



SHAPING CRISIS RESPONSE: SPOTLIGHTING TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS



Travis County, Texas
County Seat: Austin, Texas
Population: 1,290,188

The National Association of Counties (NACo), in collaboration with [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#) and [RAND](#), hosted a series of conversations with county leaders to understand the progress, challenges and lessons learned from 911/988 interoperability across various models, including embedded clinicians, call transfer and co-located response. This series will spotlight the work of five of the innovative counties shaping crisis response systems.

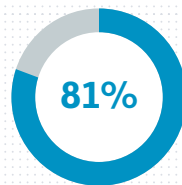
Travis County's commitment to transforming behavioral health care into a readily available emergency resource is apparent the minute 911 dispatchers ask, "Are you calling for police, fire, EMS or mental health services?"

In 2019, Travis County expanded its partnership with Integral Care, the local mental health and intellectual and developmental disability authority, creating the Crisis Call Diversion Program (CCD), which introduced co-location in its 911 public safety answering points (PSAP) centers. **In under six weeks, Travis County shifted some of the employees from Integral Care's Expanded Mobile Outreach Team (EMCOT) to new roles as Crisis Center Clinicians (C3s), who serve as trained behavioral health experts embedded within 911 PSAP centers.**

Travis County introduced a call tree to assess the eligibility to divert calls to C3s. This call tree prompts 911 dispatchers to ask whether weapons are present, if a crime is occurring and if other people are in immediate danger. If the situation is deemed safe, the dispatcher

passes the call to a C3, who is co-located in Travis County's PSAP, guaranteeing a seamless transfer. Once a C3 is on the line, they draw from their specialized training to evaluate and provide appropriate care including de-escalation, emotional support and community resources. If an in-person response is needed, all call takers can dispatch an EMCOT unit, offering in-person behavioral health support with or without law enforcement and EMS.

In only three and a half years, the CCD increased its full-time employees from six and a half to 19, who are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. **In 2022, C3's handled 6,981 calls and diverted 81 percent of calls away from law enforcement, reducing the demand on law enforcement while streamlining access to behavioral health care for Travis County residents.** Looking forward, the county seeks to improve its technology and data-sharing abilities between C3s and law enforcement agencies to provide the best possible care in times of crisis.



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NACo would like to Marisa Malik, Kedra Priest and Colleen McCollough at Integral Care for sharing information on Travis County. This spotlight was created with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts.