



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince William County  
Program Title: Community Crisis Outreach Team  
Program Category: Community Outreach

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Title: County Executive  
Signature:

## **Community Crisis Outreach Team -- Prince William County Community Services Board**

### **VACo Achievement Award Submission: Community Outreach Category**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Prince William County Community Services Board's Community Crisis Outreach Team (CCOT) is changing how we respond to behavioral health challenges in our community. Instead of waiting for emergencies to happen, this innovative team proactively reaches out to residents who need support before their situations spiral into crisis.

CCOT fills a critical gap that many communities face: what happens to people who need help but don't require emergency intervention? Our three mental health professionals hit the streets, meeting people where they are—in homes, shelters, parking lots, anywhere help is needed. They use trauma-informed, person-centered approaches to connect residents with the right services at the right time.

The numbers tell the story of growing community trust: 433 referrals in our first full year (FY23), jumping to 708 referrals in 2024—a remarkable 63.5% increase. This program demonstrates what's possible when different agencies work together and shows other Virginia localities a replicable path forward under the Commonwealth's Marcus Alert initiative.

#### **The Challenge We Faced**

Like communities across Virginia, Prince William County has seen a steady rise in behavioral health needs that intersect with law enforcement and emergency services. Our first responders

were encountering the same individuals repeatedly—what we call "super utilizers"—people cycling through crisis without ever connecting to long-term support.

Traditional crisis responses wait for 911 calls, but many residents needed immediate attention and follow-up that didn't require emergency response. We had a gap in our system, and people were falling through it. Under the Commonwealth's Marcus Alert initiative, we decided to build a bridge.

### **Our Innovative Approach**

CCOT represents a fundamental shift in how we deliver behavioral health services. Here's what makes it different:

**Proactive Instead of Reactive:** Rather than waiting for emergencies, we reach out before situations escalate. It's prevention in action—a paradigm shift that's paying dividends for our community.

**Meeting People Where They Are:** Our team operates in the real world, not in clinical settings. We remove barriers to care by going to people instead of making them navigate complex systems when they're already struggling.

**Connecting the Dots:** CCOT serves as the missing link between law enforcement, emergency services, behavioral health, and social services. We're creating a safety net that actually works.

As Team Supervisor Art Square puts it: "The team is small but mighty and helps community members who have fallen through the gaps of traditional service. The engagement work to get

them where they need to be requires skillfulness, empathy, and persistence." And this team has that in abundance.

Our three full-time mental health professionals, including one bilingual Spanish-speaking staff member, conduct field outreach across Greater Prince William County using trauma-informed, person-centered approaches. They're skilled in de-escalation, motivational interviewing, and systems navigation—showing up with compassion and consistency during people's most vulnerable moments.

### **Partnership That Works**

CCOT succeeds because of strong collaboration across multiple systems:

**Law Enforcement Partnership:** We work closely with our Co-Responder Unit, which pairs six mental health clinicians with Crisis Intervention Team-trained officers. When residents decline immediate services but clearly need ongoing support, they're referred to CCOT for follow-up.

The strength of this partnership is perhaps best illustrated by feedback from a master police officer who works directly with CCOT: "The most frequent way I connect individuals to resources is through the Prince William County Community Services Board (CSB) Outreach Team. I meet with a CSB team member once a week to discuss recent cases within the department and explore how we can assist those individuals in accessing resources. Their team takes a holistic approach—not only addressing mental health needs but also helping with a wide range of services, such as finding a wheelchair, applying for Medicaid, connecting people with Meals on Wheels, and scheduling therapy appointments."

This officer emphasizes how essential the partnership has been: "This partnership has been essential to my success in this role and has proven extremely helpful for officers who are trying to connect individuals with additional support. The CSB team is always accessible, eager to help, and committed to providing assistance while maintaining a positive attitude. I have nothing but gratitude for their work. Their effectiveness, teamwork, and empathy inspire me to continue mine, and officers who may not interact with them as often also have nothing but positive feedback."

**Fire and Rescue Collaboration:** Our pilot partnership with EMS targets "super utilizers" for follow-up, reducing unnecessary 911 calls while improving health outcomes for residents who were cycling through emergency services.

**Community Connections:** We partner with the Department of Social Services, local schools, ACTS (for domestic violence survivors), RAFT (for older adults), veterans services, and legal aid providers. This network allows us to address the whole person, not just the crisis.

### **How We Made It Happen**

CCOT is fully funded through Virginia's Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services as part of the Marcus Alert initiative. This covers our three full-time clinicians, vehicles, equipment, and ongoing training in trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, and suicide prevention.

Having a bilingual clinician helps us bridge language and cultural gaps in our diverse community. The program operates within our CSB's crisis services framework, supervised by a licensed behavioral health clinician with outreach experience.

## **Results That Matter**

The growth speaks for itself:

- **433 referrals** in our first full year (FY23)
- **589 referrals** in calendar year 2023
- **708 referrals** in 2024—representing a 63.5% increase from FY23

We're seeing real impact where it counts: reduced emergency system burden, improved service connections, and expanded reach to historically underserved populations. Our referrals include individuals impacted by violent crime, families needing mental health or substance use services, sexual assault survivors, veterans, undocumented residents, and people experiencing chronic housing instability.

Every outreach effort includes follow-up and direct, in-person connections to ongoing services through a "warm hand-off" approach. This strategy has proven critical in building community trust and strengthening relationships between our CSB and our most vulnerable citizens. Community members now feel safer, stay engaged in services longer, and report greater satisfaction with their care. We are building a community-centric model that reduces reliance on emergency systems while empowering people to access the care they need. This holistic approach extends beyond mental health to include practical support, demonstrating our commitment to addressing the whole person rather than just the immediate crisis—an approach that has earned praise from our law enforcement partners.

## **A Model for Others**

The Community Crisis Outreach Team offers a blueprint that other localities can adapt:

1. **Assess local needs** through data analysis of emergency service calls
2. **Leverage Marcus Alert funding** or other DBHDS opportunities
3. **Build strategic partnerships** with law enforcement, EMS, and community organizations
4. **Recruit specialized staff** with outreach and crisis intervention experience
5. **Track your impact** through solid data collection systems

This model excels at reducing unnecessary 911 calls, preventing future crises, building bridges between public safety and behavioral health, and promoting equity by reaching non-English speaking and underserved populations.

## **Looking Forward**

As part of Virginia's broader Marcus Alert and crisis continuum efforts, Prince William County's CCOT exemplifies forward-thinking, collaborative programming that strengthens communities and saves lives. We're not just responding to crises—we're preventing them. And we're proving that with the right approach, we can help community members who have fallen through the gaps of traditional service find their way to stability and wellness.

Art Square's energy is infectious when he talks about CCOT, and it's easy to see why. This small but mighty team is making a big difference, one person at a time—a sentiment echoed by the law enforcement professionals who work alongside them every day and witness firsthand the team's effectiveness, empathy, and commitment to helping others.

