

10 Steps For Communities To Improve Their Crisis System

In order to make this information optimally accessible and useful for communities that wish to improve their behavioral health crisis system, the following 10 steps are a recommended approach:

1. Identify and convene community partners: Identify community stakeholders and potential partners who are interested in, or have a stake in, behavioral health crisis services within your community and develop a voluntary ad-hoc group for initial discussions. Remember to engage stakeholders and funding partners that represent the whole community, not just those who are indigent or funded by Medicaid. Behavioral health crisis systems are an essential community service for everyone.
2. Read and process relevant sections of the report: Share this report with those stakeholders and ask them to read the Executive Summary and the Introduction. Have the stakeholders identify aspects of the report most relevant to them over a few sessions and have them present sections of the report to the group as a whole.
3. Develop a local vision: Have the stakeholders develop an initial vision for an ideal behavioral health crisis system in your community. Do not be discouraged if you are far from that goal right now. Every community with an improved behavioral health crisis system had to start at the beginning and make progress over time.
4. Disseminate the vision: Write down this vision with some initial action steps and actively share it with others.
5. Accountable entity: Identify one or more entities that may serve as the accountable entity within your community. It could be county leadership, city leadership, a managed care organization or an existing community collaborative addressing jail diversion or suicide prevention.
6. Planning and implementation team: Identify a team of people to meet regularly on an ongoing basis to begin to plan the ideal behavioral health crisis system. This could be a new group under the accountable entity or a component of an existing collaboration. Do not hesitate to seek consultation or outside facilitation if needed at this step or any point along the way.
7. Baseline self-assessment: Using the measurable criteria in the report, rating each item from 1-5, have the planning team rate the current status of your behavioral health crisis system. No matter what you find, give yourselves a round of applause. See the Report Card in the Appendix to help organize this step. Use the Report Card as well to track your progress over time.
8. Early wins: Identify three to five improvement opportunities that the team can address early on, within available capacity and resources. Develop and implement a collaborative plan to begin to make progress in small steps on each item. Give yourselves another round of applause for making progress.

9. Data and financing: At the same time, members of the planning team begin to gather clinical and cost data on current system performance and identify potential local, state and federal funding opportunities. Do not worry that your initial data are not perfect or if you do not find all the funding you will eventually need. Every community makes progress in steps with slow improvement in data using initial seed funds to attract further funding as the vision of the crisis system takes shape.

10. Comprehensive plan: Keep meeting and working together. Over a period of time, using the data you have gathered, with consultation if needed, use this report for guidance to develop a comprehensive, collaborative plan for the design of an ideal behavioral health crisis system for your community. Identify a step-by-step approach so multiple partners can begin to work together to make progress over a period of years.