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Challenges Facing B-HEARD Expansion

January 29, 2026 – The Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division ([B-HEARD](#)) is part of a larger framework of City services aimed at responding to the mental health needs of New Yorkers. This Independent Budget Office (IBO) [report](#) explores the operational side of B-HEARD, including structure, staffing, budget, response times, and more. A [companion piece](#) examines changes in demand for services.

IBO [found](#) that during the third quarter of 2025, 37% of calls eligible for a B-HEARD response were assigned a B-HEARD unit, but only 33% of eligible calls received a B-HEARD response. Additionally, IBO [found](#) that response times are slowing as the number of mental health calls decrease, not just for eligible calls receiving a B-HEARD response, but for all mental health calls (and even non-mental health calls) citywide overall. This decrease should not be interpreted as evidence that mental health needs are being fully addressed citywide. It may, however, suggest increased usage of other [programs or City initiatives](#).

If the Mamdani administration continues the Adams administration's plan of scaling the program citywide, IBO finds that the City would need to determine and set appropriate staffing levels to meet service demand. If the program were scaled proportionally to current staffing levels, IBO anticipates that citywide service demand would still not be adequately met.

B-HEARD has, to date, been jointly operated and funded by FDNY and H+H. B-HEARD's budget for fiscal year 2026 was \$35 million as of June 2025, a 35% percent increase from its first full year of operation in 2022. Over the same period, B-HEARD coverage expanded from 3 precincts up to 31 precincts, a nine-fold increase.

At present, nine teams are designated to cover the Bronx, Upper Manhattan, Central Brooklyn, and Northwestern Queens. As of March 2025, 38 H+H social workers staffed B-HEARD, alongside 58 FDNY staff assigned to the program as of June 2025.





Together, these findings highlight the operational considerations that will shape any effort to expand or restructure the City's approach in responding to mental health calls. As discussions surrounding the Mamdani administration's proposed Department of Community Safety take shape, lessons can be drawn from the early implementation of B-HEARD. If the B-HEARD program is to be expanded citywide, or incorporated into a more comprehensive approach, then these operational difficulties will need to be addressed.

