

## Community Updates

### Anchorage

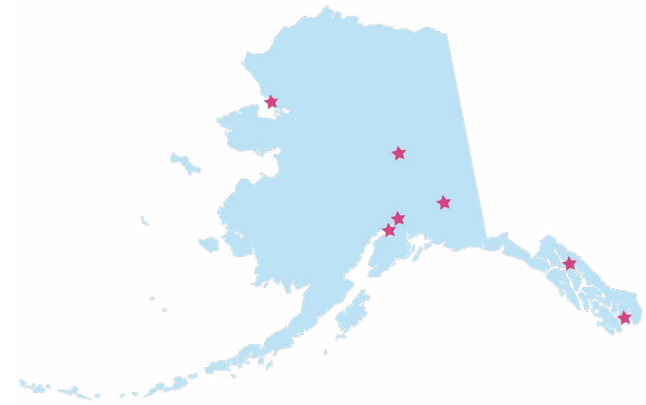
In 2023, a total of 42 calls were transferred from the Alaska Careline (the 988 call center for Alaska) for an Anchorage Fire Department Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) response, and three calls were transferred from the Veteran's Affairs Crisis Line. Of those responses, only eight individuals were transported to an emergency department by EMS.

#### Anchorage Fire Department MCT 2023 data

- 3,022 crisis responses, 612 post-crisis responses, for a total of 3,634 responses (44% increase from 2022). The Anchorage Fire Department MCT was in service 10 hours a day for 342 days in 2023.
- Averaged over 10 calls a shift (up from eight in 2022).
- 990 unique individual clients were contacted by Anchorage Fire Department MCT.
- 90% (2,719) of responses resulted in clients staying safely in the community.
- Average response time was 34 minutes and average time on location was 27 minutes.

Providence is in the construction phase of their crisis stabilization center project which will include a walk-in clinic for individuals 13 and older, 23-hour crisis stabilization, and crisis residential for adults. Anticipated opening is November 2024.

Southcentral Foundation is in the design phase for construction of a new facility to house 23-hour crisis stabilization, crisis residential, withdrawal management, and outpatient behavioral health services located on the corner of Tudor and Elmore Roads in Anchorage. Groundbreaking is anticipated this spring.



### Fairbanks

The City of Fairbanks is advocating for funding from the Alaska State Legislature for a Crisis Now stabilization center to serve the Interior Region. The Alaska State Troopers, Fairbanks Police Department, and North Pole Police Department support this request to provide immediate and comprehensive behavioral health emergency services to our residents. It's the next step for Fairbanks in establishing the Crisis Now continuum of care.

The MCT has continued to see increases in monthly call volume in 2024 with over 70 calls a month. The team consistently works with individuals in need and provides assistance with resolution in the community.

#### Fairbanks Fire Department MCT 2023 data

- 704 total dispatches to 403 unduplicated individuals.
- 81.4% community resolution.
- 4% of calls involve law enforcement, usually for transportation to the hospital.

Other developments within the community which will lead to better preparation for crisis response: The Fairbanks Police Department, as of January 2024, is 100% trained in Crisis Prevention Institute, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is providing an upcoming training for providers who work directly with patients affected by mental health challenges, and a media promotion will be airing soon to increase knowledge throughout the Interior on how to access the MCT throughout the entire Fairbanks North Star Borough.

## Ketchikan

Ketchikan is gearing up to implement a Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) Program this spring! The MIH team, two community paramedics and a remote behavioral health clinician will respond to non-emergent medical and behavioral health needs of community members. The MIH workgroup is thankful to partner with PeaceHealth and the State of Alaska's Department of Health (DOH). The MIH program has graciously received \$100,000 from PeaceHealth and \$250,000 from DOH. A specialty vehicle that allows the MIH team to provide privacy, safety, and comfort to community members has been purchased and will be delivered soon. Sponsored by the University of Alaska Anchorage, Jennifer Pierce and Michael Riley of the Anchorage Fire Department MCT, will provide in-person training to our MIH personnel this April.

## Juneau

The Aurora Behavioral Health Care Short Term Crisis Stabilization Services opened in December for adolescent care. Short-Term Crisis Stabilization Services are anticipated to expand in the future for adult services. Juneau Dispatch has begun transferring calls to 988 after creating a decision tree to determine which calls are appropriate for transfer. Capital City Fire and Rescue (CCFR) currently see 35 people in the MIH program. CCFR is also preparing to adapt MIH to provide more behavioral health crisis response care. Several MIH EMTs are now certified as chemical dependency counselors and are completing training for behavioral health tech certification.

