



Northern
California
North Peninsula Chapter

ACLU - North Peninsula Chapter's Guide to
Support Unarmed Crisis Response for Mental Health Emergencies
Tuesday, December 5th, 2023 at 1:00 pm

Goal: Convince the Board of Supervisors to follow the Behavioral Health Commission and Mental Health Services Act Committee's recommendation to implement a **non-armed** 24/7 crisis response program for mental health emergencies throughout San Mateo County.

Why we need your help: On December 5th, the Board of Supervisors (BoS) will hold a public Study Session on "Mobile Mental Health Emergency Response Models." We want to urge the BoS to fund and implement a non-armed mobile mental health crisis response program with crucial components described further below. We offer these instructions and an optional template to prepare your **written or live (in person or virtual) public comment**.

Instructions for making public comment in person, on Zoom, or by email:

- The Board of Supervisors meeting starts at 1:00 pm and you can participate in person or by Zoom.
- You'll probably have only 1 minute to speak. That goes by very quickly, so imagine you have only 30 seconds. Practice your script beforehand to make sure it fits within 60 seconds. When your 1 minute ends, finish your sentence, and stop speaking.
- Be respectful when you speak. It's also okay to be passionate.

In person:

1. The Board of Supervisors meets at the Hall of Justice, [400 County Center](#) in Redwood City. (Park at the Parking Garage at 400 Middlefield Rd off of Veterans Blvd for \$1.00 per hour). The Board of Supervisors chambers is at the end of the hall on the first floor. You'll need to go through security.
2. When you arrive, look for a comment card in the entry room and fill it out. Hand the card to the Board Clerk at the front of the room before the meeting.
3. When the Clerk calls your name, go to the podium to give your comment.

4. The Clerk will set a timer you can see from the podium. At the end of your one-minute slot, return to your seat.

On Zoom:

1. Zoom link: <https://smcgov.zoom.us/j/91404119375>. The webinar ID is: 914 0411 9375. The meeting may also be accessed via telephone by dialing +1 669 900 6833 (Local). Enter the webinar ID:914 0411 9375, then press #
2. Zoom comments are usually before in-person comments.
3. Click on the Zoom “Raise hand” button when they ask for public comment.
4. You will not be on video, so don’t worry about looking presentable!
5. There is a timer on the screen to track your time.

By email:

1. Put the date and title of the study session in the subject line
2. Send your email to boardfeedback@smcgov.org
3. *Optional: copy or bcc the ACLU chapter email, NPenACLU@gmail.com.*

Talking points:

1. My name is _____ and I live in _____ [town or city].
2. *Optional: I am a member of ____ [community group]. [If you belong to many groups, we suggest only listing 1 or 2 affiliations.]*
3. Thank you for offering this study session to consider mobile responses to mental health emergencies.
4. I urge the Board of Supervisors to implement a county-wide, 24/7 non-armed mobile mental health crisis response program to ensure that our neighbors who need community support receive equal access to the care, compassion, and properly qualified support that they deserve.
5. ***[Say a sentence or two about why you personally care about this issue. If something in the presentations resonates with you, feel free to reiterate that point]***

For example, “I have loved ones who needed help. Unfortunately after calling 911 we were met with police officers and that made the situation worse.”

[Choose from the statements below or add your own. Is there a question you have after the presentations that you would like the Board of Supervisors to consider?]

6. When specialized, unarmed, crisis response teams are the default first responders to behavioral health emergencies, we reduce the risk of police use of force, violence against people with disabilities, and unnecessary arrests.
7. A non-armed mental health crisis response program should include the Behavioral Health Commission's recommendation that these teams include an EMT and either a peer support specialist or a licensed mental health clinician.
8. A non-armed mental health crisis response team should be available to people who call either 911 or 988. People calling an emergency line to request life-saving support should receive timely and appropriate services, regardless of which emergency number they call first ("there should be no wrong door").
9. How can 911 dispatch consistently and predictably match the caller with an appropriate emergency response, including a non-armed crisis response, throughout the county?
10. A non-armed mental health crisis response program should be sufficiently staffed so that help can get to the person in crises within 15 minutes, which is a recommended best practice.
11. Thank you.

What we know about the study session: The lineup of presenters that we are currently aware of for the study session includes:

- San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services
- 911/Public Safety Communications
- San Mateo City Chief of Police Ed Barberini
- San Mateo City Police Captain Matt Lethin
- [Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team](#) (CWCRT)
- [Crisis Assistance Response & Evaluation Services Program](#) (CARES), Half Moon Bay
- Community Services, City of Half Moon Bay
- San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus
- San Mateo County Behavioral Health Commission
- [Wellpower](#) (mental health services in Denver, CO)
- Denver Dept. of Public Health and Environment

Background:

San Mateo County community members overwhelmingly support an unarmed, 24/7, county-wide crisis response program. When specialized, unarmed, crisis response teams are the default first responders to behavioral health emergencies, we reduce the risk of police use of force, violence against people with disabilities, and unnecessary arrests. By default, when community members experience mental health, substance

use, housing insecurity, and other nonviolent emergencies, these unarmed civilian crisis response teams should be assigned.

1. The [Behavioral Health Commission made well-researched recommendations for an unarmed crisis response program.](#)
2. [74 individuals and organizations signed an open letter advocating implementation of those recommendations.](#)
3. Based on strong community demand, [San Mateo County's Mental Health Services Act Planning Committee \(MHSAPC\) recommended prioritizing funding for unarmed, 24/7 crisis response to serve the entire community.](#)
4. The [CARES Program](#) in Half Moon Bay is a non-armed mobile mental health crisis response program available to coastside residents that launched nearly two years ago.