



Mental Health & Police response

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INTRODUCTION

- In recent years, the intersection of mental health and police response has gained significant attention.
- Society has become increasingly aware of mental health issues.
- It is essential to address how law enforcement interacts with individuals facing mental crisis and how the police are trained to deal with those individuals.
- This topic delves into complexities and challenges of addressing mental health concerns within policing and urgent need of strategies that prioritize understanding, support and collaboration to ensure the safety and well-being of all involved.
- *Korchinski-Paquet's Death - Toronto family questions police involvement in woman's fatal fall from balcony (2020)*

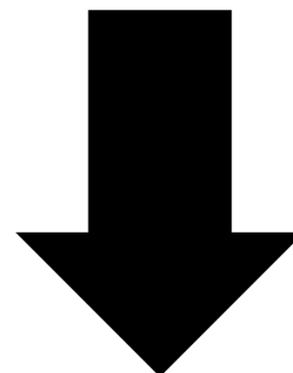


POLICY OVERVIEW (PART 1)

- The Toronto Community Crisis Service – TCCS is part of the city of Toronto.
- It is a community based multidisciplinary program formed by crisis workers
- Crisis workers respond to non-emergency calls from people in crisis.
- It is committed to treat mental health crisis as a public health issue, not a public safety issue.
- Principles: Harm reduction, pathways to access support services while taking in consideration cultural individual needs.

**Toronto
Community
Crisis
Services
TCCS**

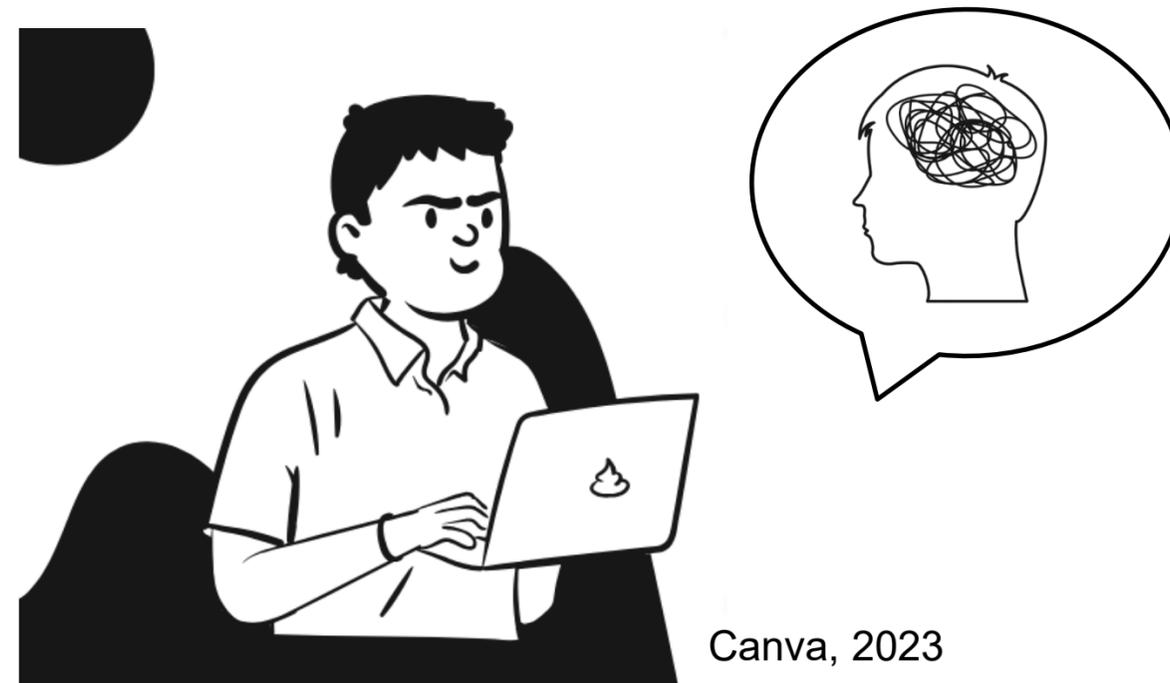
mental
health
matters



POLICY OVERVIEW (PART 2)

**How
does the
program
work?**

- Trained teams (multidisciplinary) will respond to calls received based on: dispatch criteria, call type, location, and availability of teams.
- Community-based program, focused on non-police response to mental health crisis calls.
 - The TCCS supports individuals 16 years of age and older.
- Prioritized communities impacted by over-policing and who experience of mental health issues and substance use.
 - It can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week (all holidays included). .



POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

Is the policy effective in improving the mental health crisis in the city of Toronto?

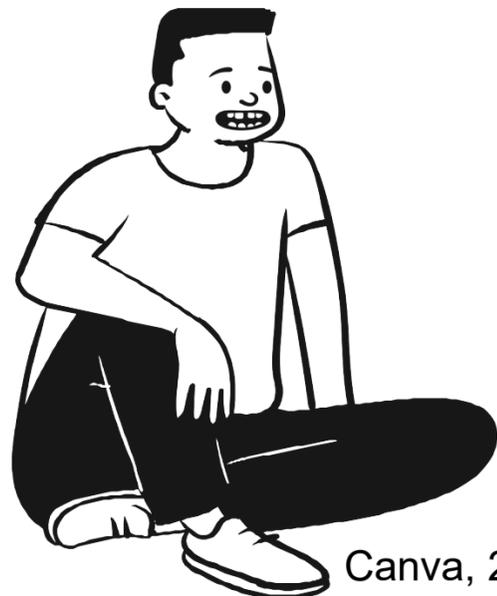
- In a period of 6 months, the Toronto Community Crisis Service received 2,489 unique calls
- 78% or 1,530 calls were transferred from 911 to TCCS
- 4% of calls were resolved over the phone by staff providing information and referral services
- 2,092 times mobile teams were dispatched
- The average phone call is 9 minutes and 6 seconds

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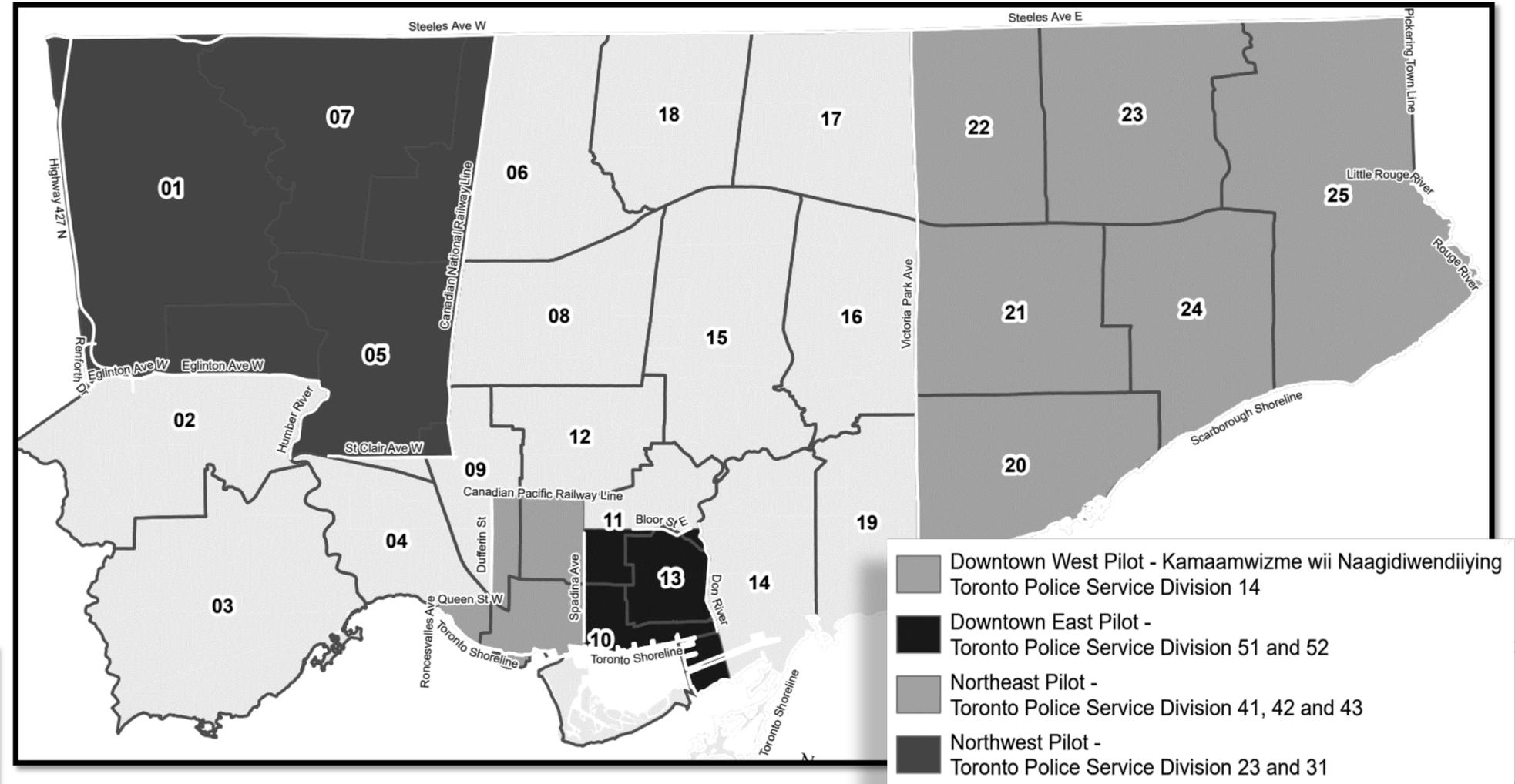
POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

