

Proclamation
Honoring Douglas County Community Response Team and
Homeless Engagement, Assistance, and Resource Team
Co-Responders

WHEREAS, Douglas County, along with the State of Colorado, and the USA, have continued to address the issue of Mental Illness, Substance Use Disorder, and Homelessness due to the large number of people affected directly and indirectly by these as well as other co-occurring conditions, and

WHEREAS, nearly 1 in 5 Citizens of Douglas County, Colorado, and the USA, currently deal with mental health issues or will in their lifetime, and

WHEREAS, the Opioid Epidemic continues to rage across the nation, Colorado, and here in Douglas County, with over 100,000 overdose deaths occurring annually in the U.S., and

WHEREAS, the Douglas County Region 12 Opioid Abatement Council recognizes the valuable work of co-response in the fight against substance use disorder and allocated funds to expand the work of the CRT and HEART Co-Responder programs, and

WHEREAS, mental illness, substance use disorder, and co-occurring conditions often lead to homelessness, criminal charges, and arrests as well as expensive and less effective jail housing, broken families, suicide, violent crimes and community safety issues, and

WHEREAS, the many issues created by mental illness, substance use disorder, addiction, and homelessness are community problems, not just a problem for Law Enforcement or Fire and Emergency Medical Services, and

WHEREAS, many communities, towns, cities, counties, and states have realized the need for additional resources to address these issues and specifically when individuals are experiencing crisis situations, and

WHEREAS, Douglas County has acted to connect those in crisis to community services in a compassionate way, while ensuring public safety through code enforcement, and

WHEREAS, many communities, including Douglas County, have identified an evidence-based and effective program called Co-Response, and

WHEREAS, Co-Response is the pairing of a mental or behavioral health professional, or navigator with a first responder such as a deputy sheriff, police officer, fire officer, or paramedic/EMT, who respond as a team to intervene in varying levels of crisis with the goal of diverting individuals from arrest and jail, diverting individuals from emergency rooms, and connecting individuals in crisis with necessary and effective resources such as counseling, access to medications, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for alcohol/drug addiction, access to housing, shelter, food, and other basic necessities, and

WHEREAS, Douglas County, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Castle Rock Police Department, Lone Tree Police Department, Parker Police Department, Castle Rock Fire and Rescue, South Metro Fire and Rescue and the Douglas County School District have partnered to create the Community Response Team, a Co-Responder program comprised of specially selected and trained deputies, officers, clinicians, resource specialists and EMTs since 2017, and

WHEREAS, the Community Response Team has responded to 12,696 emergency and non-emergency calls and referrals for service, and provided crisis intervention, conducted important follow-up, implemented safety plans, and helped nearly 8,000 people get connected with the resources they desperately need for healthier living including access to mental health treatment/counseling, anti-psychotic medications, MAT, and other community resources, and

WHEREAS, the Douglas County Homeless Initiative created the Homeless Engagement, Assistance and Resource Team (HEART) to provide a specialized co-response for individuals who are unhoused by pairing subject matter expert navigators with local law enforcement, and

WHEREAS, the HEART has responded to over 2500 referrals and calls for service, served 445 individuals, and helped to reduce the number of unhoused individuals sleeping outside in Douglas County from 43 down to 6 in the first two years of operation, and

WHEREAS, Community Response Team and HEART Personnel have shown exceptional commitment, dedication, leadership, and passion to help those in need - reinforcing how vital their work is to the communities of Douglas County.

NOW, THEREFORE, WE, the Board of County Commissioners for Douglas County, hereby proclaim the week of September 15-September 21, 2024, as Douglas County Co-Responders Week and join with the Colorado Co-Responder Alliance, and the International Co-Responder Alliance, to express our appreciation and gratitude for all Co-Responders, Crisis Mental and Behavioral Health Clinicians, and Homeless Navigators working in Douglas County, and recognizing the significant contributions of these dedicated law enforcement and fire/EMS first responders paired with mental health and homeless navigator professionals who routinely respond to non-routine, and sometimes dangerous situations, involving people in crisis and who work together to intervene and ensure the best possible outcomes through appropriate placement, safety planning, access to treatment, and connection to needed services.

As the Board of County Commissioners, we call upon Douglas County residents, public and private institutions, and organizations to recognize, honor, and give thanks to these amazing professionals for their dedication to serve our community, assist those in need and keep our community safe.

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, STATE OF COLORADO

CHAIR
ATTEST:

Deputy Clerk
