



Be Well Huntington Beach FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Be Well Huntington Beach?

Be Well Huntington Beach is a Mobile Crisis Response Team funded by the City of Huntington Beach and staffed by Be Well OC to provide 24/7 community-based assessment and stabilization of individuals experiencing psychological crisis, challenges related to substance abuse, and other non-medical emergency challenges. Each team will consist of two crisis counselors who will help de-escalate a situation and provide a compassionate first response model to get ***all*** Huntington Beach residents – *regardless of income, background, or insurance status* - the right help at the right time.

Why is this needed?

This service is designed to deliver better outcomes for those suffering from mental illness crises throughout Huntington Beach, while relieving law enforcement from a significant portion of these incidents which do not involve violence, weapons, or clearly criminal conduct. Examples of the categories of incidents to be diverted to Be Well Huntington Beach include behavioral episodes, substance abuse, non-domestic violence family issues and public assistance including welfare checks. Every year in Huntington Beach, there are 15,000 calls for these types of services, and it is estimated that at least 20% of those could eventually be diverted to a program like the Be Well Huntington Beach.

Where is the funding coming from?

This program is funded entirely by the City of Huntington Beach. With that said, the Be Well Huntington Beach Team will not only be able to improve outcomes and community satisfaction, but also lower overall costs and optimize availability of first responders and community services.

When will Be Well Huntington Beach begin operating?

The program will begin operating on August 2, 2021, as a pilot program. Services are scheduled to begin with one Team operating for 12 hours per day and will gradually ramp up to additional Teams with a full-service, 24/7 model.

Why doesn't Be Well require the Crisis Counselor to be a licensed Crisis Intervention Specialist?

Crisis work is centered around your ability to connect with people in an impactful way. It's not about the "letters" you have, but rather your ability to connect with individuals in crisis and form alliances with them. The crisis intervention specialists will be able to triage the large volume of calls for mental health support and connect residents to higher levels of care when needed.

What situations will be covered by Be Well Huntington Beach?

The Be Well Huntington Beach team will be prepared to help with a variety of non-emergency and non-medical situations, which may include:

- Mental health / behavioral crisis
- Suicidal ideation
- Public assistance including lack of basic needs (food, shelter, water, clothing), failure to conduct basic self-hygiene, failure to thrive
- Non-domestic violence family issues / disputes
- Drug & alcohol abuse / addiction
- Welfare checks
- Death notifications
- Homelessness, in conjunction / collaboration with the Huntington Beach Homeless Task Force



How is the Be Well Huntington Beach Team dispatched?

When someone calls 911 or the non-emergency line for a mental health crisis that does not require medical evaluation or care, the dispatcher will triage, and when appropriate, deploy the Be Well Huntington Beach Team rather than police. Callers can also request the Team, and again the dispatcher will determine whether appropriate or not. Public safety personnel (police and fire) already involved in an incident can also request Be Well Huntington Beach Team response via HBPD Communications. .

What are the hours of Be Well Huntington Beach?

At launch, Be Well Huntington Beach will be available between 12pm – 12am with the plan of expanding to 24-hour coverage by late fall/early winter.

Who will staff the van?

All staff will be Be Well OC employees. Each team will include two Crisis Counselors who specialize in crisis management and are trained in de-escalation techniques.

After assessment of an individual in the field, where will the Be Well Huntington Beach Team take them?

The Team will have the ability to transport clients to a variety of locations based on the individual's assessed needs. This can include the Be Well Campus, alternative psychological care facility, and the Huntington Beach Navigation Center (for homeless clients only).

How long do you anticipate each call to last?

It will depend on the situation. Some calls will be shorter, such as welfare calls that may take a few minutes; whereas domestic crisis calls may last up to a few hours.

How often will the team be dispatched?

Based upon data from Huntington Beach Police Department, we anticipate responding to approximately 30 calls a day with one van. Two vans can respond to approximately 60 calls per day. These statistics will vary depending on the situation and length of each call.

Will the van be used to treat people at the location?

The van is equipped with clothing, food, and a private, secure space where mental health support can be provided in a discreet setting. If medical aid is required, the Huntington Beach Fire Department will be dispatched to provide immediate care and transport to the appropriate medical facility.

Will the van take homeless people off of the street?

Homeless individuals will only be transported on a voluntary basis. Transport locations may include the Huntington Beach Navigation Center or other location where the individual's specific needs can best be met with the objective to identify a long-term solution and prevention of future crisis incidents.

Is it dangerous to respond to a crisis without the police?

The Huntington Beach Police Department will be triaging all calls and dispatching the Team to only non-violent, non-criminal incidents that do not involve weapons. The Team will be trained in de-escalation, to ensure people get the right care at the right time. Our teams will be equipped with police frequency radios in case of emergency, though this is rarely needed. For example, out of approximately 20,000 calls per year handled by Cahoots, a similar program in Oregon, only 24 or 0.1% required police be called in for a safety concern.