

# Virtual Crisis Care



## Overview

**The Virtual Crisis Care pilot program provides law enforcement with 24/7 access to behavioral health professionals who can assist in responding to people experiencing a mental health crisis. It advances Chief Justice David Gilbertson's vision to ensure that those working in the criminal justice system have access to the resources they need to help people with mental illness, regardless of where they live.**

**The Virtual Crisis Care program provides law enforcement access to behavioral health professionals when local crisis response services are not available. Through tablet technology, behavioral health professionals assist law enforcement officers with de-escalation, stabilization and safety assessment during a crisis situation wherever the crisis is occurring.**

**Following the crisis response, Virtual Crisis Care connects individuals to local mental health resources for follow-up care.**

Virtual Crisis Care is a partnership between Avera eCARE® and the South Dakota Unified Judicial System, in collaboration with local law enforcement and local mental health care providers. Pilot funding is provided by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

## For Individuals

- Receive care from mental health professionals at the time of crisis, remain at home when safe to do so, and avoid hospitalization.
- Avoid unnecessary health care costs, reducing the individual's financial burden.
- Continue with regular daily routines (e.g., work, school, caregiving responsibilities).
- Avoid the stigma of 'criminalizing' behavioral health by providing care without requiring transport in a law enforcement vehicle.

## For Law Enforcement

- Provide around-the-clock access to trained behavioral health professionals.
- Decrease potential for probation violations.
- Reduce the need to involve law enforcement during a crisis
- Decrease petitions filed for mental health holds.

## For Governments

- Save state dollars by avoiding unnecessary admissions to a state mental health facility.
- Reduce the number of court appearances.
- Save county dollars by avoiding payment for unnecessary mental health holds.
- Keep law enforcement officers in their communities by reducing transports for individuals to mental health facilities for assessment.
- Facilitate communication and coordination with current resources such as community mental health centers to identify best practices and operational efficiencies.

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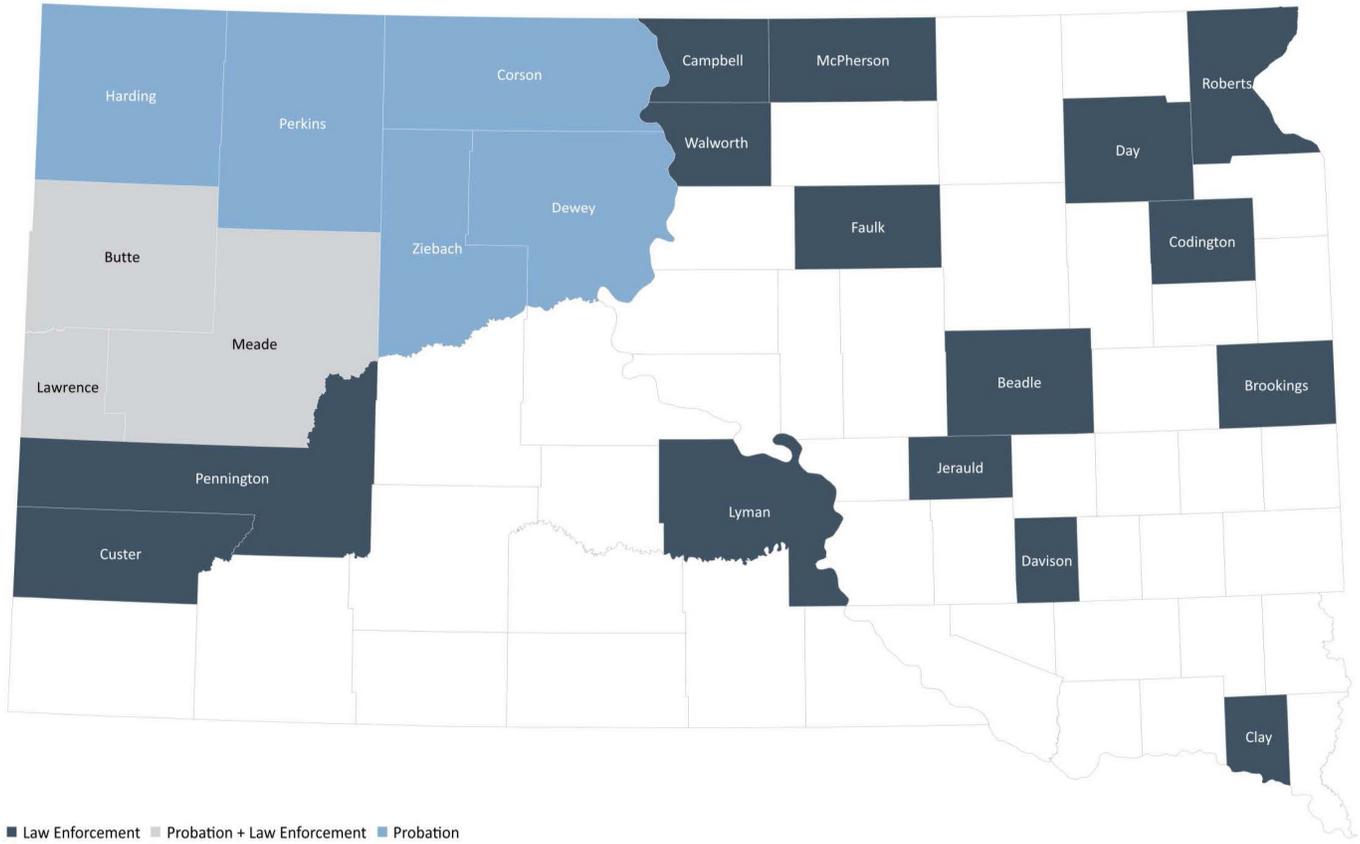


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Call Greg Sattizahn at 605-773-3474 or Brian Erickson at 605-322-2385 for more information.

