including items requested by Toronto City Council at its June 29, 2020 meeting.

(<https://tpsb.ca/meetings/meetings-past>)

At its June 29, 2020 meeting, City Council adopted CC22.2 Changes to Policing in Toronto that included 36 decisions related to policing reforms covering areas touching on policing, public safety and crisis response. In addition, Council asked the City Manager to report to City Council with terms of reference for an anti-Black racism council advisory body.

(<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.CC22.2>)

COMMENTS

Program Launch

Piloting of the Toronto Community Crisis Service is a priority action under year one of the SafeTO Implementation Plan. The pilot is allowing the City to test, evaluate, and revise a community-based crisis response before implementing it at a larger scale.

Implementation of the Toronto Community Crisis Service has taken a phased approach to ensure service delivery is efficient, consistent, and reliable. This approach has also ensured that each pilot is able to adapt to local service conditions and emerging opportunities. The service was launched in two phases, with the pilots in the downtown east and northeast launching first.

Downtown East Pilot

The downtown east pilot led by Gerstein Crisis Centre launched on March 31, 2022. The service is currently operating in the catchment area serviced by Toronto Police Service, Division 51. Gerstein Crisis Centre brings over three decades of experience implementing a strengths-based, non-medical, trauma informed, and harm reduction approach to service delivery. Their partners include, Strides Toronto, Toronto North Support Services, Unity Health Toronto, WoodGreen Community Services, Health Access St. James Town, Inner City Health Associates, Regent Park Community Health Centre, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre.

Northeast Pilot

The northeast pilot led by TAIBU Community Health Centre launched on April 4, 2022. Their teams are currently operating in the catchment area serviced by Toronto Police Service, Division 42 and 43. TAIBU Community Health Centre brings to the pilots an Afro-centric approach to mental health and wellbeing. They are working in partnership with Hong Fook Mental Health Association, Strides Toronto, Canadian Mental Health

Association Toronto Branch, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Scarborough Health Network, Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities, and the Black Health Alliance.

The two pilots operate twenty-four hours a day for six days a week with the service being partially closed on Saturday. Community anchor partners are continuing to build capacity and recruit crisis workers to make service 24/7. This report will provide early program data and analysis from these two pilots.

Preliminary Program Data

Program data for the Toronto Community Crisis Service is collected by Toronto Police Service through transferred calls, FindHelp | 211 Central as the program dispatch partner, and the community anchor partners who track mobile crisis team engagement and wrap-up details

The City has also partnered with the Provincial System Support Program and Shkaabe Makwa at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health to establish a program evaluation framework co-developed with our community anchor partners, the Toronto Police Service and FindHelp | 211 Central.

A comprehensive evaluation report on the pilot will be brought to City Council in October 2023, and will include a report from the Provincial System Support Program and Shkaabe Makwa at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. In the interim, staff are using the emerging data from the evaluation to inform service delivery and adjustments to the pilots to ensure operational efficiency and service excellence.

This report includes available program data from March 31 to June 18, 2022 to offer some preliminary insight into the pilot's performance. The data demonstrates that the pilot is succeeding in advancing the pilot's key outcomes, including:

- Diverting calls related to persons in crisis away from a police-response to a community-based response;
- Connecting those in crisis to appropriate community-based services; and,
- Completing follow-ups and supporting clients who need case management.

As the service is in its early stages, there is no historical data to allow for comparison. Additional data is required to inform a more comprehensive assessment of the pilot's performance and impact, as well as recommendations for future service delivery. The City of Toronto will continue to collect data over the course of the pilot phase, which will be included in future updates to City Council.

The following section provides a high level summary of key program data. Attachment 1 presents the data as an infographic.

Service Uptake

- The Toronto Community Crisis Service received a total of 549 calls for service from 9-1-1, 2-1-1 and directly to the anchor partners during the period from March 31 to June 18. Of the total calls received, 438 (80 per cent) were dispatched to the mobile teams.

