

Behavioral Health Crisis Services Expansion Act

Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Section by Section

Sec 1: Short Title

Sec 2: National Standards for Behavioral Health Crisis Services

To guide the implementation of this continuum of crisis services by states, regions, counties and communities across the nation, the bill directs HHS to define the core regional and community-based components of the behavioral health crisis continuum of care to include:

- 24/7 crisis hotlines and call centers and warm lines
- mobile crisis services
- behavioral health urgent care
- 23-hour crisis stabilization/observation beds
- short term crisis residential and crisis stabilization services

The Secretary's work should draw heavily from work that the Department and key stakeholders have already compiled, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s February 2020 "National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care."¹ This playbook of best practices is based in part on bodies of work including the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's 2016 Crisis Now recommendations, and the Interdepartmental Seriously Mentally Ill Coordinating Committee (ISMICC) report to Congress in 2017. It is informed by the innovative work of dozens communities across the country have developed these various components and measured their success in treating behavioral health crisis.

These services must be available to all individuals regardless condition or ability to pay.

Sec. 3: Expanding Coverage of Behavioral Health Services

This bill provides for expanded coverage of behavioral health crisis services and reimbursement to providers thereof with the aim of ensuring access to care for all patients no matter where they get their health insurance. The bill provides explicit coverage of crisis services for enrollees in public and commercial health insurance programs, including Medicare, Medicaid, ACA health plans, employer-sponsored coverage, VA and TRICARE, and the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program.

Sec. 4: Building the Crisis Continuum Infrastructure

To provide resources and operation assistance to help communities develop behavioral health crisis services, this bill would:

- Directs \$35 million annually in new Mental Health Block Grant funding for crisis services

¹ [SAMHSA](#)

- Requires HHS to provide technical assistance to communities as they develop services
- Establishes a clearinghouse of best practices for communities to share successful ideas and services

Sec. 5: Integrating Traditional Emergency Response

To ensure that individuals experiencing behavioral health crisis who enter the system via a call to 911, the bill establishes a panel of experts that will make recommendations for training and protocols that improve the coordination among 911 dispatchers and 988 crisis hotline call centers for behavioral health crisis cases.