

UNDERSTANDING TRAVIS' LAW

Travis' Law was passed as part of the 2021 legislative session.

Minnesota Statutes 2020, section 403.03, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1.

Emergency response services.

(a) Services available through a 911 system must include police, firefighting, and emergency medical and ambulance services. Other emergency and civil defense services may be incorporated into the 911 system at the discretion of the public agency operating the public safety answering point.

(b) In addition to ensuring an appropriate response under paragraph (a), the 911 system ~~may~~ shall include a referral to mental health crisis teams, where available.

What is required under Travis' Law?

Travis' Law requires 911 dispatchers to deflect mental health crisis calls directly to mental health crisis teams. Previously, families had to know the separate phone numbers for these teams in order to access these services.

What are the requirements for mental health crisis teams?

Minnesota state government funds a system of county-based mobile mental health crisis teams. Under MN Statute 256B.0624, this service must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide crisis screenings, crisis assessments, and crisis intervention services.

Teams must consist of two mental health professionals or one mental health professional and one mental health practitioner and be capable of leading a crisis response in the community.

Under MN Statute 245.462, mental health professionals include psychologists, licensed clinical social workers (LICSW), and psychiatric nurses. Mental health practitioners have completed at least 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in behavioral sciences or related fields and have at least 2000 hours of supervised experience in the delivery of services to adults or children. Mental health practitioners must be supervised by mental health professionals.

What does "where available" mean?

Mental Health Crisis Intervention teams currently serve in every county and are specifically trained to be the primary responders to these calls.

The "where available" language is meant to allow for certain contingencies related to geography and staffing issues. However, such contingencies should not be the norm.

What are the consequences of not implementing Travis' Law?

Because Travis' Law is a statutory requirement, counties must act now to implement it. Negative outcomes from a failure to dispatch these teams could create liability for the law enforcement agency and for the county.