



First Call Cuyahoga: Community Co-Response Startup Funding



The Cuyahoga County Department of Public Safety & Justice Services (PSJS) is introducing a new Community Co-Response Startup Fund to strengthen locally led co-response initiatives across the county. This program provides seed funding to help communities start, sustain, and expand co-response programs that address local needs and build on existing resources. It builds off the successful co-response model connecting local safety and mental health service providers in Cuyahoga County, launched by the City of Shaker Heights in 2022.

Communities will have the flexibility to design programs that best fit their needs, while PSJS offers guidance and coordination during development. Funding decisions will follow standardized criteria to ensure readiness, capacity building, and strong community commitment. This initiative is designed for long-term impact—not short-term solutions—and requires serious engagement for sustainable success.

OVERVIEW



ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

A single community or a coalition of up to 4 communities.



FUNDING

Up to **3 years of programming** (initial **2-year contract**, with option for a third year).



COMMUNITY INTEREST

Communities interested in applying for funding should first notify Cuyahoga County of their intent to apply. This step ensures that the community's program goals align with the funding requirements. Please note that funding cannot be used to support planning processes.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Requests for funding will be accepted on a rolling basis, with cohort decisions announced **on or around June 1 and December 1 each year**.

REQUIRED PROGRAM COMPONENTS



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Must include **at least one community and one behavioral health care provider agency**. If there is no partnership, PSJS can assist in connecting with providers. Communities may hire their own licensed mental health worker **if proper supervisory structure and licensure oversight are in place**. Otherwise, a behavioral health provider agency is required.
- Any coalition of communities applying for funding must have a signed **memorandum of understanding or agreement among all participating cities**. This document should outline each community's commitment and include signatures from the mayor or trustee(s), the safety director if applicable, the police chief, and the fire chief. If a behavioral health provider agency is involved, the memorandum must state which city will hold the contract or identify the community that will assume this role if the provider is not yet known. For a single community operating alone, a letter of commitment from the mayor, manager, or trustee(s) is required. This letter must also be countersigned by the safety director if applicable, the police chief, and the fire chief.



PROGRAM MODEL

- Only **co-responder models** are eligible for this funding phase. Co-responder models must include public safety professionals (Police, Fire, EMS) responding with a behavioral health specialist. They may also include behavioral health specialists responding on their own, in addition to the team's initial response operations, for the following types of services: follow-up calls, after-hours referrals, responses to high-frequency, known individuals.
- **Care response** and **9-1-1 dispatch response models** are **not supported at this time**.



PROGRAM READINESS

Before funding discussions, communities must define:

- **Personnel:** Number of staff, reporting structure, job descriptions, compensation, training requirements for staff and first responders. Programs should incorporate employee assistance programming for behavioral health professionals and first responders.
- **Operations:** Hours of operation, record-keeping and confidentiality policies, updated policing orders or protocols for integration.
- **Call Tracking:** Types of calls categorized for response, incorporation of employee assistance programming for behavioral health professionals and first responders.

Applicants should show:

- Demonstrated community need through identification of calls where mental health or substance use is listed as the primary concern.
- Additional information on risk factors such as limited community access to mental health or substance use treatment.



BUDGET REQUIREMENT

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget detailing all program costs, including personnel, fringe benefits, equipment (e.g., radios, phones), transportation (vehicle use or mileage), and printing of program materials. If a mental health service provider is involved, all payments to that provider must be itemized.

A sustainability plan is required, outlining how the program will continue after County funding ends. The County reserves the right to adjust budgets to ensure equity across communities.

Each participating community must demonstrate a clear financial commitment in the form of public or grant funds; in-kind contributions will not be accepted. These commitments must be shown as revenue streams in the budget. Individual contributions are mandatory for eligibility.

AWARD

Cuyahoga County will award funding to continue sustainment of existing programs and for new programs for two (2) years with an option to extend the commitment for a third year. Applications for sustaining existing programs must be filed separately from applications to bring on new communities. Third year funding decisions will be made by PSJS following review of quarterly reporting and overall team success. Third year funding commitments are also contingent on continued availability of funds.

Funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis, and regular reporting (quarterly) will be required.

- Cuyahoga County will consider funding requests for up to 50% of operational costs per year for team, or a maximum of \$50,000 annually per community, whichever is lower.
- The funding of \$50,000 annually per community can apply to communities working together under one program, there is a maximum of \$200,000 annually per group of communities that apply for funding.

Questions:

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