



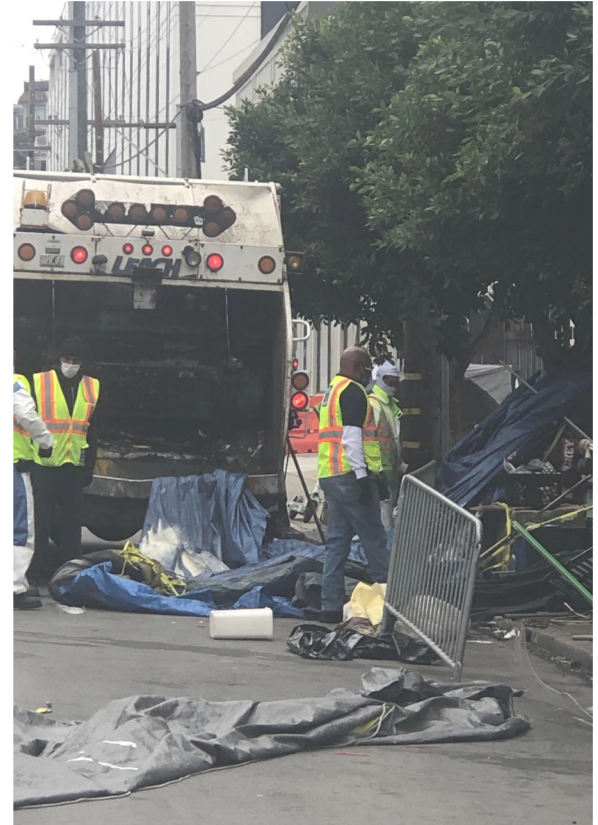
**C**OMPASSIONATE  
**A**LTERNATIVE  
**R**ESPONSE  
**T**EAM

