

Collaboration in Practice: A Law Enforcement Co-Response Model for Children & Families Experiencing Trauma

Collaborative co-response models between law enforcement and social service agencies can improve safety, reduce harm, and support children and families on scene, especially when they are thoughtfully designed and sustainably implemented. This tip sheet offers practical guidance for agencies ready to move from exploration to action, outlining key considerations for readiness, partnership design, training, and long-term sustainability. A successful model is grounded in shared understanding, community context, and ongoing evaluation to ensure the collaboration remains effective, trauma-informed, and responsive over time.

Assess Organizational Readiness & Capacity

- Explore organizational and staff experience with local police and law enforcement
- Conduct an organizational assessment to determine whether your agency has the capacity to support a collaborative co-response model
- Assess strengths, gaps, and readiness, and develop a clear implementation roadmap



Establish Shared Values with Law Enforcement

- Establish a mutual understanding of what trauma is and how to identify it
- Ensure organizational commitment to understanding the realities, values, and operational context of law enforcement
- Promote a collaborative approach grounded in mutual respect, trust, and a commitment to supporting children and families



Center Community Context & Representation

- Understand the makeup of the community, the cultural and linguistic background of residents, and the historical relationships.
- Ensure liaisons are representative of the communities they are responding to
- Explore ongoing opportunities to build community trust and engage community leaders



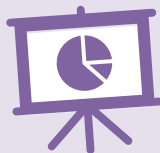
Plan for Longevity & Sustainability

- Develop a long-term financial sustainability plan that explores diverse funding as well as municipal, state, private funding sources, and federal funding sources
- Build program infrastructure to retain institutional knowledge, encourage cross-training, address community needs, and support staff needs



Monitor, Evaluate, and Improve

- Develop robust data collection processes about service delivery and participant demographics
- Establish ongoing evaluation to ensure model and meets shared goals
- Utilize data to address gaps, respond to outcomes, and measure success



Build the Partnership Infrastructure

- Collaborate in the hiring process
- Ensure the partnership with police reflects collaboration protocols, shared workflows, and an established office space for the social service responders within the police department
- Partnership includes a data sharing agreement, co-location, mutual training, call signs, and radios



Train Together & Learn Together

- Identify cross-training opportunities, including police protocols, safety in the field, understanding and responding to child trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences, community resources, talking with children about trauma, and first responder secondary traumatic stress (STS)
- Attend roll calls, community events, command staff meetings, social service staff meetings, case debriefs, police events, and joint follow-up visits
- Incorporate the collaboration model into police academy, leadership, and in-service or professional development training, with continuing education and refresher training to address ongoing needs

