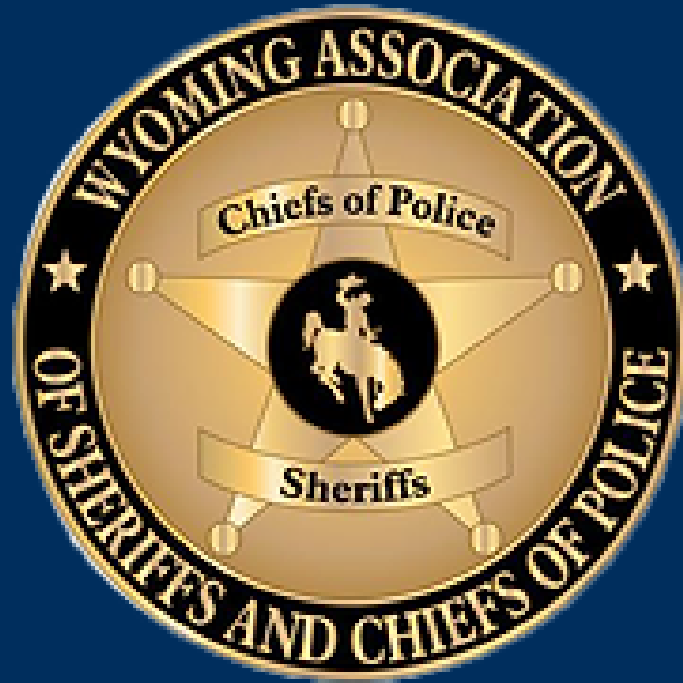


WYOMING ASSOCIATION OF
SHERIFFS AND CHIEFS OF POLICE



VIRTUAL CRISIS
CARE
COMMUNITY
ROLLOUT
RESOURCE GUIDE

AUGUST 2025

This document is intended to assist with the education around and promotion of Virtual Crisis Care in your communities.

It contains:

- A 1-page overview
- Ideas for promoting the program
- Sample talking points
- Sample social media posts
- Frequently asked questions
- Brief overviews of the funder, WASCOP, and project partners

Purpose & Contents

Virtual Crisis Care

Overview

Virtual Crisis Care provides law enforcement with around-the clock access to behavioral health professionals who can assist in responding to people experiencing a mental health crisis. Through the use of telehealth technology, behavioral health professionals assist law enforcement by providing de-escalation, stabilization, and safety assessment to support the person in crisis. Following this crisis response, Virtual Crisis Care initiates a request for local follow-up care.



Virtual Crisis Care Supports Law Enforcement

- Provides 24/7 access to trained behavioral health professionals to support local crisis response services, reducing the primary dependence on law enforcement to resolve a crisis.
- Interrupts the cycle of mental health crisis and emergency detention by connecting people to local providers for follow-up care.
- Allows law enforcement to focus more time on public safety functions.

Virtual Crisis Care Supports Individuals

- Provides care from behavioral health professionals at the time and place of crisis, allowing people to remain at home when safe to do so.
- Avoids the stigma of criminalizing behavioral health issues by reducing law enforcement's involvement in stabilizing a crisis.

How Does it Work?

1. Law enforcement receives a call for service involving an individual experiencing a crisis, determines whether use of Virtual Crisis Care is appropriate and if so, connects with the crisis response team to request assistance.
2. The individual in crisis is provided a tablet for a video session with the crisis response team, which will assist with de-escalation, stabilization and safety assessment.
3. The crisis response team discusses recommended next steps with law enforcement and notifies a local provider to reach out to the individual for follow-up care.



For more information, contact Allen Thompson, Executive Director
Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police
athompson@wascop.com | 307-751-4488

Promoting Community Awareness

Communication is an essential part of any new program or service. It is important for the community to know about the resource your department is making available to help improve access to essential mental health services during a crisis. The following are some ideas for how to spread the word about Virtual Crisis Care.