- The four community based partners in four service areas of the city
- Gerstein Crisis Centre
- TAIBU Community Health Centre
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Toronto
- 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nation



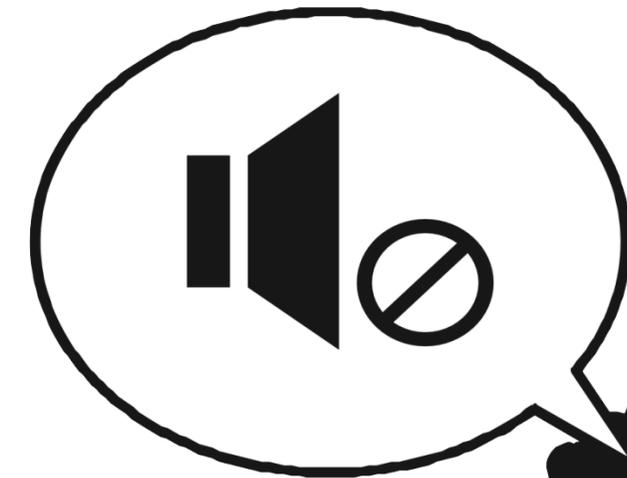
Canva, 2023

- Northwest Pilot – Division 23 & 31
- Northeast Pilot – Division 41, 42, 43
- Downtown West Pilot – Division 14
- Downtown East Pilot – Division 51 & 52



POLICY EFFECTIVENESS

- According to the Toronto progress report on the TCCS (2022), there has been effective collaboration between the partners and the City. “Anchor partners and FindHelp 211 highlighted the strong collaboration with each other and the City project team has been pivotal for the implementation of the service” (Toronto, p. 7).
- There have been positive and 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” (Toronto, p. 7).
- “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” (Toronto, p. 7).



POLICY - GAPS

The following gaps and opportunities for improvement have been identified by TCCS responders:

- There is a need to **ensure mental health support throughout the health-care system** to prevent challenges from reaching a crisis.
- Due to the **extensive areas** a team has to cover there is instances where the mobile crisis team might not be able to answer a call in time; if that's the case, EMS might be dispatched instead.
- There is still a need to **work with police and health-care organizations to build trust** between them and marginalized groups.

(Ore, J, 2022, CBC)



ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE – SOCIAL POLICY

TCCS is a CRISIS response program, Mental health crisis is view as a public health issue.

4 Units to serve 6.3 million people. Considering the rapid increased in mental health conditions, is this a realistic approach?

1 in 5 Canadians experiences mental illness. By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, 1 in 2 have had a mental illness.

PREVENTION



Mental Health WALK-IN clinics
When having mental health symptoms people should not have to wait for months to get access to care

Implementation of Mental Health Programs in school and community centers

Emphasize assistance for vulnerable communities



ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE – SOCIAL POLICY

What happens when the police is directly involved in a mental health crisis?

- Police officers role is to protect the public – They make instant decisions.
- They do not have the training to asses a mental health crisis (Based on the conventional training)
- Key points to train police forces: Communication – Negotiation – De-escalation
- Provide police officers with ongoing training including basic knowledge and skills to manage individuals in crisis
- PTSD as a determinant on the way police officers respond to a mental health crisis – Program to deal with the trauma they suffer due to what day face in their field

Jones, D. J. (2019)



CONCLUSIONS

- Bringing the gap between mental health and the police response is a pressing imperative.
- By providing police officers with specialized training, reducing stigmatization and fostering collaboration with mental health professionals, we can transform the crisis encounters into opportunities for compassion and understanding.
- We can also take part in helping the police ensure that individuals facing mental health challenges receive appropriate care and support they need.
- This proactive approach will not only benefit those in distress but also foster trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.



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