- 346 calls (79 per cent) resulting in the mobile crisis teams being dispatched were through 9-1-1; and 70 calls (16 per cent) were received directly by the community anchor partner; and 22 calls (5 per cent) originated from 2-1-1.
- Not all calls received were dispatched. 111 of all calls received (20 per cent), were not dispatched. 53 calls (10 per cent) from all sources were handled over the phone with the provision of information or referrals. 30 calls (5 per cent) were sent back to the Toronto Police Service as they did not meet pilot criteria or the mobile teams were unavailable. 21 calls (4 per cent) ended with the client hanging up the phone and/or refusing service, and 7 calls (1 per cent) experienced technical issues.
- The most common 9-1-1 call type transferred to the pilots were person in crisis calls at 195 (36 per cent); wellbeing check at 182 (33 per cent); and distressing or disorderly behaviour at 108 (20 per cent).

Dispatch and On Scene Interaction

- The median time for the mobile teams to arrive on scene was 19 minutes and the median time the mobile crisis teams spent on scene engaging clients was 39 minutes.
- The majority of service requests were completed successfully. The table below offers a breakdown of the on scene interaction for the 438 dispatched calls for service:

	Number of Dispatches	Per cent of Calls Dispatched
Successfully supported the client	267	61 per cent
Unable to locate the client	109	25 per cent
Service declined by the client	39	9 per cent
Service no longer needed	23	5 per cent

Preliminary Call Outcomes

The preliminary program data demonstrates that the Toronto Community Crisis Service provided connection to community-based services through post-crisis follow-ups and supports, referrals, and case management for clients.

- The crisis teams completed 340 post-crisis follow-ups with clients within the 48 hour service standard.
- The crisis teams have been able to successfully offer 157 referrals to clients, either on the primary call or during a post-crisis follow-up.

- 70 clients (26 per cent) were connected to case management supports provided by the anchor partners.
- Only 41 (9 per cent) of all calls attended resulted in a visit to a hospital emergency room: 29 times (71 per cent) at the client's request or team's recommendation, 10 times (24 per cent) due to medical emergency or need identified, and 2 times (5 per cent) as a result of a Mental Health Apprehension involving the Toronto Police Service in a joint response.
- In the vast majority of cases, the mobile teams did not identify a need to involve other emergency services. The Service made requests for police attendance on 9 calls (2 per cent) of all calls attended and requested ambulance attendance on 11 calls (3 per cent) of all calls attended.

Call Diversion

- Preliminary program performance data highlight the successful diversion of 386 calls (87 per cent) received from 9-1-1 to community-based crisis response.
- 321 calls (72 per cent) transferred from 9-1-1 to the Toronto Community Crisis Support Service resulted in the mobile team being dispatched and were handled without police attendance.
- 65 calls (15 per cent) transferred from 911 to the Toronto Community Crisis Support Service resulted in FindHelp | 211 Central offering callers information and referrals to appropriate supports over the phone without a mobile team dispatch.

Building Community Awareness

- The preliminary data on efforts to build service user and community trust in the pilots include indicators that such as the pilot's outreach efforts, awareness building, and service user feedback. The community anchor partners have completed over 144 outreach activities within their pilot areas to local shelters, businesses, community centres, and court houses to raise awareness about the new Service.
- At the time of report writing, no service user feedback had been collected. However, client outcomes and experiences will be captured as part of the third-party evaluation by Provincial System Support Program.

Early Achievements and Challenges

Staff from Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, the community anchor partners, and Toronto Police Service continue to work in close collaboration to build on early achievements and resolve early challenges in order to strengthen service delivery. Examples of early achievements and challenges are identified below:

Early Achievements

- *Effective collaboration between partners and the City*
Anchor partners and FindHelp | 211 Central have highlighted that strong collaboration with each other and the City project team has been pivotal for the implementation of the service. Community anchor partners have shared best

practices for building a team, supported each other's recruitment activities, encouraged crisis worker collaboration through training, and adopted a continuous learning approach to identify system improvements to service processes. The City project team has regular engagement with each anchor partner through bi-weekly meetings and monthly meetings between all anchor partners to foster stronger collaboration, strengthen cross-agency communications and share organizational and systems learnings.

- *Strong partnerships with first responders*
Early interactions between the mobile crisis teams and first responders have demonstrated a collaborative working relationship. In some cases, the Toronto Community Crisis Service has successfully engaged persons in crisis with Toronto Police Service, Toronto Paramedic Services, and/or Toronto Fire Services in attendance to assist. To strengthen relationships with Toronto Police Service, the anchor partners have engaged their local police divisions and completed presentations to frontline officers to raise awareness about the service. Toronto Paramedic Services and Toronto Fire Services have also shared updates about the program to their staff. In addition, Toronto Paramedic Services helped onboard service crisis workers by providing sixteen hours of training in standard first aid, CPR, and the administration of an automated external defibrillator.
- *Service coordination and access*
As part of the pilot, the community anchor partners offer a follow-up within 48 hours after a visit by the mobile crisis teams and may provide referrals to other supports as needed. The community anchor partners are also able to provide case management supports for individuals and their families for up to 90 days. Preliminary pilot data shows that the anchor partners are connecting persons in crisis to supports and identifying unmet needs. The most common supports for client needs have included: access to crisis counseling, crisis or shelter beds, family supports, and access to primary care. As the Toronto Community Crisis Service develops, this information will be important in helping to inform intergovernmental discussions around service and community investment requirements to support the success of the Service.

Early Challenges

- *Access and Dispatch Process*
Continuous enhancements are being made to refine the access and dispatch process in response to fluctuations in the number of calls being transferred from 9-1-1 to 2-1-1 for response. Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, Toronto Police Service and FindHelp | 211 Central recognize that this is part of a larger piece of collaborative change management that will be ongoing. Actions to date have included enhancing FindHelp | 211 Central's ability to support all four pilots through staff hiring and capacity building, and increasing 9-1-1 call taker knowledge and awareness of the Toronto Community Crisis Service through ongoing training and information sharing. It has also been identified that the current call transfer process is contributing to increased time spent by the 9-1-1 call takers on calls as they inform callers about the service and secure consent before transferring to 2-1-1. A public education campaign set

to take place in fall 2022 will further raise awareness for Torontonians to call 2-1-1 instead of 9-1-1 for non-emergency mental health crisis supports, thereby further routing calls to the new Service.

- *Hiring challenges for community anchor partners*
Some of the community anchor partners have experienced challenges in hiring a full complement of crisis worker staff positions for the Service. Some of the hiring challenges relate to finding candidates with the requisite skills and experience for the staff positions. Limitations in staffing have affected the ability of some of the pilots to provide 24/7 coverage and have put some pressure on the workload of existing staff. City staff continue to work with the community anchor partners to address the challenges with hiring. City staff have leveraged Social Development, Finance and Administration's networks of community partners to promote the job opportunities available in the service, and posted the job calls on the City website and on City social media. The community anchor partners have also supported each other by sharing successful recruitment strategies.
- *Long wait-times for clients at hospital*
Crisis teams have transported clients voluntarily to the hospital in only 7 per cent of all calls attended. However, these emergency visits have involved significant time with the mobile crisis teams spending on average four hours with the client as they are admitted and seen. When the teams are occupied at the hospital they cannot receive additional dispatches. City staff are working with community anchor partners and local hospitals to identify ways to streamline admissions.

Launch of Next Two Pilots

The Toronto Community Crisis Service was launched in two phases, with the pilots in the downtown east and north east launching first this past spring. The next two pilots, in the downtown west and the northwest, launched in July 2022.

Downtown West Pilot

The downtown west pilot launched on July 11, 2022 and operate in the catchment area serviced by Toronto Police Service, Division 14. This pilot is Indigenous-led, with the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations as the lead agency with a focus on harm reduction and holistic health and wellness. The service was given the traditional name Kamaamwizme wii Naagidiwendiiying which means coming together to heal or to take care of each other. The service is run in collaboration with ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency and Niiwin Wendaanimak / Four Winds Indigenous Health and Wellness Program, based out of Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre. The mobile teams are operating on a 24/7 basis.

Northwest Pilot

The northwest pilot launched on July 18, 2022 in the catchment area predominately serviced by Toronto Police Service, Division 23 and 31. The Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto Branch will lead this pilot in coalition with seven other local organizations: Addiction Services of York Region, Black Creek Community Health Centre, Black Health Alliance, Caribbean African Canadian Social Services, Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre, Rexdale Community Health Centre, and Yorktown Family Services. Teams will initially be available 24/6 with the service closed on

Saturday. The pilot is actively recruiting crisis workers to build capacity for a 24/7 service.