- Share the August 5, 2025, news release with your local news and radio stations.
- Post the news release on your website, and if possible, a photo of staff demonstrating the use of the technology. WASCOP can provide photos for your use, as needed.
- Offer to be interviewed on the importance of Virtual Crisis Care. Allen Thompson is also available to participate in interviews or answer questions the media may have.
- Place posts on your social media channels. Sample posts are included in this guide that you customize to your community.
- Reach out to community organizations or businesses, such as the Rotary or Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, and local hospital, and offer to make a brief presentation on the new service during their regular meetings. Your community mental health center partners may be willing to co-present and will have some great ideas for organizations with which to speak or meet.
- Distribute the Virtual Crisis Care 1-pager included in this guide, or create your own, and distribute it to community organizations.

Would you like help drafting presentations or other materials or communications about the Virtual Crisis Care program?

Contact Allen Thompson (athompson@wascop.com, 307-751-4488) or Barbara Pierce (barbarapierce207@outlook.com, 207-400-7594).

Sample Talking Points

Need

- It is estimated that about 10% of all law enforcement calls involve a person who may be experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Mobile crisis teams, where law enforcement is assisted by behavioral health professionals, have been shown to increase connection to services, and there is some evidence that these teams promote cost effectiveness and reduce pressure on health care systems, such as emergency departments and hospitals.
- Wyoming has a very small number of mobile crisis teams; Virtual Crisis Care will exponentially expand mobile crisis response across the state.

Service

- The Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (WASCOP) Virtual Crisis Care pilot program partners law enforcement and behavioral health professionals, creating virtual mobile crisis teams to respond to people in crisis.
- The program ensures people in crisis have access to mental health resources wherever they are at the time.
- Through telehealth technology, law enforcement has 24/7 access to mental health professionals who can assist with de-escalation, stabilization, and safety assessment and planning, wherever the crisis is occurring.

Benefits

- Access to Virtual Crisis Care benefits the public, law enforcement, courts and county government.
- People in crisis receive immediate care from mental health professionals in the privacy of their own homes or wherever the crisis is occurring and then are connected to local Community Mental Health Centers for follow-up care.
- Law enforcement receives assistance in determining the need for emergency detention.
- When emergency detention is avoided, courts and licensed professionals can focus more time on people who need a higher level of care.
- Counties spend less on transportation and treatment associated with emergency detention when a person in crisis can safely stay at home.
- The use of Virtual Crisis Care in South Dakota and Nevada has resulted in avoidance of emergency detention or involuntary commitment in 8 of every 10 encounters.

Sample Social Media Posts

Shorter Posts

- About 10% of all law enforcement calls involve someone who may be experiencing a mental health crisis. We now have 24/7 access to mental health professionals who can assist our [officers/deputies] during a mental health crisis #VirtualCrisisCare #WASCOP
- If someone has a mental health crisis in our community, it won't just be law enforcement responding. Virtual Crisis Care provides us with direct access to a mental health professional to assist during a crisis. #VirtualCrisisCare #WASCOP
- Providing timely access to mental health care can prevent unnecessary emergency detention and hospitalization. That's why we are implementing Virtual Crisis Care. Our [officers/deputies] now have direct access to help from mental health professionals when someone in our community has a mental health crisis. #VirtualCrisisCare #WASCOP
- Through Virtual Crisis Care, our [officers/deputies] have help via telehealth with de-escalation, stabilization and safety planning when assisting people experiencing a mental health crisis. #VirtualCrisisCare #WASCOP
- We're excited to be a part of the #VirtualCrisisCare pilot program! It links law enforcement and mental health professionals to more effectively respond to crises. #WASCOP
- Connection to local follow-up care is essential for people who have experienced a mental health crisis. After an [officer/deputy] uses Virtual Crisis Care to de-escalate a crisis, a referral is made to a local mental health provider. #VirtualCrisisCare #WASCOP
- Until recently, mobile crisis teams were rarely used in Wyoming to respond to a mental health emergency. Now the #VirtualCrisisCare program will provide the same type of service via telehealth technology to police and sheriff agencies across the state. #WASCOP
- The #VirtualCrisisCare program provides individuals with access to timely care and prevents unnecessary emergency detentions and admissions to mental health facilities. #WASCOP
- Thanks to a grant from The Helmsley Charitable Trust to the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (#WASCOP), we are piloting Virtual Crisis Care in our community!
- Virtual Crisis Care is used in 2 other states and results indicate that 8 in 10 people are able to remain at home rather than be detained in a mental health facility or jail. #VirtualCrisisCare #WASCOP

