



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Jumaane D. Williams**

---

November 11, 2020

The Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

**RE: Pilot Program for Non-Police Response to Mental Health Crises**

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I would like to thank you for supporting several recommendations that my office released in a September 2019 report on improving responses to mental health crises. Your announcement is a meaningful step in the right direction, though I believe it is important to implement such important changes in collaboration with pending legislation from the City Council. It remains vital that we keep racial equity at the forefront of these efforts. Additionally, while we strive to reduce the criminalization of individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, we must also avoid needless hospitalization whenever possible. I believe this pilot can be made safer, more effective, and more just, by implementing additional recommendations from my office's report and infographic, which I have attached for your review.

I would also like to seek clarity with the following questions:

1. How will we train 9-1-1 to identify calls that do not need police response and make appropriate dispatch determinations by February 2021? What criteria will dispatchers be using to make these determinations, especially in regard to those concerning when a police officer is or is not to join the health professionals as part of the response team?
2. What will client follow-up and post-crisis services look like? Will there be connections provided to services such as Mental Health Respite Centers, Support and Connection Centers, and long term care?
3. Will we equip mobile crisis teams with a clinician, a social worker, and a **mental health peer** as their primary responders?
4. How will we ensure cultural competence amongst mobile crisis teams and within community outreach and public information campaigns to ensure awareness of this resource?
5. Who will be advising the development of this pilot? Will community-based organizations, advocates, and elected officials be included?



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
**Jumaane D. Williams**

---

I look forward to receiving your response as we work together to make our city a safer and more just place. Please direct any questions or further discussion toward First Deputy Public Advocate Nick E. Smith, at [nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov](mailto:nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov), and Deputy Public Advocate for Justice, Health Equity & Safety Rama Issa-Ibrahim at [rissa-ibrahim@advocate.nyc.gov](mailto:rissa-ibrahim@advocate.nyc.gov).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Williams".

Jumaane D. Williams  
Public Advocate for the City of New York