

September 18, 2023

## Community Safety Department Update Fall, 2023

This memo serves as an update on the work done in the months between our last update in May and now.

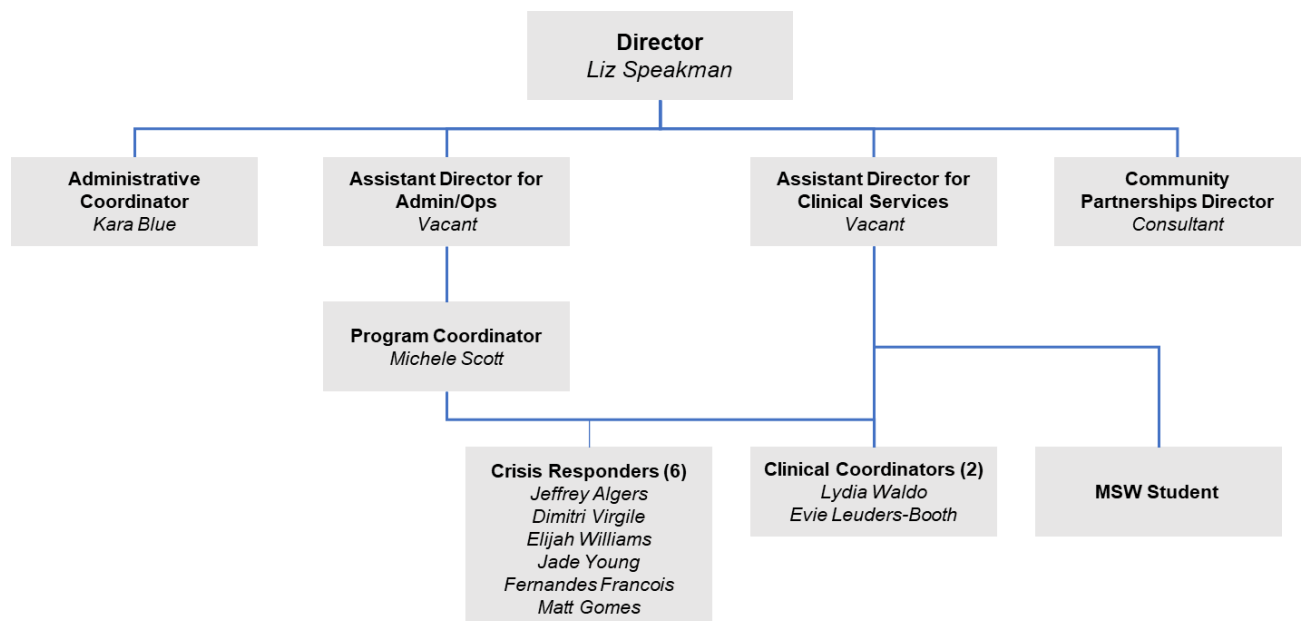
This document provides an overview of the department and some of our plans for the coming months. You will find the following sections: staffing overview (p1), infrastructure (p2), program evaluation (p3), operational readiness (p3), training plan (p5), community engagement (p6), HEART (p8) and technical assistance (p8), appendix (p9).

### Overview

The full-time staffing of the CSD includes Liz Speakman, LICSW, Director, Michele Scott, Program Coordinator and our new full-time hire, Kara Blue.

Marie Mathieu has continued as our Clinical Consultant five hours a week providing support around clinical issues as well as assisting with the recruitment and interview process for all our new hires.

The CSD's staffing model has been updated since our last communication and currently includes a Director, Assistant Director of Clinical Services, Assistant Director of Administration and Operations ([currently posted](#)), Program Coordinator, two Clinical Coordinators, Administrative Coordinator, six Crisis Responders, and a Data Analyst. As of today, we have hired a Director, Program Coordinator, Administrative Coordinator, six Crisis Responders, and two Clinicians. We are reviewing the need for a Data Analyst. We have also contracted Niko Emack to develop our strategy for communication and community engagement.



