What is CAHOOTS?
An innovative community-based public safety system to provide mental health first response for crises involving mental illness, homelessness, and addiction.
CAHOOTS Background

- In 1969, a group of student activists and concerned practitioners founded White Bird Clinic to provide crisis services and free medical care to counter-culture youth in Eugene, Oregon.
- The program now serves Springfield, Oregon in tandem.
How does CAHOOTS operate?

- The program mobilizes two-person teams consisting of a medic (a nurse, paramedic, or EMT) and a crisis worker who has substantial training and experience in the mental health field.
- The CAHOOTS teams deal with a wide range of mental health-related crises, including conflict resolution, welfare checks, substance abuse, suicide threats, and more, relying on trauma-informed de-escalation and harm reduction techniques.
What does CAHOOTS response look like?

- CAHOOTS calls come to Eugene’s 911 system or the police non-emergency number. Dispatchers are trained to recognize non-violent situations with a behavioral health component and route those calls to CAHOOTS.

- A team will respond, assess the situation and provide immediate stabilization in case of urgent medical need or psychological crisis, assessment, information, referral, advocacy, and, when warranted, transportation to the next step in treatment.
How is CAHOOTS different?

- CAHOOTS staff are not law enforcement officers and do not carry weapons; their training and experience are the tools they use to ensure a non-violent resolution of crisis situations.
- They also handle non-emergent medical issues, avoiding costly ambulance transport and emergency room treatment.
What does CAHOOTS mean for a community?

- A November 2016 study published in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine estimated that 20% to 50% of fatal encounters with law enforcement involved an individual with a mental illness. The CAHOOTS model demonstrates that these fatal encounters are not inevitable. Last year, out of a total of roughly 24,000 CAHOOTS calls, police backup was requested only 150 times.
What is CAHOOTS impact on the city’s budget?

- The cost savings are considerable. The CAHOOTS program budget is about $2.1 million annually, while the combined annual budgets for the Eugene and Springfield police departments are $90 million. In 2017, the CAHOOTS teams answered 17% of the Eugene Police Department’s overall call volume. The program saves the city of Eugene an estimated $8.5 million in public safety spending annually.
CAHOOTS in the News

- U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden has announced plans to introduce a bill in the U.S. Senate aimed at bringing CAHOOTS response model mental health services to cities and towns across the nation through increased Medicaid funding.
- “It’s long past time to re-imagine policing in ways that reduce violence and structural racism, and health care can play a key role in that effort. Oregon has a proven model in the CAHOOTS program, and I want other states and communities to have federal resources to pursue similar approaches. Americans struggling with mental illness don’t always require law enforcement to be dispatched when they are experiencing a crisis – CAHOOTS is proof positive there is another way.”