## Mat-Su

Since March 2023, the MCT served the city of Wasilla interacting with 208 individuals in behavioral health crisis. During the beginning of 2024, Crisis Now activities continue to expand in the Mat-Su. MCT staff have been planning in coordination with the Palmer Police Department, Alaska State Troopers, and two different dispatch organizations to begin serving an area of at least 86,000 residents. A second 24/7 MCT unit has been staffed and services in the expansion area will begin in March. The Community Care Team will continue to grow its services to be able to follow-up with the clients served by the MCT and make sure they receive the care they need to prevent future crises.

## Kotzebue

Maniilaq Association Behavioral Health and Agnew::Beck Consulting provided a presentation to the Maniilaq Association Board of Directors in February 2024 regarding the development of a crisis stabilization center for the region. The Board was in favor of continued planning. Next steps include site selection and updates to the center pro forma.

## Kenai Peninsula

The Trust is engaged in community planning efforts on the Kenai Peninsula, expanding on community-led work to conduct a Sequential Intercept Model mapping project and desire to increase the Nikiski-based Mobile Integrated Health team's capacity to respond to behavioral health needs.

## Unalaska

Efforts continue to develop community skills to respond in a behavioral health crisis. An Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) suicide prevention training was provided in early March by the Alaska Training Cooperative.



## To learn more about community implementation efforts or get involved, contact:

**Anchorage:** Becky Bitzer, Agnew::Beck Consulting, [becky@agnewbeck.com](mailto:becky@agnewbeck.com), (907) 277-5534

**Fairbanks:** Brenda McFarlane, [bmcfarlane@fairbanks.us](mailto:bmcfarlane@fairbanks.us), (907) 459-6794, [www.fairbanksalaska.us/crisis](http://www.fairbanksalaska.us/crisis)

**Ketchikan:** Lisa DeLaet, [lisa@KetchikanWellness.org](mailto:lisa@KetchikanWellness.org), (907) 225-9355

**Mat-Su:** Melissa Toffolon, [mt@actionabledataconsulting.com](mailto:mt@actionabledataconsulting.com), (907) 414-8180

**Juneau:** Megan Carlson, Agnew::Beck Consulting, [megan@agnewbeck.com](mailto:megan@agnewbeck.com), (907) 277-1150

**Crisis Now planning in other communities:** Eric Boyer, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, [eric.boyer@alaska.gov](mailto:eric.boyer@alaska.gov), (907) 269-7912

# 2023 Outcome Highlights from Mobile Crisis Response

Region	MCT or MIH*	Number of Dispatches	Resolved in the Community**	Dispatches Resulting in Hospitalizations	Police Transport
<b>Focus on Behavioral Health Crises</b>					
Fairbanks	MCT (24/7)***	704	89%	15%	4%
Wasilla (April-December)	MCT (24/7)	214	91%	7%	2%
Anchorage	MIH	3,634	90%	9%	1%
<b>General Mobile Integrated Health Response</b>					
Juneau	MIH	1,572	89%	10%	1%
Nikiski (June-December)	MIH	339	94%	6%	0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,463</b>	<b>5,755</b> <b>89% Average</b>	<b>624</b> <b>9.6% Average</b>	<b>84</b> <b>1.3% Average</b>
Copper River Region	MIH	Dispatched from the CRNA**** Clinic	350 responses		N/A
Ketchikan	MIH	In development	2024 launch	N/A	N/A

\* Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) – This response consists of a licensed master’s level clinician and a certified peer support specialist.  
 Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) – This response involves an emergency medical technician and behavioral health-trained professionals.

\*\* The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) benchmark for resolving behavioral health crises in the community without the need for hospitalization and/or jail is 70%.

\*\*\* Teams that are not noted as 24/7 operate on schedules less than 24 hours a day. Teams in Anchorage and Juneau are working to expand to 24/7 coverage.

\*\*\*\* Copper River Native Association

## Trust Updates and Announcements

### Joint Advocacy Action Alert Network

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (Trust) and statutory advisory boards maintain an advocacy network that communicates with grassroots advocates on issues related to legislation and policy affecting Trust beneficiaries, their families, providers, and administrators who serve Trust beneficiaries.

For more information, contact the Advocacy Coordinator at: [advocacy.coordinator@mhtrust.org](mailto:advocacy.coordinator@mhtrust.org) or [sign up for the Joint Advocacy Action Alert Network](#).

