



Crisis Intervention Services Survey Summary

All counties are required to have a crisis intervention service to respond to people experiencing distress or anxiety that results from mental health and substance use disorders. One of the main goals of crisis intervention services is to prevent people from needing more restrictive care, such as a psychiatric hospitalization or emergency detention.

The Crisis Services Workgroup, a group that includes staff from the Division of Care and Treatment Services and representatives from the Wisconsin County Human Service Association, surveyed all counties in 2019 to better understand the strengths and needs of Wisconsin’s crisis intervention services system.

The Crisis Services Workgroup is working to develop Wisconsin’s crisis intervention services system to meet the best practices identified in a 2016 national report, “Crisis Now: Transforming services is within our reach.” This report identifies three core components that work together to provide a coordinated response for persons experiencing crisis:

- Someone to call — guaranteeing that every call, text, and chat is answered by a trained crisis worker that can de-escalate the crisis situation or determine that further response is needed.
- Someone to respond — ensuring that mobile crisis services are available to provide in-person support where the person is located.
- A place to go — offering short-term and long-term care in a stabilization facility to prevent more restrictive placement while connecting people to community-based care.

Responses to the Crisis Intervention Services Survey are informing the work of the Crisis Services Workgroup. A summary of the key findings from the survey grouped by the components of the “Crisis Now” framework is below.

Someone to Call

Call volume varies widely across the state.

24 to 40,000

The estimated number of calls each county answers in a year varies across counties from 24 to 40,000. Close to one-third of programs have less than 500 calls while another third have more than 3,000.

Some counties do not offer 24/7 phone service.

4

While almost all counties answer calls 24/7 or have a back-up system for non-business hours, four counties do not have a 24/7 phone service. Of the counties with a back-up system, 33% use a contracted provider to answer calls during non-business hours. One of the four counties with no 24/7 phone service relies on law enforcement to answer calls during non-business hours.

Someone to Respond

Mobile outreach is not equally accessible to all state residents.

54%

Over half of counties (54%) rely on their phone line when mobile outreach isn't available. Sixteen percent of counties do not respond to all areas within their service area. Law enforcement and next-day follow-up are used by at least one-third of programs when mobile outreach is not available. Additionally, staffing shortages limit mobile outreach for ten counties.

A Place to Go

More residential crisis stabilization options are needed in Wisconsin.

21

Twenty-one counties have no options for residential crisis stabilization.

62%

Sixty-two percent of counties say the closest option for residential crisis stabilization was outside of their county. The northern and southwestern regions of the state have few options for crisis stabilization.

54%

More than half of counties (54%) resort to more costly and restrictive hospitalization when residential crisis stabilization is not available.

Emergency protective placements are hard to find.

58%

The majority of counties (58%) do not have an emergency protective placement facility in their county. Counties and law enforcement spend a significant amount of time and money to locate available beds and often those beds are far away. This is especially true in the southern and northeastern regions of the state with 78% of programs in these regions not having a local emergency protective placement facility.