# Pilot Locations

## Virtual Crisis Care



### Law Enforcement

- Brookings County Sheriff's Office
- Clay County Sheriff's Office
- Beadle County Sheriff's Office
- Butte County Sheriff's Office\*
- Campbell County Sheriff's Office
- Codington County Sheriff's Office
- Custer County Sheriff's Office
- Davison County Sheriff's Office
- Day County Sheriff's Office
- Faulk County Sheriff's Office
- Jerauld County Sheriff's Office
- Lawrence County Sheriff's Office\*
- Lyman County Sheriff's Office
- McPherson County Sheriff's Office
- Meade County Sheriff's Office\*
- Pennington County Sheriff's Office
- Roberts County Sheriff's Office
- Walworth County Sheriff's Office

### Probation

- Fourth Judicial Circuit Court Services Officers, serving:
- Butte County\*
  - Corson County
  - Dewey County
  - Harding County
  - Lawrence County\*
  - Meade County\*
  - Perkins County
  - Ziebach County

\*Counties with Law Enforcement and Probation Coverage

# 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.

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# Community Outreach Tips

## Virtual Crisis Care

Communication is an essential part of any new program or service. It is important for the community to know about the resource your department is making available to help improve access to essential mental health services during a crisis. The following are some ideas for how to spread the word about Virtual Crisis Care.

1. Share the news release with your local newspaper and radio stations. Offer to be interviewed on the importance of this new resource. Greg Sattizahn with the South Dakota Unified Judicial System (605-773-3474) and Brian Erickson at Avera eCARE® (605-322-2385) are also available to participate in interviews or answer questions the media may have.
2. Post the news release on your website, and if possible, a photo of staff demonstrating the use of the technology.
3. Place posts on your social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Sample posts are included in the media kit. Please customize these posts to reflect your community.
4. Reach out to community organizations, such as the Rotary or the Lions, and offer to make a brief presentation on the new service during their club meetings. Your community mental health center may not only have some great ideas for organizations to share this new resource with, but also may be willing to co-present with you on the need for this resource and their role in connecting with people post crisis.
5. Partner with community organizations, such as the hospital or Chamber, to share this resource to the community. Provide the news release or offer to write a guest column for their newsletter.

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Contact Sadie Stevens of UJS (Sadie.Stevens@UJS.STATE.SD.US or 605-773-2374 or Barbara Pierce of CJI (bpierce@cjinstitute.org or 207-400-7594). They can provide a PowerPoint presentation or other materials about the Virtual Crisis Care program, and assist you with any communication efforts.

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# Talking Points

## Virtual Crisis Care

### Need

- It is estimated that about 10% of all law enforcement calls involve a person who may be experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Mobile crisis teams, where law enforcement is assisted by behavioral health professionals, are used in many urban areas across the country to de-escalate crisis situations and prevent unnecessary admissions to emergency rooms and mental health hospitals.
- Minnehaha County utilizes a mobile crisis team. When the team responded to crises in FY2019, nine out of every ten people in crisis were able to stay at home rather than be placed on an emergency mental illness hold and in a mental health facility or jail.
- Despite the proven effectiveness of mobile crisis teams, there are only two operating in South Dakota — in Minnehaha and Hughes counties.
- Following the crisis response, Virtual Crisis Care connects individuals to the local community mental health center for follow-up care.
- The Virtual Crisis Care program will assist law enforcement and court services officers in 23 counties. It is a partnership between the Unified Judicial System and Avera eCare®, in collaboration with the South Dakota Sheriffs' Association and community mental health centers, with pilot funding from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

### Service

- South Dakota's Virtual Crisis Care pilot program joins law enforcement and behavioral health professionals to respond to people in crisis.
- The program aims to advance Chief Justice David Gilbertson's vision to ensure those working in the criminal justice system have access to the resources they need to help people with mental illness regardless of where they live.
- Using technology such as an iPad, law enforcement officers have 24/7 access to mental health professionals who can assist in de-escalating and complete a safety assessment, stabilizing a person in a crisis situation in the individual's home or wherever the crisis is occurring.
- Access to Virtual Crisis Care benefits the public, law enforcement and local and state government.
- People in crisis receive immediate care from mental health professionals in the privacy of their own homes or wherever the crisis is occurring and then are connected to local resources for follow-up care.
- Law enforcement spends less time transporting people to a mental health facility who can safely stay at home.
- Counties avoid costs associated with mental illness holds, and the state saves money from unnecessary stays at the Human Services Center.

### Benefits