City of Toronto's Role in Supporting the Pilots

The City will continue to support pilot implementation with a focus on ongoing oversight and consistent service delivery across pilot areas. Key areas of ongoing support include:

- *Backbone support* - Providing financial and logistical support to pilot implementation. Including supporting the standardization of data collection and managing the reporting of outputs and outcomes on an ongoing basis to recommend necessary adjustments to enhance service delivery and availability.
- *Training and development* - Partnering with Gerstein Crisis Centre on the establishment of a comprehensive training program for the Toronto Community Crisis Service. The program was informed by best practices in other jurisdictions and incorporates expertise from all four community anchor partners. It integrates over 150 hours of both classroom and scenario-based learning on core skills and foundational principles. The program will be used to facilitate ongoing professional development and learning opportunities year round.
- *Policies and standards* - Working collaboratively with all community anchor partners to develop service standard guidelines that outline customer service standards, client rights and responsibilities, and complaints and feedback processes.
- *Change management* - Continuing to support change management efforts with the Toronto Police Service and the 911 call centre by developing tip sheets, informational pamphlets, and training materials to be used by staff. A total of 51 presentations were given to Toronto Police Service staff at divisional meetings to inform front line officers about the operation of the service.
- *Community engagement* - Establishing a City-Wide Pilot Community Advisory Table comprised of representatives from local community advisory tables, leaders from mental health and related sectors, senior leadership from the City of Toronto, Toronto Police Service, and the community anchor partners. This table will continue to support the pilot by providing strategic feedback, monitoring and input.
- *Ongoing collaboration* - Facilitating opportunities for anchor partners to collaborate on systems transformation through ongoing engagement, issues management, evaluation and tracking.

Need for Community Investments for Crisis Prevention and Intervention

As the pilots are implemented, early data about unmet needs is reinforcing the importance of greater intergovernmental investments in mental health, substance use services and other supportive services. The City of Toronto will continue to engage with Ontario Health Teams and the provincial government to identify future funding opportunities and areas for intergovernmental coordination. Rising needs for access to mental health and supportive services due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic further emphasizes the need for a robust mental health and addictions system.

Next Steps in Building the Toronto Community Crisis Service

Staff have identified the following next steps for the continued development of the Toronto Community Crisis Service:

- *Monitoring and evaluating the service*
A measured approach to service implementation and expansion is essential in order to ensure the safety of the clients and service providers, optimize outcomes and manage scalability. A comprehensive evaluation report on the pilot will be brought to City Council by October 2023 and will include a report from the Provincial System Support Program and Shkaabe Makwa at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Ongoing data from the evaluation will also be used to inform service delivery and utilized to support necessary adjustments to the pilots to ensure operational efficiency and service excellence.
- *Reviewing and adjusting pilot boundaries*
Current pilot boundaries were determined by matching proposed service areas to police service divisions. A key takeaway since implementation of the pilot has been that these boundaries may not conform to how clients use services and access health care. Community anchor partners for the northeast and downtown east pilots have identified the need to adjust their catchment areas to include adjacent Toronto Police Service divisions to better facilitate access to health care services and coordinate care for clients. For the northeast, the adjustment would mean adding Toronto Police Service Division 41 to the catchment area and Toronto Police Service Division 52 to the downtown east catchment area.
- *Reviewing Auditor General's Report*
At the Toronto Police Services Board meeting on June 22, 2022, the Auditor General's reports on the Audit of 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point Operations and the Review of Toronto Police Service – Opportunities to Support More Effective Responses to Calls for Service were discussed and adopted. The Auditor General's reports was also discussed and adopted by the City's Audit Committee on July 11, 2022. City staff are reviewing these reports and will consider the impacts on the Toronto Community Crisis Service once City Council has had a chance to receive the reports.
- *Community awareness building*
To ensure public awareness of the Toronto Community Crisis Service, the City is working with the community anchor partners to develop and conduct a multi-lingual public awareness campaign to inform residents about the service. A key element of the campaign will be to promote the multiple access channels for the service, including further encouraging Torontonians to call 2-1-1 instead of 9-1-1 for non-emergency mental health crisis supports. The public education campaign will be launched in fall of 2022.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Progress on Toronto Community Crisis Service Infographic