



North Sound BH-ASO

Community Information and Education Plan

2023

**NORTH SOUND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES ORGANIZATION**

2021 East College Way, Suite 101 Mount Vernon, WA 98273

360.416.7013|800.864.3555|F: 360.899.4754

www.nsbhaso.org

Community Information and Education Plan

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Community Information and Education Plan

Summary

North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization (BH-ASO) administers behavioral health services and programs, including crisis services for all people in an Integrated Managed Care (IMC) Regional Service Area (RSA). Crisis services are provided to anyone, anywhere and at any time across five counties, regardless of a person's ability to pay.

As part of North Sound BH-ASO's commitment to ensure crisis services are equitable and available to anyone at any time, our organization maintains a Community Information and Education Plan (CIEP) that serves as a planning tool for our public education and engagement strategies.

The diversity of the North Sound Region requires targeted strategies that address known barriers to accessing crisis services and provides clear information that is accessible by all regional residents, as well as health care providers, first responders, criminal justice system, education systems, tribes, faith-based organizations, and other key system and public partners.

North Sound BH-ASO's first CIEP plan submitted in 2022 identified several primary goals:

- Ensure the effectiveness of our organization, crisis provider network and system partner's communication campaigns in providing accurate information and education about crisis services.
- Identify opportunities to improve access to information about the crisis system, particularly for underserved populations in the North Sound Region.
- Improve public information strategies that target specific stakeholders and partners including but not limited to healthcare providers, the education system, advocacy organizations, faith-based organizations, and Indian Health Care Providers (IHCPs).

We acknowledged that any public information campaign can be complex and multi-faceted. Information about crisis services, how to access, what services can be provided, and what to expect, should be clear and simple.

In 2022, North Sound BH-ASO initiated a **Diversity Racial Equity and Inclusion (DREI) strategic plan** to support our work reducing disparities in crisis services and continue our learning on how racial equity issues impact policies and behavioral health services in the North Sound region. We provided a summary of our DREI workplan further in our reporting.

2022 CIEP Activity Summary

In 2022, North Sound BH-ASO CIEP planning workgroup focused on three (3) focus areas:

- Conducted a thorough review of all North Sound BH-ASO's crisis service promotional materials to include online media resources, pamphlets, and program materials.
- Assessed information and education materials distributed by Volunteers of America (VOA), contracted crisis agencies, stakeholders, and community partners.
- Develop a community engagement workplan to include soliciting input about regional crisis services that reflects individual and family voice. We discuss this project further in our reporting.

North Sound BH-ASO - Promotional Materials

North Sound BH-ASO and our Regional Crisis Line (RCL) **Volunteers of America** (VOA) have a long history of providing information and education through widely distributed resource pamphlets, how-to-guides, and web-based materials.

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ASO Website

North Sound [BH-ASO](#) and [Volunteers of America's](#) (VOA) websites has served as centralized hubs for information and education resources about crisis services. The COVID-19 pandemic further reinforced that our organization, as well as our provider's online media efforts, were critical for anyone needing to obtain information. In addition, the expansion of virtual meeting platforms hosting regional collaboratives with Behavioral Health Agencies (BHAs), law-enforcement, first responders, hospitals, advocacy groups and other regional community partners, supports a real-time mechanism to discuss the crisis system and disseminate information.

Our ASO homepage focuses on one primary objective – **getting help**. We want anyone accessing our website to be offered clear and direct pathways to crisis support and suicide prevention resources. We've also maintained a North Sound "[Find a Provider](#)" database for substance use disorder (SUD) and Mental Health treatment services. Anyone visiting our website will see simple information on how to directly connect with the crisis line, customer service, how-to-guides for generating [Crisis Alerts](#), as well as other regional resources such [Crisis Chat](#), 211, Washington Interpretive Services, [Washington State's Indian Behavioral Health Hub](#), [Office of Behavioral Health Advocacy](#) and emergency services. In addition, other programs that North Sound BH-ASO administers such as our regional [Family Youth System Partner Round Tables](#) (FYSPRT) have comprehensive crisis resources available.

