



County Mental Health Crisis Response Teams

Topic Selection Background Information

March 2022

Program Overview	<p>When an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis, a local mobile crisis team may meet with that individual at their home or another location in the community to assess and resolve the crisis situation and connect them with services, if needed. Counties and some tribes provide mental health crisis response services directly or through contracted service providers. In 2021, there were 34 crisis teams operating across the state.</p>
Original Evaluation Questions	<p>What is the geographic availability of county mental health crisis responders across the state? How often have these responders received calls, and to what extent did they meet the requirements to respond when called? To what extent does state funding support county mental health responders?</p>
Revised Questions	<p>To what extent does the availability of mobile crisis teams vary across the state? How often have these teams received calls, and to what extent did they meet the requirements to respond when called? To what extent does state funding support mobile crisis teams?</p>
State Resources <i>Low</i>	<p>The state spent more than \$27 million on mobile crisis services in fiscal years 2019 through 2020. Federal dollars also fund a portion of the work of mobile crisis teams. Counties and tribes may provide additional funding.</p>
State Control <i>Medium</i>	<p>The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides some support for mobile crisis teams, although counties administer these services. Medical Assistance covers some services provided by mobile crisis teams. While state statutes outline standards for these covered services, standards for covered services are also subject to federal approval.</p>
Impact <i>High</i>	<p>Mobile crisis teams intervene at critical times in the lives of individuals and families. DHS reported that mobile crisis teams conducted 34,707 face-to-face responses in 2018 through 2019.</p>
Timeliness <i>Medium</i>	<p>Mental health treatment is a timely concern. However, the Legislature made recent changes to state law regarding some standards for crisis response services covered by Medical Assistance. These changes will not be in effect until at least July 1, 2022.</p>
Feasibility <i>Medium-High</i>	<p>This evaluation would be a large project. We would likely need to collect information from multiple entities, including individual counties and contracted service providers. However, we have done similar evaluations in the past.</p>
Balance <i>Medium</i>	<p>OLA released a financial audit related to DHS Behavioral Health Services Division grants in March 2021. While there are a few other topics on this year’s list involving DHS, OLA has not previously evaluated mobile crisis teams.</p>
Discussion <i>Important topic</i>	<p>Mental health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a legislative change that may increase the usage of mobile crisis teams, could make this a good time to consider the availability and financial support of these services. However, because some new legislative standards for mobile crisis teams are not yet in effect, an evaluation would reflect only past standards when examining crisis responses.</p>