



Ashland and Bayfield Counties, like many rural areas in the state, face limited access to care. In their area there is just one behavioral health unit in a hospital with limited beds. Often patients in mental health crises are transported long distances downstate for in-patient care.

Tackling the problem

A regional coalition, the Chequamegon Accountable: the Community for Health (CA:tCH), was formed to improve the behavioral health response system and reduce the number of crisis calls. The Resilience Alignment Beekeepers served as the organizing group.

Organizers convened behavioral health service providers and lived experience to a discussion, and emergency detentions rose to the surface. **The goal was clear – to be able to identify people in crisis and provide them the most appropriate care to best help them.** A safety plan including information such as who to contact and calming strategies that could be shared among public health, law enforcement, and emergency response teams was the answer.

“There were a lot of powerful moments in our process,” said Amy Syverson, Resilience Alignment Beekeepers Project Implementation Coordinator. “At one point when we brought people together we had a lived experience individual sitting by the law enforcement officer who transported them and the person in the hospital who worked with them. All three had equal seats at our table.”

The solution

The CA:tCH safety plan is created and approved by patients. It is designed to include information that will build trusting connections between first responders and the individual in crisis. The plan is shared through a portal that works within HIPPA and allows for the release of information and sharing it among participating agencies.

Safety plans are in the portal for one year. Lived Experience input in the design process determined that individuals didn't want a record that followed them forever, as mental health can improve. Participating organizations entering the individual's plan in the portal receive notice when a plan will expire and can work with the individual to determine if their plan will remain in the system or not.

Results

There are over 100 safety plans in the portal. Successes are on multiple levels – first just having a written plan helps clients understand their individual needs in crisis situations. Additionally, Syverson points to a client who had a prior traumatic experience at a local facility. **The client learned about the CA:tCH plan and wanted one. She said it made her feel supported and changed her need to go to an emergency room, that she was calmer just knowing that someone could pull her plan.**

Created and approved by an individual, a CA:tCH safety plan includes information to assist first responders in providing the most appropriate care for the individual in crisis.

