

Alternative Response Teams program

Overview

In a collaborative effort to support counties and municipalities, Alternative Response Teams (ARTs) build co-responder models into law enforcement response and existing diversion programs.

ARTs can take several different forms, with the common element of connection to behavioral health and other service needs. ARTs are meant to interrupt the cycle of legal system involvement and prevent over-utilization of crisis resources by addressing unmet needs of individuals in crisis.

This model of response allows those 911 calls that can be safely diverted from law enforcement to be addressed with a visit by ARTs. ARTs include behavioral health and social service specialists, in addition to or instead of law enforcement, who support in connection to behavioral health services and other needed resources.

Eligibility requirements

Priority populations for ART grant monies include those cities or regions with documented capacity to meet crisis triage and stabilization needs. Cities are encouraged to partner with each other to create a regional response model.

Authority

ARTs were designed and a seed grant fund initially established through Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693; Section 215(103)(a); Chapter 297; Laws of 2022.

Ongoing appropriations for ARTs covering state fiscal years 2024-2025 were included in Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5187; Laws of 2023. The Washington Health Care Authority (HCA) contracts with AWC and Whatcom County, who contract with subrecipients to carry out the ART model.

The biennial budget includes dedicated funding to support the Whatcom County ART program and resource center.

Funding

The Association of Washington Cities (AWC) receives funding from HCA to administer a grant 82-0497 (10/23)

program to reimburse the cost to implement ARTs regionally across Washington. HCA also contracts with Whatcom County to support their ART program.

Budget

Association of Washington Cities

- \$2,000,000 General Funds State- Fiscal year 2024
- \$2,000,000 General Funds State- Fiscal year 2025

Whatcom County

- \$587,000 General Funds State- Fiscal year 2024
- \$587,000 General Funds State- Fiscal year 2025

Participating Agencies

In state fiscal year 2023, 11 municipalities applied for and received funding from AWC (HCA's subcontractor) to operate ARTs. There are active ARTs in the following locations:

- Anacortes (Skagit County)
- Bellingham (Whatcom County)
- Everett (Snohomish County)
- Kirkland (King County)
- Monroe (Snohomish County)
- Moses Lake (Grant County)
- Port Angeles (Clallam County)
- Port Townsend (Jefferson County)
- Poulsbo (Kitsap County)
- Puyallup (Pierce County)
- Renton (King County)
- Tukwila (King County)

Whatcom County contracts directly with HCA to support operating costs for their ART. Due to how new the program is, participant outcome data is not yet available.

People Served

Program participants in cities contracted with AWC to provide ART services in SFY23:

Agency	Participant Count
Anacortes	103
Bellingham	261
Covington	26
Everett	70
Kirkland (RCR)	503

Monroe	30
Moses Lake	8
Port Angeles	47
Port Townsend	207
Poulsbo	186
Puyallup	0* (due to program just starting up in SFY '23)
Ridgefield	30
Shelton	95
Tukwila	146

Key partners

Association of Washington Cities (AWC)

Whatcom County Health and Community Services

Oversight

HCA's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery has authority over ARTs.

More information

Contact: Sarah Melfi-Klein
Criminal Legal Systems and Blake projects supervisor
sarah.melfi-klein@hca.wa.gov