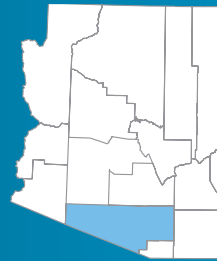




SHAPING CRISIS RESPONSE: **SPOTLIGHTING PIMA COUNTY, ARIZ.**



Pima County, Ariz.
County Seat: Tucson, Ariz.
Population: 1,043,433

The National Association of Counties (NACo), in collaboration with [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#) and [RAND](#), hosted a series of conversations with county leaders to understand the progress, challenges and lessons learned from 911/988 interoperability across various models, including embedded clinicians, call transfer and co-located response. This series will spotlight the work of five of the innovative counties shaping crisis response systems.

Pima County is as a leader in crisis response as one of the first communities in the country to embed clinicians within its 911 operating system. In 2015, 911 dispatchers began to reroute behavioral health-related calls to the Pima County Crisis Line, a community hotline with counselors available 24/7. Recognizing 911 dispatchers were apprehensive about rerouting calls to a new partner, a few years later, Pima County piloted a co-location model with clinicians embedded within the 911 public safety answering point (PSAP) centers. This pilot provided behavioral health as a fourth option for callers in addition to police, fire and EMS.

To coordinate protocols and build comradery between the crisis counselors and 911 dispatchers, the teams meet twice a month to discuss overlapping data and identify patterns of call types and mobile dispatch. This practice was fundamental through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its corresponding social distancing protocols as it helped facilitate the transition to a virtual co-location model. **As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, the success of the virtual model made it easier to continue to**

offer behavioral health crisis care as a 24/7 call option by retaining remote clinicians during low-volume shifts.

Upon transfer from 911, crisis counselors assess whether the caller needs telephonic or in-person support by a Mobile Crisis Team (MCT). **To determine which MCT to deploy, Pima County utilizes a dispatch optimization tool that GPS tracks MCT's locations and monitors their status using a color-coding system indicating whether they are available, in route or offline.** Having the location and status readily available allows clinicians to strategically access resources to ensure that the closest available MCT is responding to a crisis.



Organizations nationwide have recognized Pima County's success in dispatch diversion.

911 dispatchers transfer about 1,000 calls monthly to their embedded clinicians, proving consistent communication and adaptability between implementers are essential to building an effective behavioral health responses. Organizations nationwide have recognized Pima County's success in dispatch diversion, with data indicating that clinicians resolve 80 percent of their calls over the phone and the MCTs resolve the majority of the remaining calls without the need for further service.

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