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Care-Based Safety Team Announces Groundbreaking Plan for Michigan's First Unarmed, Non-Police Response Program in Washtenaw County to be Piloted in 2023

Washtenaw County, MI – Joining a recent national wave of calls for transformation of traditional ‘public safety’ measures (including relying on police to respond or accompany emergency responders to 911 calls made by the public), a community-based organization will pilot an unarmed, non-police response program, to launch mid-2023. This is Michigan’s first unarmed, non-police response program of this nature. After nearly a year of rigorous research, led by a design team of diverse, dedicated, and expert community members, along with ongoing feedback sessions throughout the community, Care-Based Safety (CBS) has released a [Strategic Plan](#). This document offers context about the design phase, pilot plans for Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, the founding team, and the initiative’s core values. The program plan includes: Urgent Response (through a public 7 digit phone number separate from 911), community building and skill training, and collaborating with local organizations. Under the proposed structure, local residents can call the number to address critical issues such as conflict de-escalation, accessing essential resources, and wellness checks.

The CBS team, [initially announced in August 2022](#), is a group of community members and caretakers of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, with a shared commitment to creating a place where everyone is safe, cared for, and able to thrive. CBS grew out of but is now totally independent from the [Coalition for Re-envisioning Our Safety](#) (CROS), a multi-racial coalition with an advocacy branch who has successfully advocated to the Ann Arbor City Council to allocate \$3.5 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds towards unarmed response, and building political support from residents, who responded positively to such a program in a city survey. CBS has secured strategic investments from multiple sources to pilot the project in Ypsilanti. The full Strategic Plan, updates, and other resources about CBS can be found [here](#).



Quotes from CBS members:

"This work gives me hope that we can return to neighborhoods and communities centered in care and regard for our shared humanity. Non-police care response models are proven not only to save lives but they redefine public safety in a way that decriminalizes issues like homelessness, poverty, addiction, mental health and other disabilities. Care-based safety contributes to a culture of consent rather than one with the threat of force. This approach signals to those in our community that we do not need cops to keep us safe, what we need is each other." - Yodit Mesfin Johnson, Ypsilanti

"We need an unarmed response team, a community-centered, care-based way to address mental health emergencies and conflicts before they escalate, because this is what we have been asking for, this is where the future leads. We know the current system DOES NOT work. The evidence tells us that there is another way. Our communities that have been systematically divested from deserve an infusion of investment and love as a beginning of a communal healing process." - Desiraé Simmons, Ypsilanti

"Washtenaw County has a long history of organizing toward a community of safety where Black, disabled, houseless, and mentally distressed people are treated with dignity and care, rather than violence. I am excited for generations of multi-racial community action to bear fruit and for our friends, families, and neighbors to have a new option to reach out to in times of conflict and distress, knowing they will be treated with care rather than punishment." - Luna Hughson, Ann Arbor

"Everyone in our community needs someone they feel safe calling for help. For too many of our neighbors - BIPOC, immigrant, queer and disabled communities among them - the presence of police removes that feeling of safety and introduces fears of harm or criminalization. Having an urgent unarmed, non-police response builds towards an affirmative future that we wish to live in - one where we address the root causes of harm, poverty and criminalization with compassion and expertise. I am excited that we are building that vision of an interwoven Washtenaw together." - Ryan Henyard, Dexter

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