

Since Medicaid Cuts in December 2025, Idaho State Behavioral Health Crisis Centers See a Significant Increase in Clients Served

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 6, 2026

As Idaho's 2026 legislative session begins, the state is facing its largest projected deficit since the Great Recession. While some program cuts will be unavoidable, others risk transferring costs from one agency to another and may even increase future deficits. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness's (NAMI) 2025 end-of-year report, cuts to services for Idahoans with serious and persistent mental illness is likely to shift costs to Hospitals & Emergency Departments by \$70-85 million dollars, to Jails & the Criminal Justice System by \$28-38 million dollars, to City & County Government Operations to \$30-40 million dollars, and to the Child-Welfare / CPS System by \$12-18 million dollars. These cuts are targeting effective, low-cost treatment options. As NAMI explains, "***These cuts will not save money — they will destabilize six distinct populations and shift \$150–\$180M in new costs to Idaho's hospitals, counties, EMS [emergency medical] systems, and child-welfare programs.***"

As the Idaho Legislature considers additional cuts, we emphasize that *cutting behavioral health crisis centers will not reduce costs to the state or its taxpayers*. The collected data shows that cuts to these critical services will push expenditures into the most expensive systems, such as emergency departments, inpatient hospital settings, and even jails. **Our crisis centers are public-safety infrastructure and cost-containment tools, not optional spending.**

CRISIS CENTERS ARE COST-SAVING, SAFETY NETS

Behavioral health crisis centers **save Idaho money**. This is particularly important as the *demand for behavioral health aid rises*. For example, in Idaho's Regions 6 & 7, South Eastern Idaho Behavioral Crisis Center (SEIBCC - Pocatello) and Behavioral Health Crisis Center of Southeast Idaho (BHCC - Idaho Falls) have both seen significant increases in the number of patients visiting the centers. From December of 2024 (394 clients) to December 2025 (598 clients), these centers have seen a **34% increase** in client visits. In January 2025, 314 clients used crisis center services in regions 6 and 7. That number increased by **43% in January 2026**, when 558 clients used the crisis centers in Pocatello and Idaho Falls. Importantly, these increases occurred during Idaho's mildest winter in years, indicating the numbers could have been much higher.

Records indicate that more than **90% of clients are either utilizing Medicaid or are uninsured**, and **68% of those patrons are experiencing homelessness**. If Crisis Centers are forced to limit operations in response to budget cuts, then those costs will be transferred to other agencies. If crisis care resources are cut, costs to the State do not disappear, or even decrease. Those expenditures will be shifted to other agencies and will increase the burden on already **overloaded ERs, jails, sheriff's offices, and other high-cost services offered by the state, county, and private businesses**.

Data from BHCC, the region 7 crisis center located in Idaho Falls, reveals that **Idaho State crisis diversion works**. BHCC reports indicate an estimated cost of **\$5.8-\$9.6 million per year is avoided** in psychiatric hospital charges by diverting people from inpatient intakes to behavioral health crisis care centers. This is a conservative estimate considering it is reflective of savings *before* counting the costs of law enforcement, jail, or emergency medical services.

Crisis Centers were established across Idaho following a 2014 statute that recognized that "[h]ospital emergency departments, jails and law enforcement agencies in Idaho have become the default providers of crisis intervention to Idaho citizens with behavioral health disorders. Extensive resources are being unnecessarily expended by law enforcement and hospitals on behavioral health crisis services." This statute also states that crisis centers across Idaho shall "be developed and operated, as funding is

appropriated, to provide the appropriate level of care to meet the needs of Idahoans experiencing behavioral health crises.”

Communications Contact

DeVere Hunt, MS

CEO of Rehabilitative Health Services

devereh@rhscares.com or 208.709.7029.

Additional Information:

Full Texts of TITLE 39 HEALTH AND SAFETY, CHAPTER 91, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMUNITY CRISIS CENTERS, 39-9102. DECLARATION OF POLICY AND INTENT:

- (1) Citizens of Idaho experiencing a behavioral health crisis are often incarcerated, hospitalized or treated in hospital emergency departments because an appropriate level of care to meet their needs is not available.
- (2) Hospital emergency departments, jails and law enforcement agencies in Idaho have become the default providers of crisis intervention to Idaho citizens with behavioral health disorders. Extensive resources are being unnecessarily expended by law enforcement and hospitals on behavioral health crisis services.
- (3) It is the policy of this state that citizens with behavioral health disorders should not be needlessly incarcerated when no crime has been perpetrated or the crime is of a minor nature arising from a behavioral health disorder, crisis or incident.
- (4) Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature that behavioral health community crisis centers, hereinafter referred to as crisis centers, be developed and operated, as funding is appropriated, to provide the appropriate level of care to meet the needs of Idahoans experiencing behavioral health crises.
- (5) The crisis centers shall be available on a voluntary basis to individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The centers shall provide transitional de-escalation, stabilization and community referral services only, and the centers shall not serve as inpatient or residential facilities.
- (6) This chapter and any subsequent administrative rules shall not assume authority over other community efforts to assist Idahoans experiencing behavioral health crises.

History:[39-9102, added 2014, ch. 131, sec. 1, p. 365.]

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/statutesrules/idstat/title39/t39ch91/sect39-9102/>

NAMI SPMI PROGRAM CUTS: STATEWIDE FISCAL IMPACT WHITE PAPER — IDAHO 2025:

<https://namiidaho.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/238/2025/11/STATEWIDE-FISCAL-IMPACT-WHITE-PAPER-%E2%80%94-IDAHO-2025-v1.2.pdf>