A FUTURE OF CARE NOT CRIMINALIZATION FOR THE UNHOUSED  
IN SAN FRANCISCO

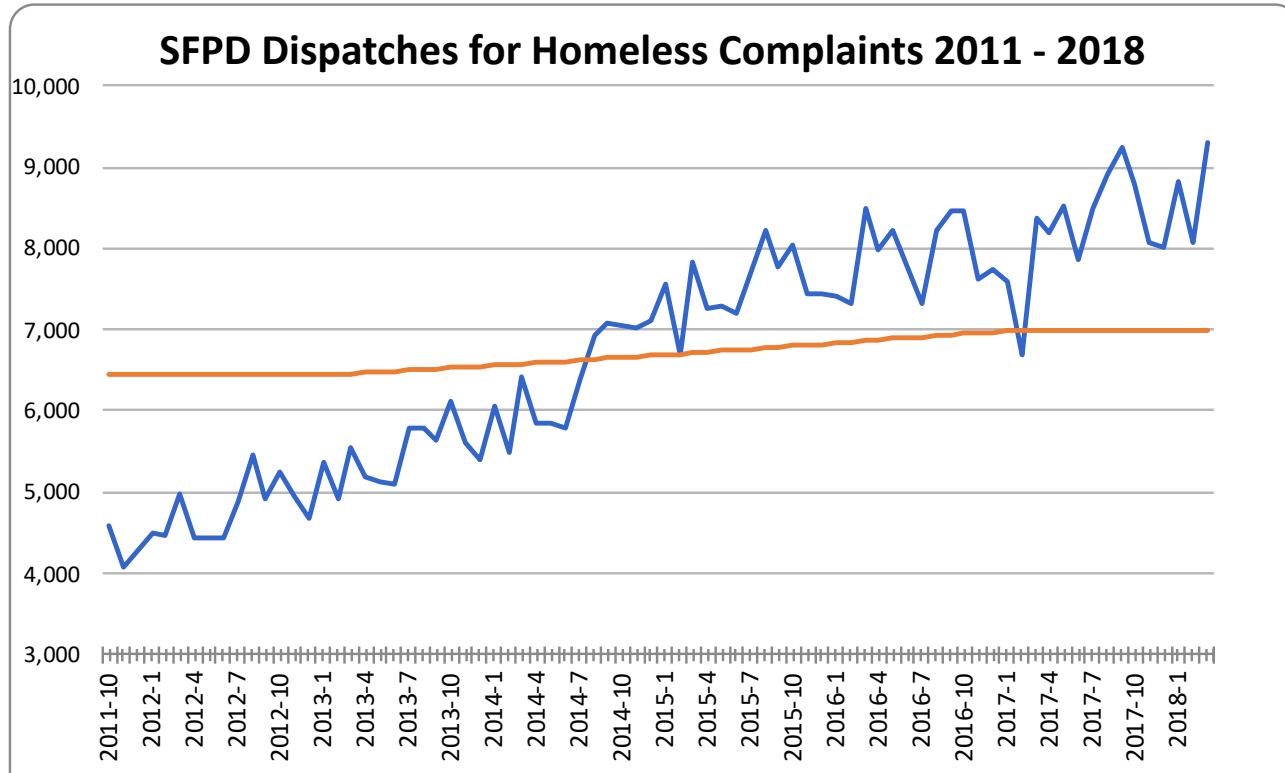


# The problem - police as a response to homelessness

- SFPD was dispatched to over 90,000 homeless related calls in 2019 (Budget and Legislative Analyst Office 2023)
- Policing is costly and ineffective (Budget and Legislative Analyst Office, 2015)
- Police officers and DPW workers are in wide consensus that the approach is not effective, and many find the work demeaning and demoralizing.



# The problem - police as a response to homelessness



Herring, Chris. 2019. "Complaint-Oriented Policing: Regulating Homelessness in Public Space." *American Sociological Review*, 84(5), 769-800.

# The problem - police as a response to homelessness

## Policing is Ineffective

### - **Outcomes of Police Dispatches** (Budget and Legislative Analyst Office, 2015):

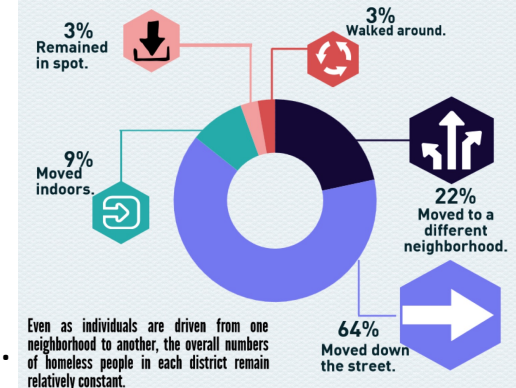
- 26.5% are “gone upon arrival”
- 89% of those remaining are issued “move-along orders”

### - **Outcomes of Move-Along Orders**

- 91% remain in public space, most moving around the block. Most who move indoors do so only for a few hours (Herring et al. 2019).

### - **Services Rarely Rendered**

- Voluntary shelter is currently not available in SF for the vast majority of those on the streets.
- Federal Court recently ruled that SFPD and HSOC do not have enough shelter on offer when carrying out enforcement.



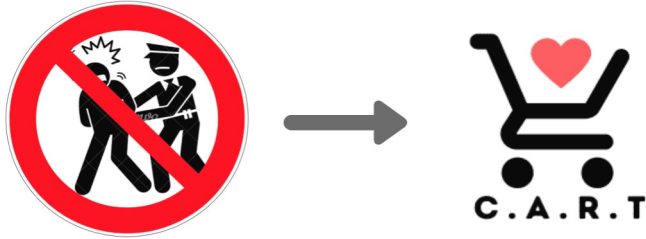
# The problem - police as a response to homelessness

- **Negative health impacts and undermines city investments in health and human services:** Move-along orders and camp evictions result in loss of critical medications, survival gear to protect people from disease and environmental exposures, disrupts sleep, the stability of the mentally unwell, and create challenges for social workers and health care providers to follow-up with their clients (Knowles 2000, Bourgois and Schoenberg 2009, Stuart 2016, Robinson 2017, Sparks 2018, Herring 2019, Centers for Disease Control 2020, Chang et al. 2022).
- **Decreases public safety:** Move-along orders and camp evictions without placements amplifies risks of conflict, sexual assault, theft and violence by forcing people to move into unfamiliar areas and straining relationships on the street (Wolch and Philo 2003, Langegeer and Koester 2017, Herring et al. 2019).
- **Property Confiscation** – frequent loss of ID, benefit cards and important paperwork required for services, tools for work, and precious personal mementos. (Okike et al. 2018, Herring et al. 2019).

