



# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS RECOMMENDATION #9: ADOPT ELECTRONIC BED REGISTRY AND ENHANCE 988

## Recommendation Overview:

Montana has underserved rural and frontier communities located hours from the nearest health care providers and services, often delaying critical support for people with behavioral health (BH) needs. This recommendation seeks to leverage technology to better connect people with providers and resources. Key components of the recommendation include implementing an electronic bed registry to help identify open beds and coordinate care for people with BH needs, providing first responders with tablet technology to connect people in crisis with mental health professionals, and enhancing the capacity of 988 call centers to provide support for people experiencing a behavioral health crisis through text, chat, and interoperability.

Currently, when a Montana health care provider is seeking to find the appropriate level of care for a person with behavioral health needs, they must manually search for an available bed. This process often includes time-consuming phone calls and faxes, leading to delays in care. To address this gap, one component of this recommendation supports the implementation of a real time web-based bed registry. The behavioral health bed registry will be accessible to 988 call centers, local behavioral health agencies, mobile crisis teams, crisis call centers, and hospital emergency departments, allowing them to quickly find and access behavioral health treatment.

## Intended Impact:

This recommendation proposes strengthening technology to increase access to behavioral health services and support, reducing contact with law enforcement and the frequency of behavioral health-related emergency department visits. Example performance measures for this recommendation may include:

- Decreased reliance on state-operated facilities.
- Increased number of service connections made through 988.
- Decreased number of calls requiring emergency department or higher levels of intervention.
- Decreased number of people with a behavioral health crisis who are arrested.

## Governor’s Budget Amounts:

Funding by Year <sup>1</sup>		Funding Sources <sup>2</sup>	
SFY26	SFY27	State Special Revenue	Federal Funds
\$4.2M	\$1.8M	\$5.3M	\$800K





This recommendation includes real-time monitoring and coordination through a web-based system and virtual technology solutions for first responders and 988 call centers. The BHSFG funding request will support the electronic bed registry, covering IT infrastructure, provider



incentives, and staffing. Additionally, the BHSFG funding request will support technology that connects people in crisis with mental health professionals, such as tablets, conference software, and phone data, and for enhancing 988 call center technology, including IT support, outreach, and sustainability efforts. Long-term funding assumes federal Medicaid matching funds for the bed registry and a combination of state and federal funding for 988.<sup>3</sup>

**Implementation Considerations:**

This Phase 1 foundational recommendation establishes the needed infrastructure for subsequent recommendations to succeed and is critical to strengthening and sustaining system operations.<sup>4</sup> It is designated to receive funding in both SFY26 and SFY27 in the governor’s budget.

Project Requirements	Project Needs
<b>Staffing</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hiring additional staff or vendors will be needed for oversight, monitoring, and provider training of the bed registry.</li> </ul>
<b>System / Infrastructure</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the necessary IT infrastructure and the type of bed registry (e.g., search engine, referral network).</li> <li>Identify the necessary enhancements, provider agreements, and support for the 988 call centers.</li> <li>Determine the necessary specifications to inform an RFP for a bed registry vendor.</li> </ul>
<b>Legislative / Regulatory</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish bed registry operating policies and update the provider manual.</li> </ul>
<b>Finance / Sustainability</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify criteria and annual available funding for the provider incentives for registry and e-referral participation.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> In November 2024, Governor Gianforte authorized \$100M for SFY26 and SFY27 to implement 10 recommendations identified by the BHSFG Commission. The cost estimates for this recommendation in the BHSFG final report may vary due to the timing of projected expenditures and additional adjustments.

<sup>2</sup> Federal match is projected to cover part of ongoing costs but is not expected to begin immediately.

<sup>3</sup> All long-term recurring program costs are assumed to be eligible for federal matching.

<sup>4</sup> The BHSFG recommendations included in the Governor’s budget are all eight Phase 1 recommendations and two Phase 2 recommendations. Phase 2 BHSFG Commissioner Identified Focus Area Recommendations are those the Commission identified as a leading focus area that may be impacted by the completion of a foundational recommendation and/or are not foundational in nature.

For more information contact Macey Curry at Macey.Curry@mt.gov or call (406) 444-2727.