Longer Posts (e.g., Facebook)

Post 1: We're excited to share that we're one of the agencies participating in Wyoming's Virtual Crisis Care pilot program. The program brings together law enforcement and mental health professionals to assist people in a mental health crisis through the use of telehealth via tablet or phone. The purpose of the program is to ensure law enforcement has access to timely resources to help people experiencing mental health issues regardless of where they live.

Why are we doing this? It is estimated that nationally about 10% of all law enforcement calls involve someone who may be experiencing a mental health crisis. Through Virtual Crisis Care, mental health professionals help law enforcement identify when an individual can safely stay at home and also assist with de-escalation, stabilization and safety assessment in an individual's home, or wherever the crisis is occurring. Following the crisis response, Virtual Crisis Care connects individuals to a local Community Mental Health Center for follow-up care.

Post 2: Our department is participating in the Virtual Crisis Care pilot program to bring law enforcement and mental health professionals together to assist people experiencing a mental health crisis via the power of technology. Through this pilot, mental health professionals will help law enforcement identify when an emergency detention is unnecessary, and aid with de-escalation, stabilization, and safety assessment. All of this occurs at the location of the crisis. Afterwards, Virtual Crisis Care will connect the individual with a local Community Mental Health Center for follow-up care.

The pilot program is made possible through a grant from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust to the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (WASCOP), in partnership with Avel eCare and ChangeUP Justice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Virtual Crisis Care?

- Virtual Crisis Care creates mobile crisis teams through technology.
- A “mobile crisis team” is defined in Wyoming statute--Title 35, Article 5-- as at least 1 behavioral health care professional trained in trauma-informed care, de-escalation, and harm reduction who is able to respond in a timely way and provide screening, assessment, health services, stabilization, de-escalation, and referral to services to a person experiencing a crisis.
- Virtual Crisis Care ensures law enforcement in Wyoming has access to mental health professionals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via interactive video when a local mental health professional is unavailable to assist with the crisis.

How does Virtual Crisis Care work?

- On-site law enforcement calls the crisis response team at Avel eCare to request a safety assessment.
- Law enforcement provides the individual in crisis with a tablet for a video session with the crisis response team.
- The response team initiates a video session with the individual using the tablet. The crisis response team completes a safety assessment and follows up with law enforcement by phone or continued video session to discuss recommendations and also follows up with the appropriate Community Mental Health Center.

In what types of situations might law enforcement use Virtual Crisis Care?

The program may be used when an individual:

- Is demonstrating psychotic behaviors (e.g. delusional, hallucinating, off medications)
- Makes suicidal statements
- Is unable to care for themselves (e.g. not showering, eating)
- Makes homicidal statements

When is the service available?

Virtual Crisis Care is available 24/7 in the areas covered by the law enforcement agencies participating in the pilot.

How much does the program and service cost?

Funding for the 3-year pilot is generously provided by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

Is Virtual Crisis Care only for adults experiencing a crisis?

No. It can also be used with those under age 18.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

How are local Community Mental Health Centers involved in the pilot?

Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) play a crucial role in Virtual Crisis Care and must be on board before the program can be implemented in a county.

When Virtual Crisis Care is used by law enforcement and the individual is able to safely remain at home, the Virtual Crisis Care provider sends a referral for follow-up care to the appropriate CMHC. As part of this program, the CMHC reaches out to the individual to determine if he or she would like to engage or reengage in services.

How does Virtual Crisis Care relate to 988?