### 2024 Alaska Suicide Prevention Conference

The 2024 Alaska Suicide Prevention Conference is a joint effort by the Alaska Department of Health and the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council. This is an opportunity to build connections in suicide prevention work across the vast landscape of Alaska. This conference will include sessions covering the breadth of suicide prevention work including research, innovation, community-level action, postvention, youth-focused interventions, and more. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with suicide prevention work being done throughout Alaska and the nation, network with others in this field, and earn continuing education credits for their time. We look forward to your participation at this two-day event to help build and enhance the connections and foundation we all need to collaboratively strive towards a robust system of suicide prevention within Alaska.

[aksuicidepreventionconference.com](https://aksuicidepreventionconference.com)



# Crisis Now and the Essential Role of Peers

## What is a Peer?

Peers are people with lived experience and sustained recovery from a behavioral health or substance use disorder, or both.<sup>1</sup> Anyone – miners, healthcare workers, fishers, teachers, etc. – can have lived experience, or be a family member of someone with a behavioral health and/or substance use disorder. In behavioral health settings, it is common for peers to receive specific training and receive a certification. In Alaska, Peer Support Professionals may be credentialed in degree-seeking or non-degree seeking tracks with levels of certification ranging from a Peer Support/Traditional Peer Support Associate to a Certified Peer Support/Traditional Peer Support Professional III. A detailed matrix of requirements in Alaska is available on the Alaska Commission for Behavioral Health Certification (ACBHC) [website](#).

## Peer Roles in the Crisis Continuum

Peers are a critical element to the Crisis Now framework. SAMHSA asserts that peers are “core members” of the crisis team, enhancing engagement due to the “unique power of bonding over common experiences” and “peer modeling that recovery is possible” (p.28).<sup>2</sup>

The Crisis Now framework integrates Peers into each component of the framework – crisis call lines, mobile crisis response, and crisis stabilization services. RI International calls their approach to peer integration in crisis care settings “The Fusion Model” because their approach to care brings together best practices from both medical and recovery models.<sup>3</sup> RI provided a webinar for Alaska providers on their peer-powered fusion model in November 2022. A recording of the webinar is available on the Trust’s [YouTube channel](#).

Alaska’s 1115 Medicaid Waiver created peer-based crisis services as a billable service and expanded the number and types of services that can be provided by peers. It’s also important to remember that Crisis Now is part of the broader behavioral health continuum – Peers play essential roles in all levels of behavioral health care before, during, and after a crisis.

## Peer Support Specialist Certification

The ACBHC, via a contract with the State of Alaska DOH, Division of Behavioral Health (DBH), is responsible for developing and maintaining a Certificate Program for Alaska Peer Support Specialists. Certification requires a 40-hour basic training plus additional training and supervision hours depending on the level of certification.

The 40-hour Basic Peer Support Training offered by Alaska Behavioral Health is offered at no cost to participants/ organizations through support from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the State of Alaska DOH DBH. Alaska Behavioral Health provides week-long, evening, and weekend training options. Information regarding the training schedule and registration is available on the Alaska Behavioral Health [website](#).

## Additional Resources on the Role of Peers

- [State of Alaska Department of Health Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse](#)
- [SAMHSA’s Peer Support Workers for those in Recovery](#)
- National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
  - » [Why Peer-Operated: An Essential Ingredient to Innovative Crisis Alternatives](#) (video)
  - » [Why Peer-operated? An Essential Ingredient To Innovative Crisis Alternatives](#)
  - » [TTI 2021 Information Exchange: Peer Support, What a difference it makes](#) (video)

