

# NATIONAL COUNCIL

[www.TheNationalCouncil.org](http://www.TheNationalCouncil.org)

MAGAZINE

2019

## CRISIS TO RECOVERY

How to Get  
Where We

When Crisis  
Happens "Now"

Moving Toward  
Comprehens



# 24/7

## Connecting with Counselors Anytime, Anywhere

### **Arnold A. Remington**

Program Director, Targeted Adult Service  
Coordination Program

**W**hen Nebraska law enforcement officials encounter people exhibiting signs of mental illness, a state statute allows them to place individuals into emergency protective custody. While emergency protective custody may be necessary if the person appears to be dangerous to themselves or to others, involuntary custody is not always the best option if the crisis stems from something like a routine medication issue.

Officers may request that counselors evaluate at-risk individuals to help them determine the most appropriate course of action. While in-person evaluations are ideal when counselors are readily available, officers often face crises in the middle of the night and in remote areas where mental health professionals are not easily accessible.

The Targeted Adult Service Coordination Program began in 2005 to provide crisis response assistance to law enforcement and local hospitals dealing with people struggling with behavioral health problems. The employees respond to law enforcement calls to provide consultation, assistance in recognizing a client's needs and help with

identifying resources to meet those needs. The no-charge offers crisis services to 35 sheriffs, municipal and other departments in 16 rural counties in the southeast section of the Cornhusker state.

Six months ago, the program offered select law enforcement officials a new crisis service tool: telehealth. Cideo conferencing makes counselors available 24/7, even in remote rural parts of the state. Officers can connect with on-call counselors for face-to-face consultations through a secure telehealth connection via laptops, iPads or Toughbooks in their vehicles.

The technology, which is in use in select jails and police and sheriff departments, is proving to be a win-win for both law enforcement officers and clients. Officers no longer have to wait for counselors to arrive for consultations. In rural communities, it is too common for officers to wait for up to two hours for counselors traveling from long distances. Online video conferencing gives officers the freedom to connect with counselors anytime, anywhere.

Telehealth also supports the Targeted Adult Service Coordination Program's primary goal of preventing individuals from being placed under emergency protective custody. The program maintains an 82 percent success rate of keeping clients in a home environment with proper supports. The technology promotes faster response times that mean more expedient

and more appropriate interventions for at-risk individuals, particularly those in rural counties.

So far, the biggest hurdle has been getting law enforcement officers to break out of their routines and adopt the technology. Some officers still want in-person consultations, a method that is preferable when counselors are available and nearby. But when reaching a counselor is not expedient and sometimes not even possible, telehealth can play an invaluable role.

Police officers' feedback on telehealth has been mainly positive. Officers often begin using the new tool after hearing about positive experiences from colleagues. As more officers learn that they can contact counselors with a few keystrokes from their cruisers, telehealth will continue to grow. The Targeted Adult Service Coordination Program plans to expand the technology next year by making it available to additional police and sheriff departments.

Telehealth has furthered the Targeted Adult Service Coordination Program's goal of diverting people from emergency protective custody and helping them return to being successful, contributing members of the community. This creative approach to crisis response provides clients with better care and supports reintegration and individual autonomy.