

Stakeholders show support for county crisis center

Questions remain about model, funding to make it happen

CALDWELL — A group of stakeholders in Canyon County came to an agreement Wednesday that there's a need for a behavioral health crisis center in the area.

What that center would look like and how it would be funded remains to be determined, but the meeting was a step toward finding support for the center and facilitating a discussion around it.

The Idaho Legislature has funded four behavioral health crisis centers in health districts across the state. The centers help people experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis and connect them with resources.

There are still three health districts, including Region 3, which is Canyon County's district, that don't have crisis centers, but all three have expressed interest in getting one.

State Rep. Rick Youngblood, R-Nampa, coordinated the meeting with Canyon County Commissioner Tom Dale. Youngblood said he wanted to see if there is local support, including local funding, for the centers that could improve Region 3's chances of getting state funding for a crisis center.

The idea is to have the crisis center in Canyon County and make it available to Region 3, which includes five other counties.

A group of about two dozen people attended the meeting in Caldwell. They included local lawmakers, county officials, law enforcement and health care providers.

Canyon County has experienced increasing numbers of involuntary mental holds on people in distress that put a burden on law enforcement and the county budget.

Capt. Curt Shankel of the Nampa Police Department said when officers get a call about a person in crisis, their options are fairly limited. Officers try to determine if the person is a threat to himself or herself or others or if they're disabled. People who are taken into custody on an involuntary mental hold are first taken to a hospital, and then law enforcement has to find a place to house them, Shankel said. With limited resources locally, that means sometimes taking people as far as Twin Falls, he said.

"We did 321 mental holds last year, and every year we do more," Shankel said. The department has had 173 so far this year, he said.

The county foots the bill for those mental holds. County Clerk Chris Yamamoto said the budget had to be reopened this year to add \$800,000 to cover those costs.

"The bad news is I'm not sure the 800 (thousand) is enough," Yamamoto said.

Behavioral health crisis centers provide an alternative for people in crisis rather than involving law enforcement or using emergency departments.

IMPulse

Intermountain Media Pulse

A TRUETONE INCORPORATED COMPANY

**news
CLIP**

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

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Idaho Press-Tribune

Nampa, Idaho

Thursday July 13, 2017

by Torrie Cope

Page 2 of 2

State Rep. Christy Perry, R-Nampa, said the crisis center is the first point of entry for someone in need of help.

“The idea behind it is to then be able to then say, ‘OK, we’ve stabilized this person and now need to put them into resources,’” Perry said.

But there was also agreement that resources are lacking in the area. Perry said that issue is another one that the people are working to address in the Idaho Legislature.

Commissioner Pam White said Canyon County should look to other established crisis centers to learn from what hasn’t worked for them and to get in touch with the directors of those centers. Commissioner Steve Rule also asked to see data from those centers that shows the effects they’ve had.

State Sen. Jeff Agenbroad, R-Nampa, said Canyon County should find a model and funding that works locally and not put too much burden on the state funding the project.

“Everything good starts local, and we have to start this locally and continue to support it locally for it to succeed,” Agenbroad said.

###

Copyright 2017 Idaho Press-Tribune