## Scope

Since our last update in May, we have hired nine staff, which includes six Crisis Responders, two Clinical Coordinators and one Administrative Coordinator. We received 430+ applications for the Crisis Responder, Clinical Coordinator, and Administrative Coordinator roles. In order to make these hires, we conducted a total of 36 phone screening interviews, 41 in person interviews, 27 reference checks and nine offers, all of which were enthusiastically accepted!

Our Crisis Responder interview panel included: Liz Speakman, Marie Mathieu, Michele Scott, Niko Emack, Kara Blue, Malene Council, Fred Cabral, and Sam Gebru. Our Clinical Coordinator interview panel featured: Liz Speakman, Marie Mathieu, Michele Scott, Elana Klein, Elijah Williams, Jade Young, and Shameka Gregory. And our Administrative Coordinator interview panel consisted of: Liz Speakman, Michele Scott, and Francesca Gaines. We are grateful to all the community partners and City personnel who were involved in our hiring process.



***From left to right: Liz Speakman, Matthew Gomes, Niko Emack, Jade Young, Michele Scott, Jeffrey Alger, Elijah Williams, Fernandes Francois***

## Program Evaluation

We have been accepted into the 2023-2024 Cohort of Alternative Programs at the Harvard Kennedy School's Government Performance Lab (GPL). The first deliverable that the GPL will be working with us to complete is a program evaluation plan including the development of goals and a detailed data collection plan.

## Operational Readiness

Our coverage plan currently includes a model for two teams — three staff per team — which includes two Crisis Responders and one Clinical Coordinator. Two additional responders will be primarily focused on follow up care and providing back up coverage for the CARE teams. The full cohort is starting on September 11, with Monday through Friday regular schedules for the training period until December 4. On December 4, the team will transition into the following staggered shifts:

*Team A: Mon-8 am-7 pm, T/W/Th 8 am-5:30 pm*

*Team B: T/W/Th 12-9:30 pm Fri 10:30-9:30 pm*

We expect the teams will spend December, January, and February getting familiar with the community through outreach, shadowing, ride alongs, and support for the Warming Center. As well as attending meetings, events, and other community engagement opportunities. We are aiming to launch the 9-1-1 response in March 2024.

Additional updates:

- If you're just looking to connect, you can reach us at [info@cambridgesafety.org](mailto:info@cambridgesafety.org) or call our new number at (617) 349-7200.
- We have moved into our new office space at 689 Mass Ave in the lower level.
- We are continuing to work with Public Safety IT to review and vet software options to ensure we have the capacity and ability to collect data in a secure manner with appropriate separation from public safety. We will soon be putting out an RFP to secure software that will provide a confidential way of collecting our data as well as timely program evaluation data and the ability to publish a public dashboard.
- We have decided on a logo based on input from the Steering Committee. We are deciding on colors for the uniforms that are distinctive and go well with the logo.
- We have worked on drafting policies that will be reviewed internally before being shared publicly. In addition to a welcome letter for new staff, the policies will address:
  - Core Beliefs
  - Ethics and Conduct
  - Scene Safety
  - Mandated Reporting
  - HIPPA Compliance
  - Documentation Guidelines
  - Daily Equipment Checking
  - Infection Control
  - Transportation of Individuals

- Radio Etiquette
- Request by Fire
- Request by Police
- Needle Pick Up
- Call specific guidance
- Ride Alongs
- Accountability

As a reminder, the Community Safety's Steering Committee assisted in developing the follow mission and values statements.

*Mission Statement:*

The Cambridge Community Safety Department's CARE (Community Assistance, Response and Engagement) Team provides an alternative approach to the criminal legal system through compassionate and community-centered prevention and intervention efforts.