In 2022, we identified a need to revamp and expand our website to included new ASO funded programs such as first responder co-response programs, crisis follow-up case management supports, Recovery Navigator Programs (RNP), Homeless Outreach and Stabilization Teams (HOST), Opiate Outreach programs, and our upcoming Child, Youth and Family Crisis Teams (MRSS). We will continue this development into 2023.

ASO Published Brochures and Business Cards

North Sound BH-ASO provides easy access for anyone to download English and Spanish brochures and pamphlets about crisis services from our [website](#). These materials include general ASO information and specific crisis service information.

General Brochure

Our North Sound BH-ASO general brochure serves as a principal education pamphlet about a variety of programs and services in the North Sound region. This includes program information about crisis and non-crisis services. In 2022, we identified the need to include additional information about new programs such as the Recovery Navigator Program (RNP), Homeless Outreach and Stabilization Teams (HOST), MRSS Crisis Services, Law enforcement first responders and other diversion programs into our ASO general brochure.

Crisis Brochure & First Responder Business Cards

Our North Sound BH-ASO Crisis Brochure and business cards were developed to provide crisis and suicide prevention resources for anyone seeking immediate help for themselves or someone they know. We developed these resources with two objectives: provide brief education about common warning signs and clear information about how to seek help. The first responder business card provides quick access to the region's crisis line and other key numbers to coordinate care for anyone experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

Tribal Crisis Brochure

Our North Sound BH-ASO Tribal brochure is a targeted information pamphlet for crisis and suicide prevention resources for American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/AN), Tribal members, Tribal Authorities, and any Indian Health Care Provider (IHCP). In 2022, we identified several areas of improvement to include:

- Updating our Tribal crisis brochure to include recent Tribal crisis system supports, such as [Washington's Indian Behavioral Health Hub](#) operated by Volunteers of America (VOA).
- Review brochure to ensure material is conveying culturally appropriate care.

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North Sound BH-ASO's ongoing partnership with our regional Tribal partners and the Health Care Authority (HCA) in the development of Tribal Coordination agreements identified the need to include more American Indian/Alaska Native crisis resources on our ASO website.

For 2023, Our CIEP activities will continue to assess strategies to include:

- Providing brochures and business cards directly to business offices, BHAs, IHCP, medical clinics, law enforcement/first responders and schools districts.
- Ensuring pathways for business, schools, and community organizations to download and distribute crisis service materials.
- Assessing additional resources for our contracted crisis agencies for marketing activities to include a broader social media presence.

North Sound Contracted Crisis Agency - Promotional Materials

Regional Crisis Line - Volunteers of America (VOA)

Volunteers of America (VOA) of Western Washington, a faith-based social service organization, has operated North Sound's RCL for over 25 years and serves as a centralized regional hub for crisis line and suicide prevention supports and resources. VOA of Western Washington maintains a dedicated communications and marketing department and provides broad administrative resources to support education and information planning for crisis and suicide prevention.

VOA's website serves as a valuable education and information hub for crisis services, behavioral health resources, suicide prevention programs, WA tribal behavioral health resources and basic needs. From 2019-2022, VOA supported information campaigns for the suicide prevention **Crisis Chat** Program, **Crisis Service Follow up (CSF)** program and **Washington Indian Behavioral Health Hub**. All these programs require information and education efforts with community members, health care providers/community organizations, first responders, criminal Justice System, education systems, Tribes, and other faith-based organizations.

Mobile Crisis Response

North Sound BH-ASO's crisis providers engage in community information and education activities as part of their network participation in our region. **Snohomish County Human Services** and **Compass Health** have dedicated websites for crisis services that provide information and resources as well as links to various external entities such as VOA, 211, and other community-based supports. Snohomish County Human Services and Compass Health maintain outreach information guides for services offered and disseminates these materials through various cross-system collaboratives identified further in our report, as well as directly to health care providers, first responders, the criminal justice system, educational systems, Tribes, and faith-based organizations.

