

South Dakota Transforming Youth Crisis Response



Case Study

The Client

South Dakota Department of Social Services,
Division of Behavioral Health

The Project

Assess the state's children's behavioral health crisis response continuum of care

The Need

The South Dakota Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) recognized critical gaps in the behavioral health crisis response continuum for children and youth. Despite existing infrastructure—including 988 crisis lines, mobile crisis units, and stabilization facilities—there were concerns about the appropriateness and effectiveness of these services for youth experiencing significant mental health challenges. The state sought expert support to assess the current system, identify deficiencies, and recommend improvements tailored to the unique needs of children and adolescents.

The Solution

Public Consulting Group (PCG) was contracted to lead a comprehensive assessment and transformation initiative from July 2024 to May 2025. The project involved:

Stakeholder Engagement: PCG conducted extensive interviews and focus groups with a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- ✓ Crisis Mental Health Centers (CMHCs)
- ✓ Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs)
- ✓ Short-term crisis facilities
- ✓ Hospitals and inpatient units
- ✓ Intensive Residential Treatment (IRT) facilities
- ✓ 88 and mobile crisis responders
- ✓ Child Protective Services (CPS)
- ✓ Group care providers
- ✓ Unified Judicial System (UJS) court officers
- ✓ DBH leadership

System Assessment: PCG evaluated the appropriateness of existing services for youth, including outpatient treatment, psychiatric hospitalization, and residential care. The team identified both short- and long-term opportunities to improve care coordination, case management, and follow-up services.

Recommendations and Implementation Planning: PCG developed a collaborative plan with actionable steps, including the development of stakeholder messaging to communicate findings and next steps.

The Result

The project resulted in a clear, data-driven road map for enhancing South Dakota's youth crisis response system.

Key outcomes included:



A prioritized set of five strategic recommendations for system improvement.



A collaborative implementation plan developed with input from providers across the state.



Increased alignment between service delivery models and the specific needs of youth in crisis.



Strengthened partnerships among state agencies, providers, and community stakeholders.



A foundation for sustainable, youth-centered crisis care that integrates national best practices and local insights.

Contact us today to learn more!



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