

Otter asks for funding to launch 3 behavioral health crisis centers

One facility would be in Lewiston

BOISE - A new behavioral health crisis center in Lewiston and the surrounding region could get the go-ahead later this year, pending approval of Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's 2019 budget request.

The governor is asking for \$600,000 in one-time money and \$1.97 million in ongoing funding to open three new crisis centers in Nampa/Caldwell, Pocatello and north central Idaho. A similar amount of ongoing funding would be needed in fiscal 2020 as well.

The centers provide a short-term refuge for people suffering from emotional or psychological crises. They're intended to be a safe, less-expensive alternative to emergency rooms, county jails or psychiatric hospitals.

Unlike the other facilities, the north central Idaho "rural crisis response" program would be spread out across the five-county region.

"Ours is a unique model, where we're partnering with our rural hospitals," said Jim Rehder, chairman of the Regional 2 Behavioral Health Board.

The board spent the past two years working with stakeholders across the region to develop the proposal. Rather than a single location, the emphasis was on creating a network of care centers.

"The folks who are going through a crisis often end up in the emergency room anyway, so it makes sense to partner with the hospitals," Rehder said.

The plan calls for a total of 10 new crisis rooms to be set up at hospitals in Moscow, Lewiston, Orofino, Cottonwood and Grangeville. A portion of the state funding would help offset the cost of providing the rooms; additional funding would be used for training, security, transportation and developing protocols.

The idea is that someone having a psychotic episode could come to the hospital voluntarily, be referred by family and friends, or be brought in by local law enforcement or emergency medical personnel.

The individual would then be evaluated by a trained clinician, have a risk assessment done and could stay in the crisis room for up to 24 hours. From there, Rehder said, they could either be admitted to the hospital for longer-term care or go home with a treatment plan.

If the Legislature approves the governor's budget request, he said, the Region 2 crisis response services could "go live" in September or October.

IMPulse

Intermountain Media Pulse

A TRUETONE INCORPORATED COMPANY

**news
CLIP**

11623 Lake Shore
Nampa, ID 83686
(208) 880-9814

FOR YOUR INFORMATION
The Lewiston Tribune
Lewiston, Idaho
Saturday, February 03, 2018
William L Spence
Page 2 of 2

"I think Region 2 is perfectly positioned to move forward," said Ross Edmunds, administrator of the Department of Health and Welfare's Behavioral Health Division. "I'm impressed with the work they did to put their plan together. They're set to go."

Edmunds presented the division budget to the joint budget committee Friday. The only questions dealt with the long-term financial viability of the centers.

The Legislature previously has funded crisis centers in Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, Boise and Coeur d'Alene. Admissions to the Idaho Falls facility, which opened in 2014, have increased from 735 to 2,481 last year. The other centers have seen similar increases.

However, lawmakers never imagined that the centers would rely exclusively on state funding. After a two-year start-up period, the expectation was that the local sheriff, county, hospitals, insurers and others would start to chip in. Since the centers offer a more cost-effective approach to mental health crisis management, lawmakers felt local entities should help cover a portion of the cost.

Reaching that 50-50 milestone, though, has been difficult.

"What we've seen in Idaho Falls is that it's been a struggle," Edmunds said. "They're in year three. They've shown a regular decrease in their need for state general fund support, but it will take some time (to get to a 50-50 split)."

Rep. Luke Malek, R-Coeur d'Alene, said the North Idaho crisis center in Coeur d'Alene, which opened in 2015, illustrates the problem. Although admissions have doubled, the center still only meets a portion of the need. Demand for crisis services continues to outpace the available resources, and that eats up whatever local funding might be available to help the center.

"As we provide more resources, we're realizing the impact not having these resources before has had on the community," Malek said. "We're seeing more demand on our already overburdened hospitals and community services."

The budget committee will start setting agency budgets within the next few weeks.

###

Copyright 2018 The Lewiston Tribune