# The problem - police as a response to homelessness

- **Unpaid citations have lingering negative impacts:** result in bench warrants, increased fines, and spoiled credit ratings creating barriers to accessing housing, services, and work. (\*Significant reforms have since been made to reduce these burdens by SF Courts) (Herring et al. 2019).
- **Policing amplifies racial inequality:** Enforcement of anti-homeless laws disproportionately impact Black and Latinx residents of San Francisco. Among those experiencing homelessness, Blacks experience more frequent and intense policing than their white counterparts (Herring et al. 2019).
- **Prolongs Homelessness.**


# The solution - a compassionate street response



- The Compassionate Alternative Response Team, or CART program seeks to end San Francisco's current police response to homelessness
- CART will create a future of care not criminalization for the unhoused residents of San Francisco



# Expectations

 policing problems

 homelessness

 **end police response to homelessness**

**"INVOLVE ALL  
PEOPLE IN THE  
COMMUNITY TO  
HELP PREVENT  
HOMELESSNESS."**

**- SF RESIDENT**





# A Community-Based Process

## The Community

Unhoused San Franciscans  
Service Providers  
Advocates and Community Orgs

Government departments  
Elected officials  
Academics

- **2019** Police Commission Resolution for a Police Alternative to Homelessness
- **2020**: Dozens of workgroup meetings
- **2020** \$2M on reserve, but was not released & instead used to cover pandemic shortfalls
- **2022** DEM releases RFP for CRT instead of CART



# CART - Goals & Outcomes



- ❑ Eliminating the police as first and primary responders to unhoused people
- ❑ Increasing safety for unhoused people and reducing the harm and trauma inflicted
- ❑ Building community resilience by empowering housed San Franciscans to more compassionately respond to their unhoused neighbors



# CART - The program design



- A community-based street response working in teams of two and responding to situations involving unhoused individuals throughout the city of San Francisco
- CART will respond to calls received through a direct CART hotline and to transferred calls going into 911 that involve an unhoused individual (list out codes.)
- CART's estimated annual budget of \$6.825 million would be paid for by funds diverted from the police budget



# CART - The program design

CART specific dispatches that no current alternative response team (SCRT, SWRT) is addressing

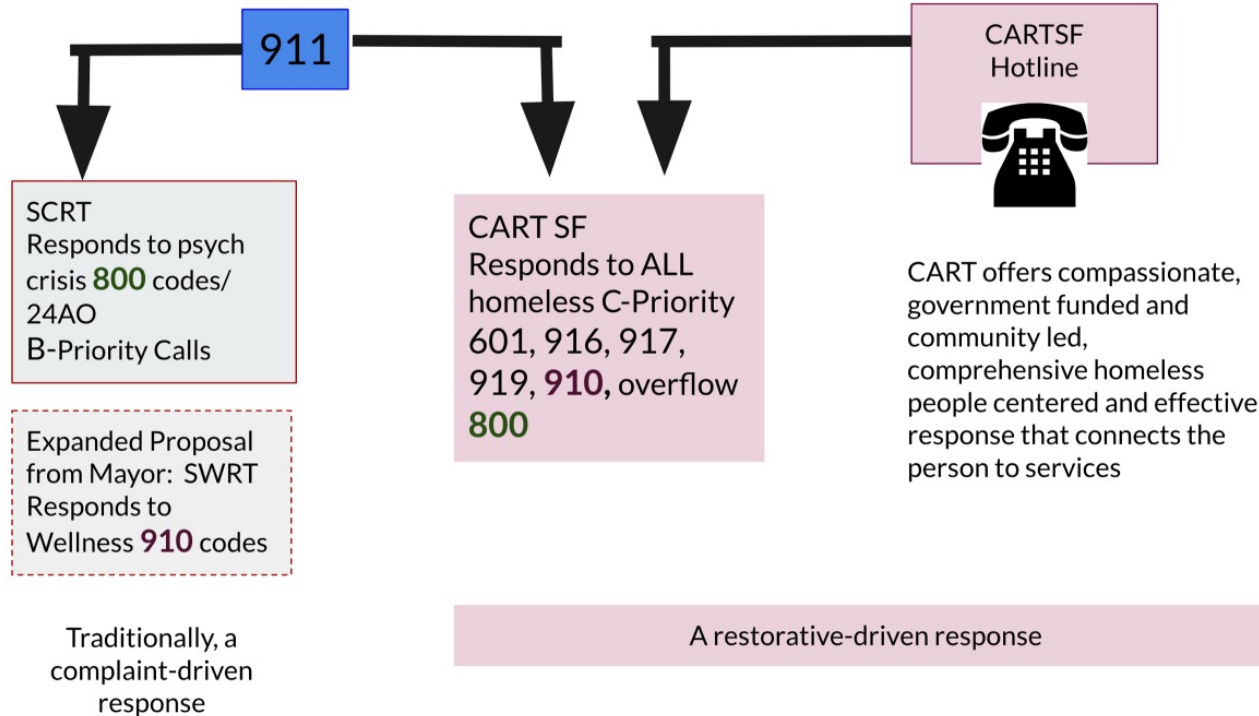
## PROPOSED SCOPE OF DISPATCH CODES FOR A CART RESPONSE