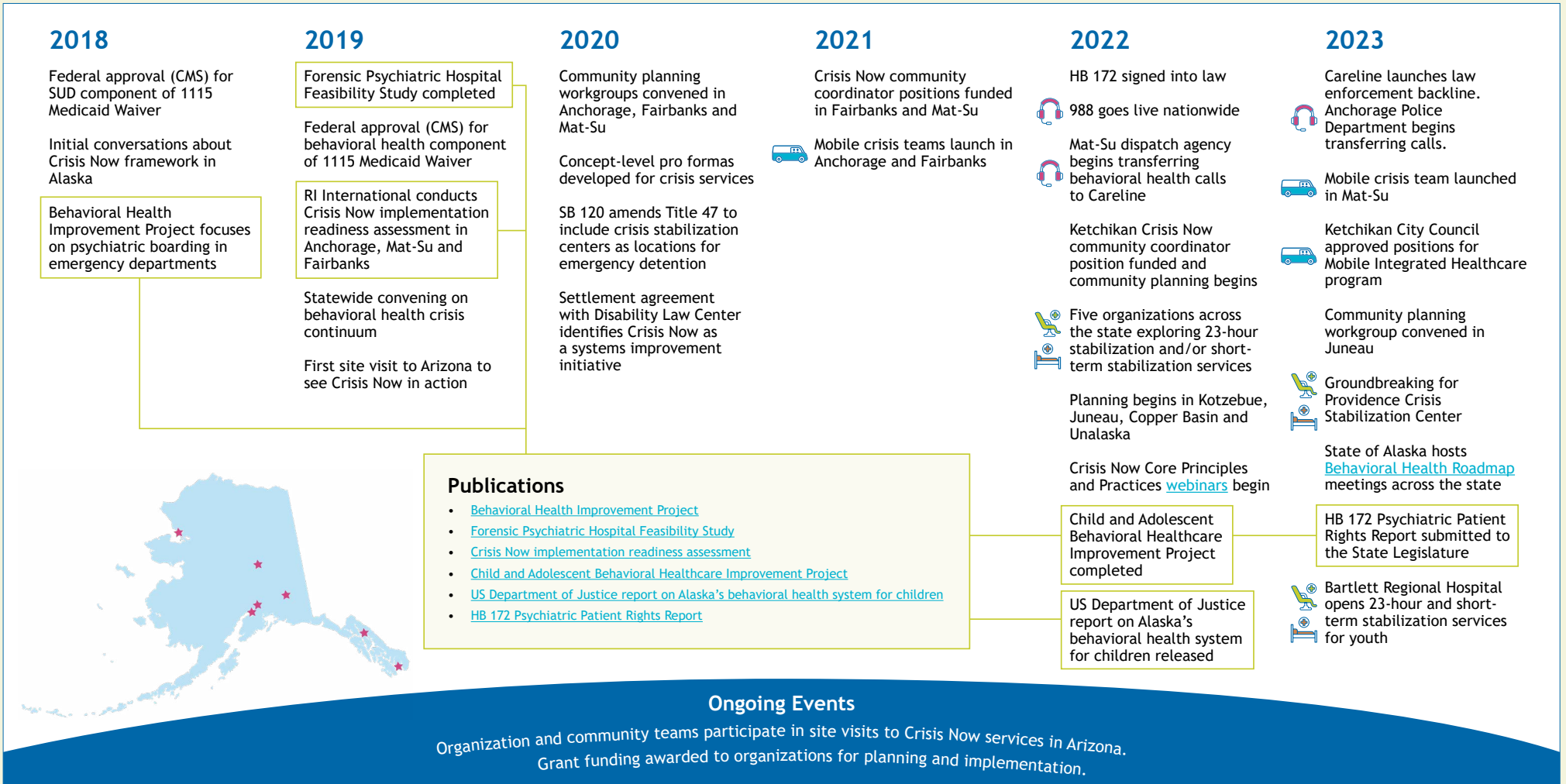
1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Peer Support Services in Crisis Care. Advisory. SAMHSA Publication No. PEP22-06-04-001

2. SAMHSA. (2020). “National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care: Best Practice Toolkit Executive Summary.” Retrieved 30 March 2023 from: <https://www.samhsa.gov>

3. The Fusion Model and Measuring Peer Inclusion in Behavioral Health Organizations. #CrisisTalk, August 9, 2022. Retrieved 22 February 2023 from: <https://talk.crisisnow.com/the-fusion-model-and-measuring-peer-inclusion-in-behavioral-health-organizations/>

# Alaska's Crisis Now Innovation Timeline

As we move into 2024, it is important to reflect on Alaska's journey to transform behavioral health crisis care. Accomplishments at the community and state level are the direct result of partnership between State of Alaska Divisions and Departments, community stakeholders, and direct service providers. There is still more work to be done, and we look forward to partnering with you on ongoing and future work so that each Alaskan receives high-quality, meaningful care before, during and after a crisis.



To read more about the framework and efforts to improve behavioral health crisis response in Alaska, visit: [alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/crisisnow](http://alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/crisisnow) or contact Eric Boyer, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, (907) 269-7912 or [eric.boyer@alaska.gov](mailto:eric.boyer@alaska.gov).