Our County Partners

All counties within the North Sound region market crisis related resources through their county human service departments:

- **Snohomish County** Human Services
- **Island County** Human Services – Behavioral Health
- **Skagit County** Public Health Human Services
- **San Juan County** Human Services
- **Whatcom County** Human Services

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Regional Network Training

North Sound BH-ASO's online Relias [Crisis Training Module](#) serves to educate providers and system partners on the care crisis continuum. North Sound BH-ASO's Crisis Training Module can be accessed on our provider Relias platform or directly on our website. The crisis training module focuses on four major learning areas:

1. Provide an overview of an ideal crisis system, best practices, and vision for a more seamless systems of care.
2. Overview of state regulations and laws that apply to the delivery of crisis services.
3. Overview of crisis system partnerships with regional Tribes, first responders and law enforcement, county behavioral health outreach programs, and other key stakeholders.
4. Overview of tools for providers and the public to support individuals in crisis.

In 2022, we updated the Relias Crisis Training Module to reflect not only regulatory and policy changes, but included learning objectives on national best practices, Washington State's 988 system, as well as newly funded ASO programs that are closely working in partnership with crisis services.

As part of our ongoing CIEP activities, the crisis training module will be reviewed and updated as needed and will be included as part of our overall quality improvement activities.

North Sound BH-ASO Collaborative Structure

Collaborative	Description
Advisory Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The North Sound Behavioral Health Advisory Board is to advocate for a system of care that is shaped by the voices of our communities and people using behavioral health services.• The Advisory Board provides independent and objective advice and feed back to the North Sound BH-ASO Board of Directors and local jurisdictions, and county advisory boards and service providers.
Interlocal Leadership Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The formally chartered collaboration body overseeing implementation of Integrated Managed Care in the North Sound region. Core membership also includes the North Sound Accountable Communities of Health (ACH) and Tribes.• Approximately once a quarter, an expanded ILS meeting is held that includes invited representatives from Hospitals, County Law Enforcement, and all Behavioral Health Agencies.
Joint Operating Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The joint technical workgroup chartered by the ILS to develop care coordination protocols. The JOC has been working both on the development of enhanced crisis-care coordination protocols as well as exploring technology platforms that can better support the exchange of crisis care coordination data.
County Coordinator Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North Sound BH-ASO staff meet monthly with the county behavioral coordinator leadership staff.• Agendas include identifying local needs, strategies for coordinating crisis and non-Medicaid services across the region and coordinating with county criminal justice agencies.

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County Crisis Oversight Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each county hosts a Crisis Oversight Committee comprised of stakeholders from first responders, hospitals, BHAs, community advocacy groups and other social services and treatment providers. • County committees share information across and identify strategies to improve crisis response services across all the different stakeholder systems.
Integrated Provider Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Monthly Provider Meetings comprised of outpatient, Residential, Inpatient, crisis service providers, MCOs, ASO and HCA.
MCO-ASO Clinical Coordination Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-weekly MCO-ASO coordination meeting to address system coordination, protocol, and policy needs.
Tribal Coordination Meetings North Sound ACH Tribal Alignment Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Sound BH-ASO leadership participate in the North Sound Tribal Coordination meetings and North Sound ACH Tribal Alignment Committee to provide updates on crisis services program development and receive feedback from Tribes on their experiences in working with the Crisis Service system
Family, Youth, System Partner Round Table (FYSPRT) – North Sound Youth and Family Coalition (YFC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constituent advisory group with membership comprised of youth with lived experience, family members, and community partners working in the child and youth serving System of Care. • Monthly meetings which include presentations, updates on goal progress, discussions of strengths and gaps in the System of Care, etc. • Opportunities for youth/adult partnership focused on positive youth development. • Youth and family leadership development opportunities.

Stakeholder & Community Engagement Plan

As a follow-up to our 2020 and 2021 Crisis Annual Assessment, North Sound BH-ASO and our Advisory Board identified a opportunity to develop a workplan to assess and incorporate individual and family voice for North Sound BH-ASO’s strategic plan. Incorporating user voice and community perceptions of the crisis system, as well as the availability of information and education about services was also identified in our annual 2022 *Annual Crisis Assessment*.

Qualitative evidence measuring crisis services impact from the individual or family’s point of view has been limited. In 2022, North Sound BH-ASO initiated an action plan to evaluate and develop a *Crisis Service Voice* initiative for 2023 that will focus on several preliminary objectives:

- Evaluate strategies and tools for crisis providers to assess and capture user experience following RCL and Mobile Crisis Response interventions.
- Assess and develop a standardized survey method for community, family, and individuals to evaluate key aspects of the crisis system to include but not limited to:
 - Assess the degree to which marginalized communities feel comfortable accessing crisis services
 - Assess equity of services across racial and ethnic populations
 - Assess community perceptions of available mobile crisis response, the availability of peer supported interventions and DCR response.
 - Assess individual’s experience receiving crisis services.

