

# Crisis Alternative Response Evanston (C.A.R.E) Team



**Jeron Dorsey, Deputy Director  
Certified Crisis Responder  
Parks, Recreation & Community Services**

December 9, 2025

# What is the CARE Team

## Mission

Offer trauma-informed, non-police crisis response for low-risk behavioral health & quality-of-life calls



## Core Values



Voluntary engagement



safety-first



cultural humility



harm reduction

# Crisis Alternative Response Evanston (CARE) Team

- Established in June of 2024
- Develop non-police response to community members in need of immediate support
- Five-week intensive training with Oakton College to obtain Crisis Responder Certification
- Teams of two trained to respond to low-risk calls, conserving police resources and preventing negative or even dangerous interactions between officers and community members.
- Two- week public awareness campaign prior to responding to first call on July 29, 2024



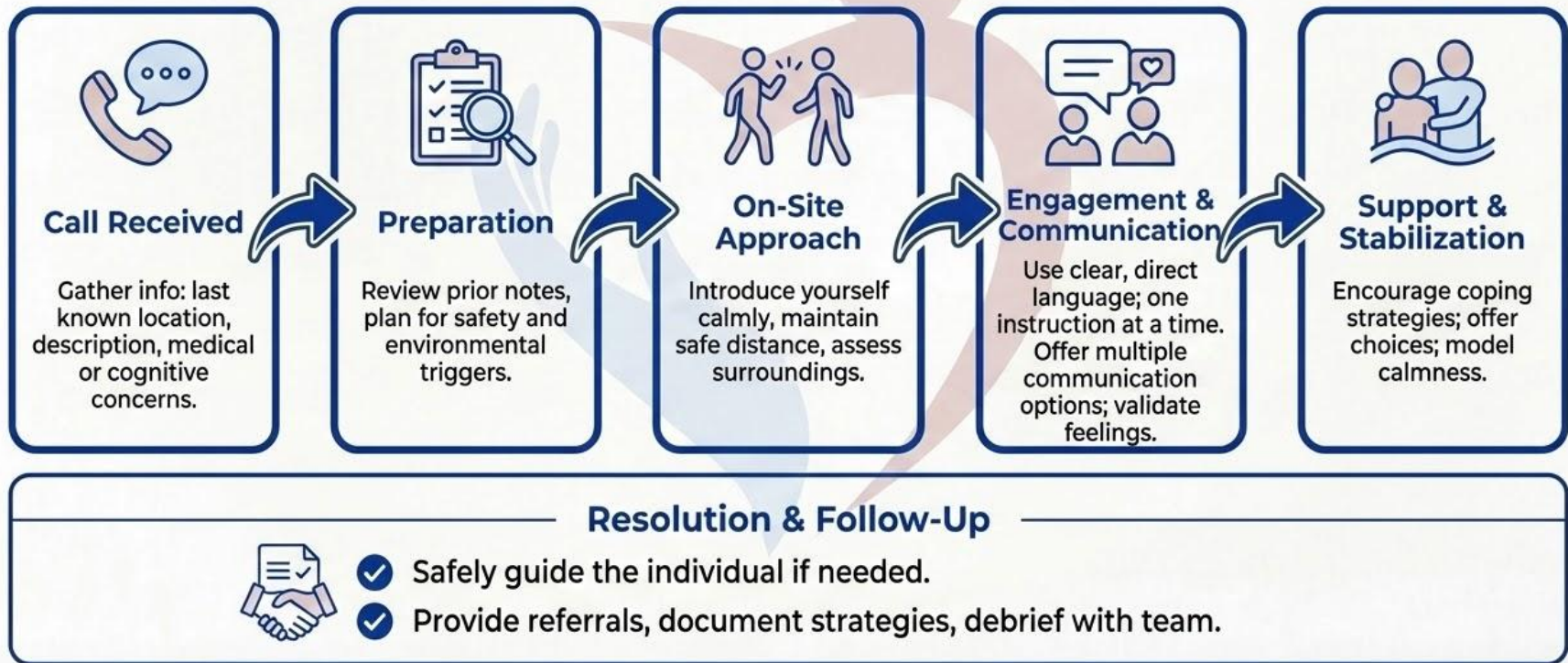
# Trauma-Informed and Person-Centered Support

- Recognize that the person knows themselves best
- Consider the person's life experiences
- Understand that every person is unique
- Value the person's rights and dignity



# Responding to the Call

## Typical call flow





# Key Considerations



## **Safety first**

Individual,  
Responder,  
Community.



## **Person-centered**

Focus on  
preferences,  
strengths,  
autonomy.



## **Trauma-informed**

Consider past  
experiences  
affecting  
behavior.

