



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Kirsten L. Johnson, Secretary

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Howard L. Marklein
Joint Committee on Finance, Senate Co-Chair
316 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

The Honorable Mark Born
Joint Committee on Finance, Assembly Co-Chair
308 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Marklein and Representative Born:

The Department of Health Services is pleased to submit a report on the Law Enforcement Officer Virtual Behavioral Health Crisis Care Pilot Program to the Legislature pursuant to 2023 Wisconsin Act 219, 1(d).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kirsten Johnson".

Kirsten L. Johnson
Secretary-designee

Enclosure

Law Enforcement Virtual Behavioral Health Crisis Care Pilot Program

Background

The Law Enforcement Virtual Behavioral Health Crisis Care Pilot Program aims to improve the response to people experiencing a mental health emergency by providing law enforcement officers with access to behavioral health professionals through telehealth technology.

2023 Wisconsin Act 219 directed the Department of Health Services (DHS) to provide an opportunity for county agencies providing behavioral health crisis services certified under Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 34 to apply for a share of \$2 million in one-time state funding to create a program to connect law enforcement officers working with a person in a mental health crisis with county agency staff through video chat who can assist with de-escalation, stabilization, and a safety assessment. The legislation capped individual grant awards to \$200,000 per county agency with a minimum of a 25% match.

DHS posted a grant funding opportunity for this pilot program June 14, 2024, with applications due July 26, 2024. One application was received. DHS staff made a concerted effort to encourage more applications by conducting direct outreach to eligible county agencies. These outreach efforts resulted in one additional application. In response to that outreach, several counties indicated to DHS staff that they already established relationships and processes between their county crisis programs and law enforcement partners, leading to a lack of interest in this pilot program funding opportunity.

Dane County and Racine County were awarded grants, with contracts effective October 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. Due to the short grant period and the pilot nature of the funding opportunity, both Dane and Racine counties focused the funds on program creation and design, equipment acquisition, and electronic systems; therefore, no client data has yet been collected. Provision of services and data collection will start this month into June and continue beyond the grant period.

Dane County was awarded \$230,794, including their match. Dane County's Department of Human Services is partnering with Journey Mental Health Care, which operates the county's crisis services program, and the Dane County Sheriff's Office.

Racine County was awarded \$250,437, including their match. Racine County's Human Services Department is partnering with the Racine County Sheriff's Office.

The grant funding pays no more than 75 percent of the cost of the program. Each grantee must contribute 25 percent of the cost of the program through cash, in-kind services, or a combination of both.

Both Dane and Racine Counties' funding match contribution is being met through personnel salary and staff time.

Both grantees are in the process of ordering equipment and establishing policies and procedures for their programs, including how data will be tracked. The programs were not yet operational to provide services as of March 31, 2025. Given the short duration of the contract, both grantees are prioritizing funding for training, technology, and data services.

Data

The data reporting requirements outlined in 2023 Act 219 contain various program elements, including: the number of law enforcement officer equipped with the services, the number of incidents in which the services were utilized, the number of those incidents that were predicted to otherwise result in an involuntary detention, the number of persons in crisis that remained in place instead of under an involuntary commitment, and an estimate of how many working hours were saved due to the pilot program. Data collection on these elements is still in process as these two counties' pilot programs remain under development and the services have not yet been implemented.