

District 5 Community Based Organization and Community Members Feedback

Introduction

In 2024, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds proposed landmark legislation to reimagine Iowa's Behavioral Health Service System. As part of this new system, the Iowa Department of Health & Human Services (Iowa HHS) and the Iowa Primary Care Association (Iowa PCA) completed district-level assessment and planning to identify needs and opportunities. This report is one component of the assessment process and shares what was learned from local behavioral health providers and partners that are contracted with Iowa PCA, also known as Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and other community members in District 5. This work is part of our collaborative efforts to build a stronger behavioral health system for all Iowans.

Brief Methods

Between December 2025 and February 2026, the Iowa PCA and Iowa HHS developed and distributed surveys to contracted CBOs and community members to inform this year's assessment. Across Iowa, 1,127 surveys were completed, including 171 from contracted CBOs and 956 from community members. In District 5, there were 226 total survey responses: 168 from community members and 58 from contracted CBOs.

In addition, the Iowa PCA facilitated 111 guided conversations with contracted CBOs statewide. 29 of the CBOs that participated in the guided conversations are based in District 5 and included organizations that exclusively provide prevention, early intervention and peer services as well as larger organizations that provide services across the continuum of behavioral healthcare—prevention, early intervention, treatment, recovery and crisis services.

What We Heard Across the Continuum

Transportation and workforce shortages were identified by respondents as challenges that affect access to services across the behavioral health continuum.

- 74% of District 5 CBO respondents and 21% of community members surveyed identified transportation as a key challenge that affects access to care across all service continuums in District 5.
- 57% of Iowa PCA contracted CBO who responded said it is difficult to hire staff.
- 24% of District 5 community members surveyed identified a lack of behavioral health providers and clinicians as a barrier.

Prevention

District 5
Top Prevention Needs

- | Parent & Caregiver Support
- | Mental Health Promotion
- | Substance Use Prevention

- The top Prevention needs identified by respondents in District 5 are parent and caregiver supports, mental health promotion, and substance use prevention.
- 73% of community members surveyed say lowans don't know how to access prevention services.

Early Intervention

District 5
Top Early Intervention Needs

- | Awareness of Behavioral Health System Navigation
- | Understanding of How to Use & Connect to Services
- | Strengthening of Consistent Referral & Utilization Pathways

- The top Early Intervention needs identified in District 5 are increasing awareness of Behavioral Health (BH) System Navigation, improving understanding of how to use and connect to those services, and strengthening consistent referral and utilization pathways.
- BH System Navigation helps connect people to services early, but many community members and CBO respondents were not fully aware of the program or how it should be used.
- 50% of community members surveyed said they had heard of BH System Navigation, and 23% had used the service or knew someone who had used it.

Treatment

District 5
Top Treatment Needs

- | Specialty Treatment Services
- | Psychiatric Evaluation Capacity
- | Reduced Waitlists & Delays in Care

- The top Treatment needs identified in District 5 are access to specialty treatment services, increased psychiatric evaluation capacity, and reduced waitlists and delays in care.
- 68% of community members surveyed reported they trust that CBOs in District 5 care about helping people. This is higher than any other district.
- 14% of community members surveyed reported they believe lowans know how to access treatment services.

Recovery



- The top Recovery needs in District 5 are increasing access to recovery supports (including housing and basic needs), improving awareness and understanding of recovery services, and strengthening coordination and referral pathways to recovery services.
- 54% of District 5 community members surveyed said lowans do not receive recovery services when they need them.

Crisis



- The top Crisis needs identified by respondents in District 5 are improving access to mobile crisis and after-hours services across rural and non-metro areas, appropriate placement options for youth with complex needs, and increasing awareness of how to access crisis services.
- 26% of community members surveyed said lowans receive crisis services when they need them, while 54% said access is not equal across the district.
- 53% of community members surveyed said people do not know how to access crisis services, and 68% said services are not received in a timely manner.

Next Steps

The feedback provided by community members and CBO's is a component of Iowa HHS' Behavioral Health Service System assessment toolkit. The toolkit has been developed to be utilized by Iowa HHS, the Iowa PCA, District Advisory Councils, CBO's and community members in support of ongoing system improvement efforts. Iowa HHS' system assessments are thematically built around answering questions that are important to lowans: **How much did we do? How well did we do it? Are lowans better off?** By gathering and using meaningful data, we are better able to identify the right targets and plan next steps.

The Iowa PCA and Iowa HHS team members wish to extend appreciation to the many individuals and organizations who contributed their time and perspectives as part of this year's assessment process. Thank you also for the perspective offered by the members of the seven District Advisory Councils who contributed to the early development of focus and themes for district assessment and planning.