

Frequently Asked Questions

Virtual Crisis Care

What is Virtual Crisis Care?

- Virtual Crisis Care creates mobile crisis teams using technology.
- South Dakota Codified Law 27A-10-20 defines Virtual Crisis Care “an interdisciplinary team of one or more mental health professionals able to respond to any person in the community, either in person or through real-time interactive audio and video, for mental health and chemical dependency or abuse intervention.”
- The Virtual Crisis Care program ensures law enforcement in South Dakota has access to mental health professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week, via interactive video and audio through a crisis response team at Avera eCARE® or when their local community mental health center is not available.

How does the Virtual Crisis Care program work?

- On-site law enforcement calls the crisis response team at Avera eCARE to request a safety assessment.
- Law enforcement provides the individual in crisis with a tablet for a video session with the crisis response team.
- The response team initiates a video session with the individual by using the tablet.
- The crisis response team completes a safety assessment and follows up with law enforcement by phone or continued video session to discuss recommendations and also follows up with the identified community mental health center.

In what types of situations would law enforcement call Virtual Crisis Care team?

- Individuals who are psychotic (e.g. delusional, hallucinating, off medications)
- Suicidal statements
- Inability to care for themselves (e.g. not showering, eating)
- Homicidal statements

How are existing community mental health centers involved?

During the implementation process, the local community mental health center is, along with law enforcement, to identify any gaps in crisis response. Virtual Crisis Care is intended to address gaps, not replace existing services. In addition, the involvement of community mental health centers in the planning process is integral because Virtual Crisis Care connects individuals to these centers for follow-up care.

Is this service available to the local police department?

A sheriff's department participating in the Virtual Crisis Care program may arrange to make the service available to a police department in the county.

When is the service available?

Virtual Crisis Care is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Is law enforcement responsible for purchasing tablets?

No, tablets and associated software for the video visit are included in the pilot. Prior to going live with the service, law enforcement will be asked to test the tablet's video quality and connection in various parts of the county.

Who is responsible if the tablet is damaged or breaks?

The tablets are outfitted with a rugged case to prevent accidental breakage. However, if the tablet is damaged or broken, a replacement will be provided as part of the pilot.

Is Virtual Crisis Care available to use in jails?

Most counties have relationships with local mental health providers to provide crisis services to individuals in jail. Virtual Crisis Care does not replace this service, but is available for times when a local provider is not available.

How long is the pilot?

The pilot program will run for one year with the goals of demonstrating effectiveness and efficiencies of the program.

How much does the service cost?

Pilot funding is generously provided by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

Who sponsors this program?

This program is a partnership between Avera eCARE and the South Dakota Unified Judicial System in collaboration with local law enforcement and community mental health centers. Pilot funding is provided by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

Who do I contact for more information?

For more information on this program, please contact State Court Administrator Greg Sattizahn at 605-773-3474 or eCARE Behavioral Health Officer Brian Erickson at 605-322-2385.

Avera eCARE



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