

## The challenge:

Youth crisis touches many families in Wisconsin. For those families, it can be a frightening time, and depending on where you live, a different experience. Sheboygan and Jefferson Counties are implementing innovative practices in their youth crisis services.

## Solution: Jefferson County

Central to Jefferson County's crisis program is to **provide preventive services and resources that are the least restrictive**. They believe individuals will get better in supportive environments and when they are part of a plan.

The crisis team provides 24/7/365 coverage where staff answer the crisis line and are prepared to go mobile at any time. Four of their nine member team are embedded with law enforcement. Calls come from the person needing help, families, schools, emergency rooms, or police. If an assessment is needed, the team goes to where the person is. And, if an emergency detention is needed, the staff write the statement and find a receiving facility, not law enforcement.

The Matz Center Youth Crisis Stabilization Facility in Jefferson County serves youth ages 10-17. The typical stay is three to five days and up to 30 days. Youth are provided coping skills, the youth's team stays involved, and individual and family therapy are offered.

The results have been noteworthy:

- 2020 – zero youth were detained to Winnebago Mental Health Institute and a 90% diversion rate.
- 2022 – zero youth returned to Winnebago Mental Health Institute and an 85% diversion rate.
- Youth emergency detentions have decreased by 33% from 2021 to 2023.
- 2024 – youth have been diverted to the Matz Center instead of hospitalization.



## Solution: Sheboygan County

More students in Sheboygan County were falling through the cracks. Schools noted that nothing could be done until some youth ended up in Child Protective Service or Youth Justice, school counseling staff were stretched thin, and at-risk youth were getting younger. Additionally, waitlists for services were long, and there wasn't a way to help the families of the youth consumer.

The County established its **Children's Assessment Team (CAT)**, a crisis program designed to be short term, provide assessments and referrals into community services, and work with the entire family. The goal was to avoid the need for county services. The voluntary program receives referrals from schools, law enforcement, Child Protective Services, Youth Justice, and self-referrals. Contacts take place in family homes, schools, or community settings, and follow up occurs after ending formal contacts. Staffing started in 2019 with two and has grown to four crisis case managers.

Since starting there have been 374 referrals ranging from elementary through high school. Prior to CAT opening a case, families were averaging 4.5 referrals per year. After involvement with CAT, families average 0.8 referrals per year.