



**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Promoting Respect, Recovery, Hope

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Marcus Alert in the City of Alexandria

The City of Alexandria is developing its Marcus Alert system, which will improve its responses to behavioral health emergencies, such as those involving mental health and substance use. The Marcus Alert system is the result of the Marcus-David Peters Act and uses a combination of existing and new approaches to achieve its goal of ensuring behavioral health emergencies are met with behavioral health responses. With this new model, the City seeks to ensure equitable behavioral health responses and outcomes for all Alexandrians.

What is the Marcus-David Peters Act?

The Marcus-David Peters Act is named for Marcus-David Peters, a young, Black biology teacher who was shot and killed in 2018 by Richmond Police while he was experiencing a behavioral health emergency. Passed in 2020 by the Virginia General Assembly, the Act aims to make sure that individuals experiencing behavioral health emergencies are met with a behavioral health-focused response and diverted to the behavioral health system whenever possible.

How will the Marcus Alert system achieve the goals set forth in the Marcus-David Peters Act?

Marcus Alert will create a response system that focuses on behavioral health and aims to deliver the most appropriate outcomes to individuals in need. Several new programs will help meet this goal: a method for determining the severity of a behavioral health emergency, a nationwide behavioral health emergency number with regional call centers, a voluntary database to allow residents to share their circumstances with first, regional mobile crisis teams, and new and revised training, protocols, and policies for responding to behavioral health emergencies.

How will the Marcus Alert system be developed in the City of Alexandria?

The City of Alexandria's Marcus Alert efforts are being carried out by two groups, coordinated by the Marcus Alert Coordinator. The Marcus Alert Technical Group is made up of City staff, including mental health professionals and first responders. The Marcus Alert Mission Group is made up of community partners, including members and representatives of Alexandria's communities. The Technical Group will manage the planning and development, while the Mission Group will provide regular input and feedback leading up to implementation. In addition to all related protocols and policies being reviewed through a racial equity lens, this group process ensures that Alexandria's diverse communities are represented and have a voice as the City develops and implements Marcus Alert.

What will the Marcus Alert system look like in the City of Alexandria?

The City of Alexandria is committed to changing the current practice sending police to respond to the majority of behavioral health emergencies. 911 operators and dispatchers will receive additional training to identify behavioral health calls; calls that do not require immediate an in-person response will be transferred to a new regional call center dedicated to handling behavioral health emergencies (the call center is able to dispatch mobile crisis teams as needed). For more urgent behavioral health emergencies, a team comprised of a licensed behavioral health clinician and an officer will be dispatched, with the clinician leading the response. Only in cases where there is an imminent risk of harm will police or other first responders lead a response, ensuring a scene's safety before addressing an individual's immediate behavioral health needs.

If you have any questions about Marcus Alert in the City of Alexandria, please contact the City's Marcus Alert Coordinator, Mike Razak, at michael.razak@alexandriava.gov.