*The Community Safety Department is guided by the following values:*

1. We are continuously learning, evolving and reimagining our approach in order to best meet the needs of the community we serve. Our department culture embraces a growth mindset and values curiosity, humility and our shared humanity.
2. We commit to continue exploring restorative practices in order to build empathy, compassion and help repair trust in the community in creative ways.
3. We center relationships, partnerships, authentic collaboration and joy in all of our work. We are guided by the wisdom, insights and experiences of those who came before us and those who are doing the work today to build solutions in community. We are intentionally laying groundwork for the future we envision.
4. We are consciously not reproducing systems of oppression and aim to create equitable, anti-racist and non-discriminatory ways of serving our community.
5. We acknowledge the historical implications of the criminal legal system and the harm it has done to our communities. With this understanding, we value the dignity and humanity of all people

**Training plan**

Starting the second week of September, our responders and clinicians will undergo 8 weeks of highly specialized training before responding to calls in the community. Internally, our team spent the summer thinking strategically about what information would be beneficial for our responders to learn. Together, with input from behavioral health experts in the community, we put together a comprehensive list of subjects ranging from technical training in CPR and sharps disposal to interpersonal development in topics like conflict mediation and harm reduction. Our responders will also be equipped with knowledge around issues of suicidality, gender violence, homelessness, and boundary setting, to name a few. In

addition to the classroom work, our responders will be getting hands-on experience in the field, going on ride-alongs with First Step, Pro EMS, and the Cambridge Police. Our syllabus also includes a host of team building activities and chances to meet with various advocacy groups, organizations, businesses, and nonprofits in the city. For this, we've enlisted the help of community partners like the MIT Job Connector, Pro EMS, and the Cambridge Public Library, who have generously made their space available to us while we put the final touches on our new office at 689 Massachusetts, Avenue.

*Here's a look at our first week of training:*

**Monday, September 11th**

- Cambridge & CSD 101
- Meet & Greet with City & CPD Leadership
- Onboarding and Team Lunch
- Mission, Values & Dept. Discussion

**Tuesday, September 12th**

- Mental Health 1st Aid with Marie Mathieu & Pastor Lorraine Thornhill (full day)

**Wednesday, September 13th**

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Workshop with Deidre Brown, Chief of Equity and Inclusion
- Team Building & Performance with Improv Boston

**Thursday, September 14th**

- Trauma 101, Boundaries & Stress Management with Erin Miller
- Crisis Mediation with the Community Dispute Settlement Center

**Friday, September 15th**

- Media Training with Jermy Warnick, Director of Media Relations and Content Strategy
- Get-To-Know Cambridge Scavenger Hunt with Niko Emack



## **Community Engagement**

Together, with help from our Steering Committee, our staff worked with graphic designer Reagan McCain to create a distinct and recognizable look for our CARE Team. For our logo, we landed on a powder blue design, which is a color that's psychologically proven to reduce anxiety and stress while elevating feelings of peace and trustworthiness. Our design includes a graphic of two people embracing, which nonverbally communicates our values and lets people know what we're about. Additionally, it's important for our responders to be easily identifiable in the community, especially in moments of crisis. It's not lost on us that our responders could face racial bias and unfair suspicion if they show up to a wellness check, or an active scene, in plain clothes. With that said, we also understand and empathize with the position that uniforms create barriers between people. With all that in mind, we landed on a softer look, with t-shirts in visible colors that are fun, accessible, and soothing.

*Here are the t-shirt options we're choosing between:*



We've been privileged to have so many thoughtful and intelligent individuals serve as a part of our Steering Committee over the past few months. They have been a tremendous resource to our department and have helped to fill our various knowledge gaps. Going forward, we want to continue learning from the community. That's why we'll be repurposing the Steering Committee as the Community Safety Think Tank. This will provide an opportunity for neighborhood leaders, organizations, and nonprofits to embrace a collaborative process around public safety in Cambridge. We'll organize breakout groups, host guest speakers, and deliver updates on our work. Later this year, we will be setting up an application process that's accessible to all residents — including students!

Lastly, we're launching a Community Safety newsletter starting this fall. **Follow the link to [join our mailing list](#) and stay up to date with everything CSD.** We have also launched a basic webpage at [www.cambridgesafety.org](http://www.cambridgesafety.org) that will be updated regularly to reflect the progress of the new department.

## **HEART**

- On June 2, 2023, HEART signed a contract with the City for \$300,000 of ARPA funding to cover a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and parts of salaries of a few responders and a co-Director. They will be billing the city monthly for expenses incurred.
- The HEART team and Liz, Michele and Niko have met over the summer to discuss other possible funding opportunities and plan to meet again after Labor Day.

