



MOBILE CRISIS SERVICES BENEFIT

MEDI-CAL TRANSFORMATION

The Issue

- » Too many Californians who experience a mental health or substance use crisis may touch distinct and even inappropriate systems—including law enforcement, hospital emergency departments, and inpatient settings—without ever receiving the mental health or substance use treatment they need.
- » In 2020, individuals with mental health and substance use disorder conditions accounted for one-fifth of all emergency department visits in California. Nationally, rates of emergency department visits related to behavioral health needs are even higher among children and youth, and individuals who are people of color.
- » Mobile crisis services offer community-based support to individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder crisis wherever they are in the community, and are available 24/7.
- » There is evidence that mobile crisis services can successfully resolve mental health and substance use disorder crises in a community-based setting, divert individuals in crisis from inappropriate systems, and effectively link individuals in crisis to ongoing services and supports.

To support Medi-Cal members experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, California is implementing the [Medi-Cal Mobile Crisis Services](#) benefit.

Mobile crisis services are a community-based intervention to provide de-escalation and relief to individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis wherever they are, including at home, work, school, or on the street. Under this initiative, multidisciplinary mobile crisis teams provide rapid response, individual assessment, community-based stabilization, follow-up, and coordination with other services and supports. Mobile crisis services are intended to provide community-based crisis resolution and reduce unnecessary law enforcement involvement and emergency department utilization. Through the Medi-Cal Mobile Crisis Services Benefit, Medi-Cal members have access to coordinated crisis care around the clock.



Faces of Medi-Cal's Transformation: Meet Cecelia and Sofia*

Sofia is worried for her older sister Cecelia, who has stopped responding to her calls and texts. Cecelia, who has been diagnosed with depression, recently communicated that she had been having suicidal thoughts. After she is unable to reach her sister for two days, Sofia calls her county's crisis hotline which dispatches a mobile crisis team to Cecelia's home. The mobile crisis team, made up of a social worker and a peer with lived experience, arrives at Cecelia's home and finds her disoriented but safe. They conduct a crisis assessment and learn that while she is not currently contemplating suicide, Cecelia has stopped taking her medications for depression. The mobile crisis team stays with Cecelia to provide support and develop a plan to resume her medication regimen and manage future thoughts of suicide. Before leaving, the team connects her to a mental health provider in her community, and two days later the team follows up with a phone call to confirm that Cecelia is safe, has resumed taking her medications, and has successfully connected with a mental health provider.

(*Hypothetical individuals based on a composite of cases.)

Mobile Crisis in the Context of Medi-Cal Transformation

Mobile crisis services are an important part of California's efforts to strengthen the continuum of community-based care for individuals experiencing mental health or substance use crises. These efforts also include implementation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the [Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program](#) (BHCIP), including the first round of funding which focused on Crisis Care Mobile Units (CCMU). Through BHCIP, the CCMU grant program has provided support to counties, cities, and tribes to enhance existing mobile crisis programs and develop new programs, including \$163 million in BHCIP grant funding to 49 county, city, and Tribal entities which has directly supported 245 new or enhanced mobile crisis response teams throughout California. Medi-Cal Mobile Crisis Services will build on existing crisis intervention and crisis stabilization services to improve care for Californians who experience a mental health or substance use crisis.

Teams delivering Medi-Cal mobile crisis services are trained to offer trauma-informed care and utilize de-escalation and harm reduction strategies. Teams are also trained to respond to the unique needs of children and youth, provide culturally responsive and language appropriate care, support crisis safety planning, perform motivational interviewing, and work with individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

The Positive Impact of Medi-Cal's Mobile Crisis Initiative

Medi-Cal Mobile Crisis Services provide access to qualified teams that can respond in real-time to mental health and substance use disorder crises to de-escalate and stabilize individuals in need. These services are part of the transformation of Medi-Cal to offer members with a broad array of community-based mental health services and provide relief to those experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis no matter where they are.