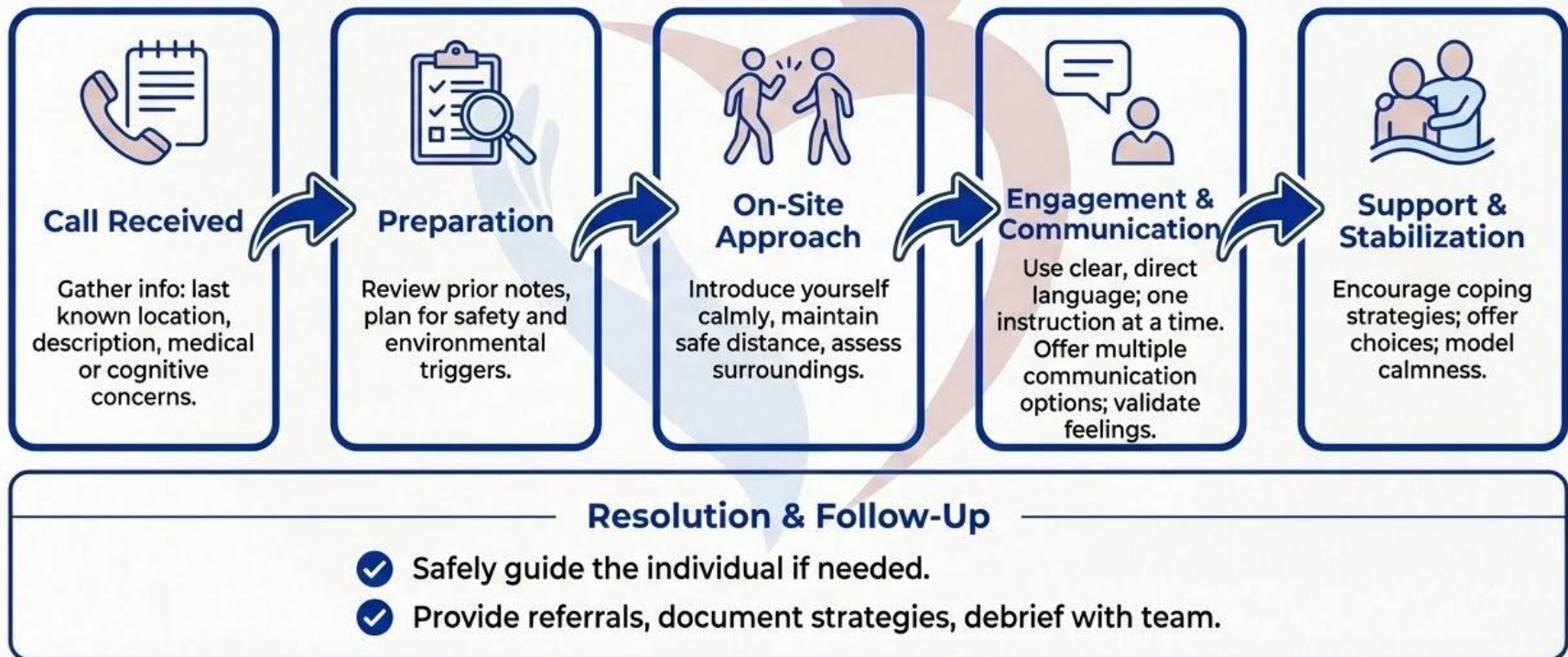


## **Strength-based**

Emphasize  
abilities and  
coping  
strategies,  
not deficits.

# Responding to the Call

## Typical call flow



# Family Protocol for IDD Awareness



## Provide Advance Information

- Share important details about the individual: diagnosis, communication preferences, triggers, and coping strategies.
- Use contact cards or behavior profiles to summarize key information for quick reference.



## Share De-escalation Preferences

- Indicate which approaches work best (calm tone, choice offering, favorite coping tools).
- Highlight strategies that should be avoided to prevent escalation.



## Use Voluntary Registries or City Coordination

- Enroll the individual in voluntary safety registries if available.
- Coordinate with local city or emergency departments to ensure responders have access to critical information before arriving.



# Preparation and Awareness



## Check Prior Information

Gather details on triggers, supports, and preferred communication methods.



## Approach with Respect & Curiosity

Neurodivergence is not a deficit. Treat every interaction with dignity.



## Practice Trauma-Informed & Person-Centered Thinking

Focus on the individual's needs, safety, and empowerment.

# Initial Engagement

- Introduce yourself calmly, clearly, and without sudden movements
- Keep your language concrete and direct; avoid idioms, sarcasm, or abstract expressions
- Respect personal space; do not touch unless safety requires it
- Observe and minimize environmental triggers (lights, noise, crowding)

The word "RESPECT" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is a different color: R (purple), E (blue), S (green), P (yellow), E (orange), C (red), and T (pink).

# Communication Techniques



## **Allow Extra Processing Time**

Patience is critical. Give them time to respond.