## **Technical Assistance**

We have applied to receive pro bono strategic consulting services for Fall 2023-Spring 2024 from [Community Action Partners](#) and are waiting to hear if our application has been accepted.

## Appendix

Our first day — September 11, 2023!!!



Front row from left to right, Jade Young, Christina Giacobbe, Mayor Siddiqui, Leah Crawford, Dimitri Virgile, Evie Lueders-Booth, back row from left to right, Niko Emack, Jeffrey Alger, Elijah Williams, Vice Mayor Mallon, City Manager Yi-An Huang, Liz Speakman, Matthew Gomes, Lydia Waldo, Fernandes Francios.



## Meet our team!

- Dimitri Virgile grew up in Medford, MA, and holds a bachelor's degree from Sacred Heart University and a master's from Quinnipiac University. He started his professional career seven years ago working as an EMT, where he was promoted to the position of Field Training Officer. He's called to this work through his faith and believes in the philosophy of treating others with the same respect he would want for himself and his family. In his free time, he enjoys learning new languages, painting, and roller skating.
- Elijah Williams is originally from Hartford, Connecticut, but has spent the past 15 years living in Massachusetts. The first in his family to go to college, he graduated with honors from Mount Ida with a bachelor's degree in Developmental Psychology. To this day, it's one of his proudest accomplishments. Professionally, he's worked at the Y2Y Youth Shelter in Harvard Square and the Inpatient Psych Unit at Tufts Medical Center. He believes that once people embrace who they are, and what they've been through, they will realize just how powerful they are. When he's not serving the community, he enjoys watching football and going to the gym.
- Evie Lueders-Booth grew up in Cambridge and holds an undergraduate degree in Human Services from UMass Boston and a MSW from Simmons College. She began her career working at local community schools, Cambridge Youth Programs (CYS), and the Mayors Summer Youth Employment Program. She's inspired by the idea of breaking mental health stereotypes and embracing the principles of restorative justice as an alternative to punitive responses. She loves listening to thriller audiobooks, cooking, and traveling.
- Fernandes Francois was born and raised in Cambridge and has always had a strong desire to serve his community. He holds a degree in Youth Justice and Advocacy from Boston University and most recently worked as a 911 dispatcher and held a position with the Suffolk County DA's office. He approaches his work with a deep sense of empathy and compassion and aims to create a culture of support and understanding wherever he goes. He enjoys going on long walks with his dog Saint, and spending quality time with friends and family.
- Jade Young is Boston born with over a decade of experience working in the field of human services. She has a long track record of working with at-risk youth, the formerly incarcerated, and the unhoused. Having lost a brother to overdose, she's motivated by the idea of helping others like him. Inspired by the resources in Cambridge, Jade is devoted to helping people find their way to stable housing and a sustainable life. She loves animals and enjoys spending time with her cat and dog.
- Jeffrey Alger grew up in Hopedale, Massachusetts and has been working in the field of public safety for over 16 years, most recently as an EMT in Cambridge. He's also served his community as a firefighter and as a 911 dispatcher. He loves building relationships and interacting with people from all different walks of life, which is something he's looking forward to in his new role with CSD. On his days off, he loves spending time with his wife and daughter, and watching the Red Sox and Bruins.

- Lydia Waldo grew up in Maine and is a lifelong New Englander. She received her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Environmental Studies and earned her master's in social work with a focus in trauma practice. She is a trained EMT and deployed with FEMA to provide disaster relief after Hurricane Ian in 2022. She is passionate about working with members of the unhoused community and believes strongly that everyone deserves to have caring providers. In her free time, Lydia is an avid hiker and a professional figure skater.
- Matthew Gomes grew up in the Sunshine State before relocating to Cambridge. He majored in Psychology at The Florida State University and is currently pursuing a Masters in Mental Health Counseling at UMass Boston. Before starting at CSD, he worked as a Research Assistant in the Flavell Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Picower Institute for Learning and Memory, where he looked at serotonin-signaling in nematodes to understand how neural circuits sustain behaviors. As an undergrad, he served as President of QTIPOC (Queer, Trans, Intersex, People of Color) and remains passionate about issues of race, gender, and sexuality.