### ONLY C-PRIORITY ONLY PERSONS SUFFERING CONDITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS

Dispatch Code	Description
800 (police) / 25A0 (medical)	Mentally disturbed person, <u>but only</u> overflow calls from the SCRT team or paramedic first responders; will exceptionally take B-priority calls same as SCRT
801	Person attempting suicide
910	Well-being check
919	Sit/lie ordinance violations
920	Aggressive panhandling
915	Homeless encampment, currently routed to 311
601	Trespassing/ unauthorized person occupying property/ premises of another
916	Suspicious person in a car
917	Suspicious person



# CART – Distinct from new response teams



# CART - A two-prong approach

CART would provide both *"Persons-in-crisis" response services* and *"Community-strengthening" services*.

## *"Persons-in-crisis" response services:*

- De-escalation intervention, interpersonal conflict resolution
- Street counseling and mental wellness referrals/resources
- First aid and street medicine services
- Substance use/addiction referrals/resources
- Acute/subacute transportation services
- Suicide prevention



## *"Community-strengthening" services:*

- Identify, network, and support neighborhood-based "compassionate responders"
- Offer trainings to these "compassionate responders" to further educate them on the systemic causes of homelessness



# Research on Successful Models



## [Eugene/Springfield Crisis Assistance Helping out on the Streets \(CAHOOTS\)](#)

- Reduces police response: 18% of all 911 calls go to cahoots. And only 1% did they need to bring in backup from police.
- Cost effective: Saves Eugene \$8 million on police and \$14 million on ER each year

## [Denver STAR / \(Pyne and Deen 2022\)](#):

- Reduced responses to less serious crimes: Robust evidence that the program reduced reports of targeted, less serious crimes (e.g., trespassing, public disorder, and resisting arrest) by 34% and had no detectable effect on more serious crimes.
- Cost effective: Conservative estimate is that the program saves \$495 per-incident that the program prevented from going to the police (ie Cost of police response – cost of alternative response)
- Downside = limited pilot, more calls could be dispatched if more resources available.

## [Portland Street Response / \(Townley and Leickly 2022\)](#)

- Reduced welfare checks and unwanted person calls by 27%.
- Reduced responses where no crime is being committed: 4% reduction in total calls but could have been 15x more if operating citywide 24/7 during pilot period.
- Engaged 2,500 community members in outreach and engagement activities.
- Downside = limited pilot, still not dominant response and awareness of program is low.

# Research on Successful Models

## [San Francisco's Street Crisis Response Crisis Team \(One-Year Evaluation\)](#)



- **SCRT is diverting calls from police response:** The team responded to 5,388 calls in its first year, 3,083 (57 percent) of which entailed direct client engagements. However, even calls in which the team is unable to locate the individual(s) represent a diversion from police response.
- **SCRT response time is faster than police response for same call, and reduces police dispatch times for more serious calls:** SCRT responds to its calls in an average of 14 minutes compared to SFPD's average 20 minutes for priority B calls.
- **SCRT members only respond to calls that do not demonstrate a significant safety concern and rarely require police assistance:** Only 3% of responses required additional police support. Even when police were required in most cases (69%) were not violent and did not require restraint.
- **30% are transported to medical facility or resources while 70% remain safely in the community after de-escalation.**





Q&A