

Rapid Response to Recovery: Reshaping Behavioral Health Crisis Care

Supporting timely
stabilization, continuity
of care, and healing.



The Rapid Response to Recovery program strengthens how Kentucky responds to behavioral health crises.

The program creates an integrated, welcoming, and hopeful system to serve patients with high needs. The result is more immediate help, fewer repeat behavioral health crises, and clearer paths to recovery so people can heal and grow stronger over time.

Here's what that looks like in practice:

- ▶ Newly launched Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment, and Healing (EmPATH) units enhance therapeutic care for individuals in crisis, reduce hospitalizations and strain on emergency departments (EDs), and connect patients to community-based providers.
- ▶ A centralized tele-behavioral health hub ensures individuals get the right care at the right time, regardless of which door they walk through.
- ▶ First responders are equipped with the skills and partnerships needed to support individuals in crisis and refer them to recovery services.

Every year since 2020, Kentucky EDs have reported about 1.1 million diagnoses of mental illness or substance use disorder.

—Kentucky Hospital Association Data Center, 2024

Faster help. Fewer crises. A clearer path to recovery.

A limited number of mental health professionals in rural Kentucky, **30 per 100,000 residents**, means people in behavioral health crisis too often rely on first responders and EDs (Pathways, 2024).

The Rapid Response to Recovery program makes the most of integrated care teams, tech solutions, and community services.

► Someone to call

Individuals in crisis benefit from enhanced coordination between the 988 crisis response line, first responders, and care providers.

► Someone to respond

EMS and Mobile Crisis teams deescalate crises, prioritize timely treatment, refer patients to the right place for their needs, and benefit from tele-connectivity to behavioral health specialists.

► A safe place for help

New EmPATH units across Kentucky, plus expanded telehealth options, give patients more destinations for care that were designed with behavioral health crisis treatment in mind.

► Someone to follow up

After stabilization, patients return to their communities with wraparound support. Coordinated care teams help people pursue lasting recovery and avoid repeat crises.

Not every crisis belongs in the emergency room.



What is an EmPATH unit?

An EmPATH unit is an emergency stabilization space on hospital grounds, linked to the ED for triage and the referral of individuals in behavioral health crisis.

How does it help?

It follows a nationally recognized care model, treating patients in a calm, therapeutic environment outside of traditional EDs. It stabilizes patients in crisis and connects them directly to community services, reducing the need for extended ED boarding times and hospital admissions.

The first unit launched in the state in 2024, stabilizing more than 5,000 patients in the first year and discharging them to community services. As more units emerge, even more Kentuckians will benefit.



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