

Community Assisted Response and Engagement

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Department Overview

The Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) department, formerly known as the Community Safety and Communications Center (CSCC), was established as a new department in 2021 to provide timely, accurate, and vital information to the City's first responders, city service providers, and to the public. Ordinance 126237 transferred the primary 9-1-1 center from SPD to CARE, effective June 1, 2021. Since the transition, the department has continued working to establish itself as an independent city department and explore integrating non-uniformed and alternate resources for dispatch. CARE is home to the primary Seattle 9-1-1 call center and is the largest in the Pacific Northwest, both by staff size and volume of calls received, averaging almost 900,000 per year. The department employs 189 employees and is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The CARE department enhances public safety through CARE Response Teams that provide additional behavioral health professionals available to respond to people experiencing non-violent mental health crises or quality of life concerns. These unarmed community responders are currently dispatched to a small subset of a person down and welfare check call types. CARE Response Teams are also requested by police officers and sometimes deal with "on view" incidents. In 2024, Seattle 9-1-1 data shows a response time consistently longer than one hour to these call types; the department seeks to reduce that response time and to support SPD's ability to respond to more urgent 9-1-1 calls swiftly. The vision for CARE Response Teams into the future is to expand to additional call types and primary dispatch without officers as appropriate.

Budget Snapshot

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	27,525,414	32,815,649	36,490,801	45,433,380
Total Operations	27,525,414	32,815,649	36,490,801	45,433,380
Total Appropriations	27,525,414	32,815,649	36,490,801	45,433,380
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	163.00	190.00	190.00	239.00

** FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here*

Budget Overview

The 2026 Proposed Budget invests in CARE with an expansion of the Community Crisis Response (CCR) Team, and increased staffing in the 9-1-1 call center, increasing the department's public safety response abilities. In total, the proposed budget invests a net of almost \$9 million in growing the department, a 24 percent growth above the 2026 Endorsed Budget to bolster CARE's staffing and operations.

In 2025, the CCR teams began dispatching across the city from district locations, and with the proposed budget

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those efforts will double citywide as an additional 24 CCRs will be added to the existing 24 current CCR positions. Six CCR supervisors are also added to support and manage responses, as well as making permanent a training manager position. One-time funding will provide vehicles and space needs to help with the department's growth.

CARE, the primary 9-1-1 call center in Seattle, operates 24/7, 365 days a year, and handled over 890,000 calls in 2024. Due to high turnover rates, the call center has sometimes relied heavily on overtime to adequately staff its operations. The proposed budget includes the addition of 12 call takers to provide more regular staff coverage and reduce the need for overtime. Moreover, there will be three training positions created to assist in hiring new dispatchers. Additionally, three temporary administrative positions in finance, human resources, and payroll will be made permanent.

The proposed budget includes revenues from the City's planned Public Safety Sales Tax, which is expected to generate \$39 million in 2026. These revenues are proposed to support the expansion of the CARE Community Crisis Responder teams, hiring additional 9-1-1 call takers, recruiting 20 new firefighters, further enhancing services through the Post Overdose Team in the Seattle Fire Department (SFD), increasing substance use treatment options, and stabilizing other CARE investments.

Specifically in CARE, the proposed Public Safety Sales Tax provides \$15 million of base department funding, as well as \$9.5 million and 49 FTE to double the number of CCR teams, provide additional 9-1-1 call takers and fund needed department administrative support.

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	2026 Budget	FTE
Total 2026 Endorsed Budget	36,490,801	190.00
Baseline		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(270,795)	-
Proposed Operating		
Expansion of the Community Crisis Responder Team	6,900,001	31.00
Additional 9-1-1 Call Center Staffing and Department Administrative Support	2,632,192	18.00
Proposed Technical		
Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget	(299,366)	-
SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction	(19,453)	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$8,942,579	49.00
Total 2026 Proposed Budget	\$45,433,380	239.00

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(270,795)

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

Proposed Operating

Expansion of the Community Crisis Responder Team

Expenditures \$6,900,001
 Position Allocation 31.00

A \$6.9 million expansion of the CARE Community Crisis Responder (CCR) Team in the 2026 budget will double the number of response teams dispatched. Currently 24 CCR positions respond to calls throughout the city, and this item will add 24 positions (12 Community Crisis Responder I, and 12 Community Crisis Responder II) for a total of 48 CCRs, as well as an additional 6 Community Crisis Responder Supervisors to support and manage response calls; overall doubling CCR coverage across the city. A training manager position (Strategic Advisor 2) is also made permanent, providing needed ongoing training and other support to the department.

