

Support Team Assisted Response (STAR)

2022 End of Year Report



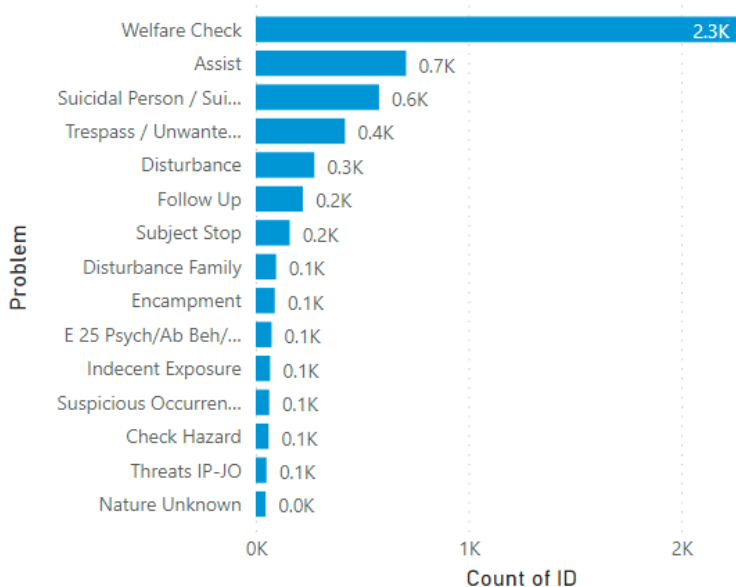
The Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) Program is an alternative response model operating within the City & County of Denver. STAR is managed by the Denver Department of Public Health & Environment in partnership with the Denver Department of Safety. STAR pairs a behavioral health clinician, contracted through WellPower, with a Denver Health paramedic or EMT. The team is dispatched through Denver 9-1-1 Communications and responds to low risk, low acuity crisis calls in the community. STAR does not respond to any calls where someone is injured, a weapon is present, or someone is acting in a violent manner. In 2022, the STAR Program was expanded to a citywide response. STAR is currently running 5 units citywide responding to calls seven days per week between the hours of 6:00am-10:00pm. In 2023, STAR will be adding 2 additional units which will allow for more responses within the current hours of operation.

Total Incidents

5719

Between January 1st, 2022 and December 31st, 2022, STAR has responded to 5,719 calls for service that would have otherwise been dispatched to police. The goal of the program is for STAR to be the first and only responder to appropriate calls. There are times where patrol officers will request assistance from STAR. In these situations, officers determine that the call is more appropriate for STAR will respond and take over the call. These situations represent 30% of STAR calls for service.

STAR Incidents by Problem Type



The graph on the left shows STAR incidents by problem type. Welfare checks, assist (calls for general assistance) and suicidal party continue to be the top three more common calls for STAR.

STAR Testimonials:

Danette

On a Friday morning in November, Danette felt unsettled after speaking with her surgical oncologist. She remembers hearing a lot of new information and medical jargon, she was over overwhelmed and spiraling out of control. Having navigated her new cancer diagnosis for a couple of months, she felt well-equipped with resources from her healthcare provider. However, on this day, her nurse navigator was out of town, the cancer counseling line was closed on Fridays and the website she usually utilized was down.

Danette knew she needed immediate support with her mental health. With nowhere left to turn, she dialed 911. She told the 911 operator about her crisis, and they sent Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) to help her.

When the STAR team arrived, Danette was immediately relieved to be in the company of two clinicians and a paramedic. The paramedic mentioned that her father was a surgeon and understood why the conversation had upset Danette greatly. She helped Danette recognize that surgeons can be very factual with their language and their job is to fight the disease.

Danette felt very supported by the STAR team. They even played with her cat who had been acting out because Danette was so upset. She mentioned how worried she felt about her upcoming surgery as she didn't have anyone to care for her cat. The STAR clinician told her that the local animal shelter could board her cat while she was in the hospital. Danette was so relieved to hear about this resource. She felt every message she needed to hear was coming from each person that was part of the STAR team.

"The best thing that Denver has is the STAR program," said Danette. "They can handle any crisis. Everyone was so compassionate. Everyone knew where I was coming from. I thought I was overreacting, and they could all relate to my experience. They understood how it threw me through a loop."

"The STAR counselors helped explain that some of my family was being somewhat distant and not as supportive as they usually were because our whole family has PTSD from breast cancer," commented Danette. "My mother died when my twin sister and I were 10- years old. Then my older sister had breast cancer. As a trauma response, our family goes into separate spaces, and we don't support each other as much as usual. It's like it's contagious."

The STAR clinicians went through the paperwork Danette received at her appointment. With the cancer counseling center closed, they referred Danette to WellPower's new TherapyDirect program. TherapyDirect provides up to three virtual sessions with a counselor for anyone in metro Denver, age 18 and up, no insurance required. Danette was able to connect with an intake person right away, and by the afternoon she had an appointment with a therapist. After two therapy sessions Danette felt that she had the tools to move forward and navigate the uncertainty ahead.

Alden

In December 2022, STAR responded to “Alden,” a gentleman who was from out of the state and wanted to get back home. He was unfamiliar with resources and did not have any money to purchase a bus or plane ticket. When STAR responded, the team was able to build rapport and really listen to Alden’s needs. After much discussion, the STAR team concluded that the best solution would be to support Alden in getting home quickly and safely. The STAR team looked at the Greyhound website and was able to purchase a bus ticket for Alden with a departure that same day. STAR then transported Alden to Union Station, where they saw that he was able to get on the bus successfully. About a week later, STAR received an email from Alden, expressing this gratitude and support, reporting that he made it home safely and things in his life were quickly improving.

Policy and Procedure Updates

In 2022, Denver 9-1-1 Communications began working on expanding STAR eligible nature codes. In quarter one of 2023, STAR will begin responding to family disturbance calls and calls involving narcotics use in public. Denver 9-1-1 also worked on developing policies that would allow dispatchers to hold STAR eligible calls for the STAR van and accommodate “STAR only requests”. A STAR only request is when a community member call and specifically requests that STAR respond and would prefer no response if STAR is unavailable. The training for these policies and additional nature codes will be rolled out in quarter 1 of 2023.