If a call to 988 results in a need to involve law enforcement to respond in-person to someone experiencing a crisis, Virtual Crisis Care may be used, if appropriate, at the responding officer's discretion when there is no other mobile crisis team operating or available.

Is Virtual Crisis Care available to jails?

Most counties have relationships with local behavioral health providers to provide crisis services to individuals in jail. Virtual Crisis Care does not replace these services, but may be used in jails by the pilot law enforcement agencies when a local provider is not available.

Is Virtual Crisis Care replacing existing services?

The program is intended to address gaps, not replace existing services.

How long is the pilot?

The Virtual Crisis Care pilot is funded for 3 years, with the goal of demonstrating the usefulness and effectiveness of the program and securing funding for it to continue.

How will this program work in areas with poor Wi-Fi and broadband coverage?

The connectivity infrastructure has been steadily improving across the state. Prior to implementing Virtual Crisis Care, the service provider works with law enforcement agencies to determine which cellular provider has the best coverage in their area and ways of connecting when there are challenges (e.g., driving to a location where there is connectivity or tapping into a wired connection where the crisis is occurring).

Officers and deputies have high pressure jobs and often face challenging situations. Can Virtual Crisis Care help them?

Personal support for law enforcement is available through Avel eCare's partnerships. Information about how to access this support is provided to law enforcement agencies by Avel eCare.

Are law enforcement agencies responsible for purchasing the tablets used as part of the pilot program?

No. The tablets and associated software for the video visit are included in the pilot.

Who is responsible for a tablet that is damaged or broken?

The tablets come with a case to prevent damage. But, in the event a tablet is damaged or broken, it will be replaced as part of the program at no cost to the law enforcement agency.

Who do I contact for more information on Virtual Crisis Care in Wyoming?

For more information, please contact Allen Thompson, WASCOP Executive Director at athompson@wascop.com or 307-751-4488.

About The Helmsley Charitable Trust

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting exceptional efforts in the U.S. and around the world in health and select place-based initiatives. Since beginning active grantmaking in 2008, Helmsley has committed more than \$4.5 billion for a wide range of charitable purposes. Helmsley's Rural Healthcare Program funds innovative projects that use information technologies to connect rural patients to emergency medical care, bring the latest medical therapies to patients in remote areas, and provide state-of-the-art training for rural hospitals and EMS personnel. To date, this program has awarded more than \$800 million to organizations and initiatives in the states of Hawaii, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and two U.S. Pacific territories, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. For more information, visit www.helmsleytrust.org.

THE LEONA M. AND HARRY B.
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About WASCOP & Virtual Crisis Care Partners

WASCOP

WASCOP is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing public safety through education, collaboration, and service. Formed for educational and charitable purposes, WASCOP's primary mission is to support its membership—Wyoming's law enforcement leaders—through high-quality training programs and strategic partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies.

WASCOP strengthens the capacity of agencies statewide to deliver exceptional service to both citizens and visitors, and actively contributes to critical public safety conversations through staff and member engagement on boards, commissions, and coalitions, as well as through representation at Wyoming legislative functions. At its core, WASCOP is committed to fostering a unified, informed, and effective law enforcement community across the state.

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AVEL ECARE

Avel eCare is a nationally recognized telemedicine care provider offering the largest and most comprehensive virtual health networks in the world. Based in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Avel operates a multispecialty telemedicine network, partnering with more than 1000 health care systems, rural hospitals, outpatient clinics, long-term care facilities, school districts, prisons, skilled nursing facilities, EMS agencies and law enforcement agencies to deliver innovative telemedicine care across the country.

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CHANGEUP JUSTICE

ChangeUP Justice is a management and strategic advisory group that collaborates with law enforcement, corrections agencies, and communities to design and implement practical solutions to complex justice challenges. Led by a nationally recognized expert in policy development and program evaluation and implementation, ChangeUP Justice brings a proven track record of guiding transformative initiatives across the US. At the heart of its work is a commitment to engaging frontline staff as catalysts for incremental and sustainable change.

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