



# *Reach Out*

## *Response Network*

**An Introduction to Our Work**

# What is the Reach Out Response Network?

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The Reach Out Response Network is a **coalition of community stakeholders** dedicated to **advocating for and creating transformational change** in Toronto's **mental health crisis services**. We are partnering with the City of Toronto to **design and implement a peer- and clinician-led** mental health emergency service.

We aim to **develop teams** that will truly **revolutionize crisis response** and lead the way in a paradigm shift away from coercive, forceful, police-led intervention **towards an anti-oppressive, recovery-oriented, trauma-informed model** that will **empower individuals** in crisis and promote their dignity, autonomy, self-determination, and resilience. Our teams will be **created by and for the communities** they aim to serve.

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# Our Vision

1. Our goal is to **support the city of Toronto in developing a mental health emergency service led by clinicians and peers** from the communities they serve.
2. The teams will be **integrated into 911 dispatch** and also accessible through **211 and their own direct number**.
3. The teams will be **available 24/7 across the city with rapid response times**.
4. The teams will **replace police response** to non-violent mental health crises.

# Who We Are

The Reach Out Response Network is **led by Asante Haughton, Rachel Bromberg, and a group of nearly 400 volunteers.**

Asante and Rachel are both mental health advocates and peer support workers.

The Reach Out Response Network also has an **Advisory Council, made up of senior leadership** from the areas of mental health, 911 dispatch, and policing, and **six Advisory Panels, made up of service users, frontline service providers, peer workers, family members, Black communities, and Indigenous communities.**



Steve Russell / Toronto Star



# The “Genesis”

The Reach Out Response Network began in 2018, when Rachel and Asante began doing research about international mobile crisis models and best practices and connecting with key stakeholders throughout Toronto.

The network was “officially” born in May 2020, when Rachel and Asante formally incorporated RORN as a non-profit and began to build a large network of volunteers.

**On June 30th, 2020, Toronto's City Council voted to commission a report on how to build a mobile mental health crisis response team.**

**In September 2020, the Reach Out Response Network signed an official contract to work with the City of Toronto to prepare that report.**

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# What We've Accomplished So Far

- Built a network of nearly **400 volunteers** and a mailing list of over **2000 people**.
- Created an **Advisory Council** made up of senior leadership in mental health, addictions, policing, and 911 dispatch.
- Created **six Advisory Panels** made up of service users, service providers, family members, peer workers, Indigenous communities, and Black communities.
- **Held 18 town halls** with over 600 attendees
- **Conducted key informant interviews** with relevant stakeholders..
- **Distributed a survey to the homeless population** to learn about their experiences and needs related to crisis services.
- **Conducted research** on international and local mobile crisis models and service gaps.
- **Created a final report on Alternative Crisis Response Models** which was submitted to the City of Toronto
- **Created an international network called the International Crisis Response Association** to connect folks leading or building alternative crisis response services across Canada and the United States



# Who We Are Working With

1. Senior leadership at CAMH, CMHA, the Gerstein Centre, the Empowerment Council, and many other mental health organizations
2. Current and former members of the Toronto Police Services Board
3. The Policing Reform team at the City of Toronto
4. Many City Councillors who have expressed support
5. Mobile crisis response networks across the world, including in Eugene, Denver, Houston, Stockholm, the UK, and New York City
6. **The Reach Out Response Network is strongly prioritizing its engagement with Black and Indigenous communities, and has connected with a large number of organizations that serve these priority populations**

# What's Next?

1. Our final report was developed into a proposal to City Council
2. City Council has voted yes unanimously to develop the new teams as set out in the proposal
3. Implementation/pilot planning throughout 2021
4. Pilot in four parts of Toronto to launch in January 2022, including an Indigenous-led pilot
5. The Reach Out Response Network will support the city in implementation roll-out
6. Through the International Crisis Response Association, we will continue supporting other cities in developing similar services across Canada and the United States

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## Contact Info

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# Questions?

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