## **Offer Multiple Communication Options**

Verbal, written, picture cards, gestures. Find what works best.



## **Give One Instruction at a Time**

Keep it simple and clear to reduce overwhelm.



## **Validate Feelings and Experiences**

Acknowledge their perspective. Show you understand.

# De-escalation Strategies



**Reduce environmental stressors** whenever possible.



**Offer choices** to give the individual control.



**Avoid physical restraint** unless there is immediate risk.



**Model calmness** with tone, pacing, and body language.



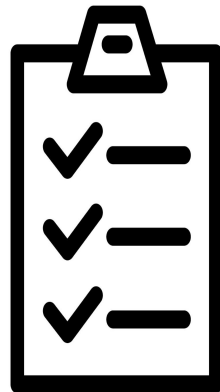
# Collaboration and Support

- Include caregivers or support staff when appropriate and consented.
- Identify and encourage coping strategies the individual uses.
- Set realistic expectations; repeated attempts may be necessary.



# Documentation and Follow-Up

- Record triggers, successful strategies, and communication preferences.
- Provide referrals to community supports as appropriate.
- Share lessons learned with your team to improve future responses.



# How to Develop a CARE-like Program



# CARE Team IDD Trainings



## **Neurodiversity Inclusion and Accessibility Training**

Focuses on understanding and supporting individuals with diverse neurological profiles, promoting inclusive environments and accessible communication practices.



## **CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) Certification**

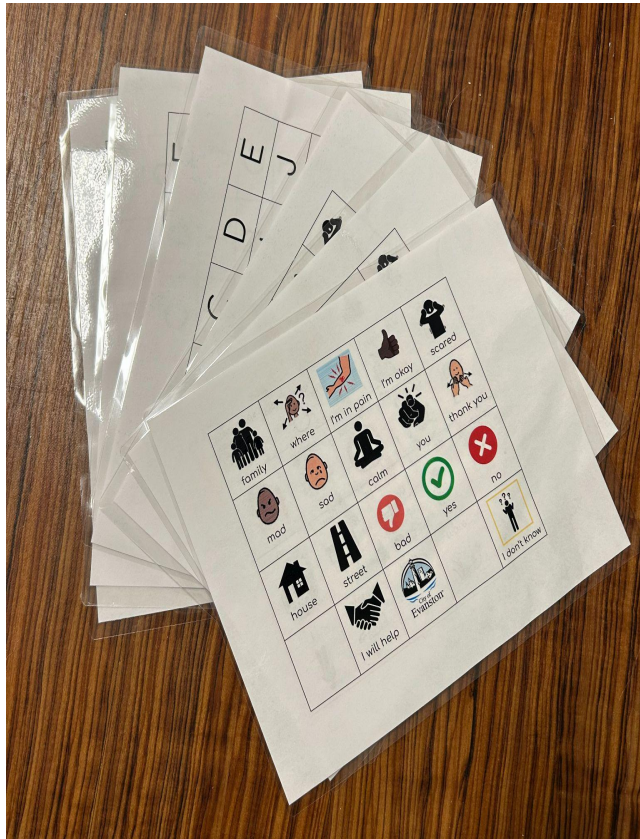
NCI (Non-violent Crisis Intervention) program. Provides evidence-based strategies for de-escalation and safe crisis management, prioritizing the safety and dignity of all individuals.



# Evanston has *Joined the Sunflower*

- The movement
- How can this benefit your community members?
- Respecting privacy and autonomy

# Additional Tools & Accommodations



# Equipping our Crisis Responders



# Resources

[Neurodivergent Affirming Language Guide](#)

[Hidden Disability Sunflower](#)

[Crisis Prevention Institute](#)

Social media groups/pages created by Autistic/Neurodivergent individuals:

- Autism Goggles
- The Autistic Teacher
- The Occuplaytional Therapist
- Sally Cat's PDA Page
- [Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#) – Autistic-run nonprofit with plain-language toolkits, self-advocacy guides, and policy resources
- [Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network \(AWN\)](#) – Resources centering autistic women and nonbinary people, with a strong focus on intersectionality and support
- [Reframing Autism – "Autism Essentials"](#) – Free, self-paced online course that explains autism in a neuro-affirming way, geared toward families, educators, and professionals
- [AANE \(Association for Autism and Neurodiversity\)](#) – Information, support groups, coaching, and webinars for autistic adults, teens, and families
- [Autism Level UP!](#) – Practical tools and visuals for regulation, energy levels, and classroom supports that can be used at home or at school
- [NeuroClastic](#) – Articles, guides, and resources written by autistic and other neurodivergent people for parents, educators, and clinicians



# Questions?



THANK YOU  
SO MUCH

YOU ARE VERY MUCH APPRECIATED!