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- Partner with several regional behavioral health advocacy and system partners to establish a series of community forums (“local town halls”) where individuals, family and community voice can be heard and integrated into our strategic planning.
- North Sound BH-ASO has contracted with an outside consultant to develop our *2023 Crisis Service Voice initiative* that will be working toward a more integrated and real-time feedback loop on how the community and the individuals utilizing crisis services perceive and experience the crisis system. This will be a critical component throughout 2023-2024 that will support identifying and targeting opportunities for improvement.

Underserved Communities – Addressing Access to Crisis Care

Crisis service demographic data remains limited or unavailable, which presents challenges to our CIEP activities. Using demographic data coupled with community and partner input we can start to develop a more targeted strategic plan that improves communications to known populations that have experienced barriers accessing crisis services.

Understanding these trends requires an ongoing analysis to include conducting a comprehensive racial equity study to ensure all crisis services are delivered in an equitable manner. North Sound BH-ASO’s commitment to reducing disparities in behavioral health care and improving access to crisis services will require our CIEP activities to incorporate community, advocacy, and system partner recommendations.

Diversity Racial Equity and Inclusion

As mentioned, North Sound BH-ASO is engaged in an 18-month process with Michelle M. Osborne & Associates (MMO) to outline a proposed direction for our organization in a journey towards antiracism. North Sound has a little less than 3 months left in the 18-month journey with MMO. The goal is to identify opportunities to address DREI related inequities and prioritize those DREI opportunities (projects) into a 3-Year DREI Strategic Plan where the efforts are (a) implemented and resourced within North Sound’s business processes and (b) become the way that North Sound does business going forward. The approach is to:

- **Spark** an internal culture shift using a shared understanding of historic and contemporary impacts of racism on policies and ideas.
- **Glean** insights from surveys and interviews within North Sound BH-ASO
- **Leverage** a work group from North Sound to help identify specific policies and practices that can be created or improved to address racial inequities in the work North Sound does and/or the work that North Sound influences.
- **Embrace** existing community touchpoints (Community Advisory Board and the Youth and Family counsel) and others, appropriately, as part of the plan
- **Apply** an inside-out approach to grow DREI skill, will, and capacity within North Sound

This work continues into 2023 with the establishment of a **DREI Strategic Plan** that includes initiatives to understand racial inequities in the crisis delivery system.

Challenges and Opportunities

Increases in crisis services and an uncertain workforce continue to be high priorities for the North Sound region. The increase in national and state efforts on behavioral health and crisis funding and education is a significant opportunity to strengthen programing in traditionally underserved or underrepresented communities.

In 2022, there has been a significant expansion of what we consider to be care crisis continuum outreach programs to include the Recovery Navigator Program (RNP), Homeless Outreach and Stabilization Teams (HOST), law enforcement co-responder programs and county and city administered Behavioral Health outreach programs. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity to further coordinate information and education activities for these new programs.

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Action and Follow-up

The intent of our first 2022 CIEP was to create a baseline workplan for our organization's public information campaign and identify potential opportunities to improve access to information about the crisis system. North Sound BH-ASO will be focusing our 2023 efforts on the three (3) broad focus areas for improvement:

- Continue updating our North Sound BH-ASO's Crisis Service promotional materials to include online media resources, pamphlets, and program materials.
- Identify and support opportunities for information and education materials distributed by our delegate Volunteers of America (VOA), contracted crisis agencies, stakeholders, and community partners.
- Continue to implement our community and partner engagement workplan to include soliciting input about regional crisis services that reflects individual and family voice.

Continuing our CIEP activities that incorporates community, advocacy, and system partner recommendations will be a major focus in 2023. We plan to utilize our established system partner collaboratives and other outreach efforts to solicit and incorporate specific recommendations about the availability and effectiveness of crisis service information. This ongoing work will identify additional opportunities to improve, target and expand access to and knowledge of crisis services in the North Sound region.