Of the \$6.9 million, \$1.97 million is one-time funding to support the significant expansion in CARE. One-time funding

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pays for additional vehicles, and space improvements and/or changes for the district dispatching locations, as well as for the department's headquarters.

The revenues for this expansion are from the proposed 0.1% increase in Public Safety Sales Tax.

Additional 9-1-1 Call Center Staffing and Department Administrative Support

Expenditures	\$2,632,192
Position Allocation	18.00

This item adds \$2.63 million of ongoing funding for call center support and department administrative needs. To increase staffing in the 9-1-1 call center, this proposal includes 12 call takers (six - 9-1-1 Emergency Communication Dispatcher 1s, and six - 9-1-1 Emergency Communication Dispatcher 2s), which will increase the total number of call taker positions to 129. Significant turnover in the call center results in the use of overtime to cover shifts and to keep call answering times low, and the 12 additional positions will provide more regular staffing coverage. To further create call center capacity, the proposed budget includes 3 trainers (9-1-1 Emergency Communication Analysts) are added to support the training needed for new hires.

To address CARE's administrative needs as the department has grown, the proposed budget turns some temporary positions into permanent positions in the 2026 budget. This includes the following three positions: 1 Strategic Advisor supporting finance, 1 Personnel Specialist, Senior supporting human resources, and 1 Payroll Supervisor supporting payroll. These permanent positions will ensure administrative capacity and certainty as the department continues to grow operationally.

The revenues for this expansion are from the proposed 0.1% increase in Public Safety Sales Tax.

Proposed Technical

Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget

Expenditures	\$(299,366)
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This centrally administered change adjusts base budget appropriations to reflect the proper Annual Wage Increase (AWI) increment for 2026, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of City Unions for personnel costs. AWI increments are determined based on the average change in the local Consumer Price Index (CPI). This change represents a true-up between the forecasted CPI assumption included in the Endorsed Budget and the actual CPI data.

SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction

Expenditures	\$(19,453)
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The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2025, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.17% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 15.06%.

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Expenditure Overview

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Appropriations				
CS - BO-CS-10000 - 911 Call Response				
00100 - General Fund	25,360,829	28,456,809	29,991,433	32,105,411
Total for BSL: BO-CS-10000	25,360,829	28,456,809	29,991,433	32,105,411
 CS - BO-CS-40000 - Community Assisted Response and Engagement				
00100 - General Fund	2,164,585	4,358,840	6,499,368	13,327,968
Total for BSL: BO-CS-40000	2,164,585	4,358,840	6,499,368	13,327,968
 Department Total	27,525,414	32,815,649	36,490,801	45,433,380
 Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	163.00	190.00	190.00	239.00

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Budget Summary by Fund Community Assisted Response and Engagement

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	27,525,414	32,815,649	36,490,801	45,433,380
Budget Totals for CS	27,525,414	32,815,649	36,490,801	45,433,380

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Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

CS - BO-CS-10000 - 911 Call Response

The purpose of the 911 Call Response Budget Summary Level is to answer 911 calls, dispatch City public safety responses, facilitate reporting of minor incidents; and respond to community safety requests.

Program Expenditures	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Communications Center	25,360,829	28,456,809	29,991,433	32,105,411
Total	25,360,829	28,456,809	29,991,433	32,105,411
Full-time Equivalents Total*	153.00	158.00	158.00	176.00

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CS - BO-CS-40000 - Community Assisted Response and Engagement

The purpose of the Community Assisted Response and Engagement Budget Summary Level is to develop and implement programs that address behavioral issues and substance abuse, share information across departments, and respond to non-emergent, low-risk community calls for service.

Program Expenditures	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Dual Dispatch	2,164,585	4,358,840	6,499,368	13,327,968
Total	2,164,585	4,358,840	6,499,368	13,327,968
Full-time Equivalents Total*	10.00	32.00	32.00	63.00

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