

Sustainable Financing for Crisis Now in Alaska



An effective Crisis Now system provides easy and timely access to critical mental health services to respond to anyone in need, regardless of their ability to pay.

The Problem

Sadly, many Alaskans in crisis don't know who to turn to, and too many do not receive the care they need. Alaska has one of the most severe mental health crises in the country, with the highest rates of adult and youth suicide. The state is also facing an increase in overdose deaths - even as other states' rates decline - and a rate of homelessness well above the national average.

The Solution

The Crisis Now Model - which the Alaska Legislature has supported - connects people in crisis to the appropriate level of care they need, just like 911 does for physical health emergencies. It includes:



**Sean Case,
Anchorage Chief of
Police**

“This is a game changer in Alaska...Establishing a behavioral health crisis services surcharge and fund is a responsible and necessary investment in the health and safety of our communities...crisis stabilization allows us to address challenges before they become a full-blown crisis.”



Someone to Talk To

Support from a trained crisis counselor at a 988 Lifeline call center. Careline Alaska was one of the first call centers in the country to join the national 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline back in 2005. Alaska experienced a 162% increase in call volume between May 2022 and 2024.



Someone to Respond

Mobile crisis teams with staff available to reach anyone who needs in-person support anywhere, anytime. Mobile response teams in Fairbanks and Mat-Su reported higher than an 80% diversion rate of law enforcement involvement and emergency room visits.



A Safe Place for Help

Crisis receiving and stabilization facilities for observation and stabilization in a home-like environment - an alternative to hospitals and emergency departments or sending patients to out-of-state residential facilities.

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Opportunity for Sustainable Funding for Crisis Now

Federal funding streams, including Medicaid reimbursement, are at risk - and some funding has already sunset. Alaska has an opportunity, with [HB 138](#), to adopt a 988 telecom fee that will reduce reliance on the federal government and provide stable and flexible funding to support local crisis solutions. Similar to 911 fees that help fund police, fire, and ambulance services, several states have authorized a small fee to fund 988 call centers and mobile response teams.

In Alaska, a modest fee of \$0.98 per month per phone line would generate urgently needed funding to sustain 988 Lifeline centers and critical mobile crisis teams - which prevent tragedies, reduce the strain on overburdened emergency departments and law enforcement, and provide timely support to individuals and families in crisis.

Many states have established sustainable funding for mental health crisis response services, including:



Oregon implemented a 988 fee in 2023 that raises approximately \$32.9 million to fund the state's 988 call centers, with leftover funds directed to mobile crisis response teams.



Nevada approved a 988 fee in 2023 that raises \$13.3 million to fund the infrastructure of its crisis continuum of care, including 988 call centers. A portion of the fee is also directed mobile crisis teams; additional funds can be used to establish and operate crisis stabilization centers.



Washington enacted legislation in 2021 that raises an estimated \$46 million annually to fund its 988 call centers (including a Tribal line), crisis outreach, and stabilization.

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