

Behavioral Health Services Overview of District 6

Sarah Berndt and Unity Stevens

December 2, 2025

Behavioral Health - Administrative Services Organization: District 6



District Leader

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Senior Lead System Navigator

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To be directly linked to System Navigators in your district, community partners can call 515.515.8988.



James Stephenson

System Navigator



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Behavioral Health System Navigation Leaders



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What We'll Cover

- Introducing the Iowa PCA's Role in Behavioral Health
- Understanding the Need for System Navigation
- Real-World Impact: Examples of System Navigation in Action
- Accessing System Navigation: Referral Pathways
- District Advisory Councils
- Questions & Discussion

A Unified Approach: Iowa's New Behavioral Health Service System

- **On July 1, 2025**, Iowa launched a new, unified Behavioral Health Service System.
- This significant overhaul combines mental health and substance use services, aiming to **streamline access and ensure consistent care** across the state.
- The goal: Make it easier for *all* Iowans to get the help they need, no matter where they go for support.
- A key component of this new system is the role of the **Iowa Primary Care Association as the Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization (BH-ASO)**.



Who is the Iowa PCA?



Iowa Primary Care Association (Iowa PCA)

- Non-profit association founded in 1988
- Members include 14 Community Health Centers (CHCs) across the state and considerable experience engaging with providers and stakeholders statewide
- Ongoing commitment to expanding access to quality, affordable, and accessible healthcare to meet local needs
- Support a continuum of care including integrated behavioral health, medical, oral health, and pharmacy services

Vision Statement

A future where communities achieve their greatest health potential.

Organizational Values



Accountable



Collaborative



Deliberate



Proactive



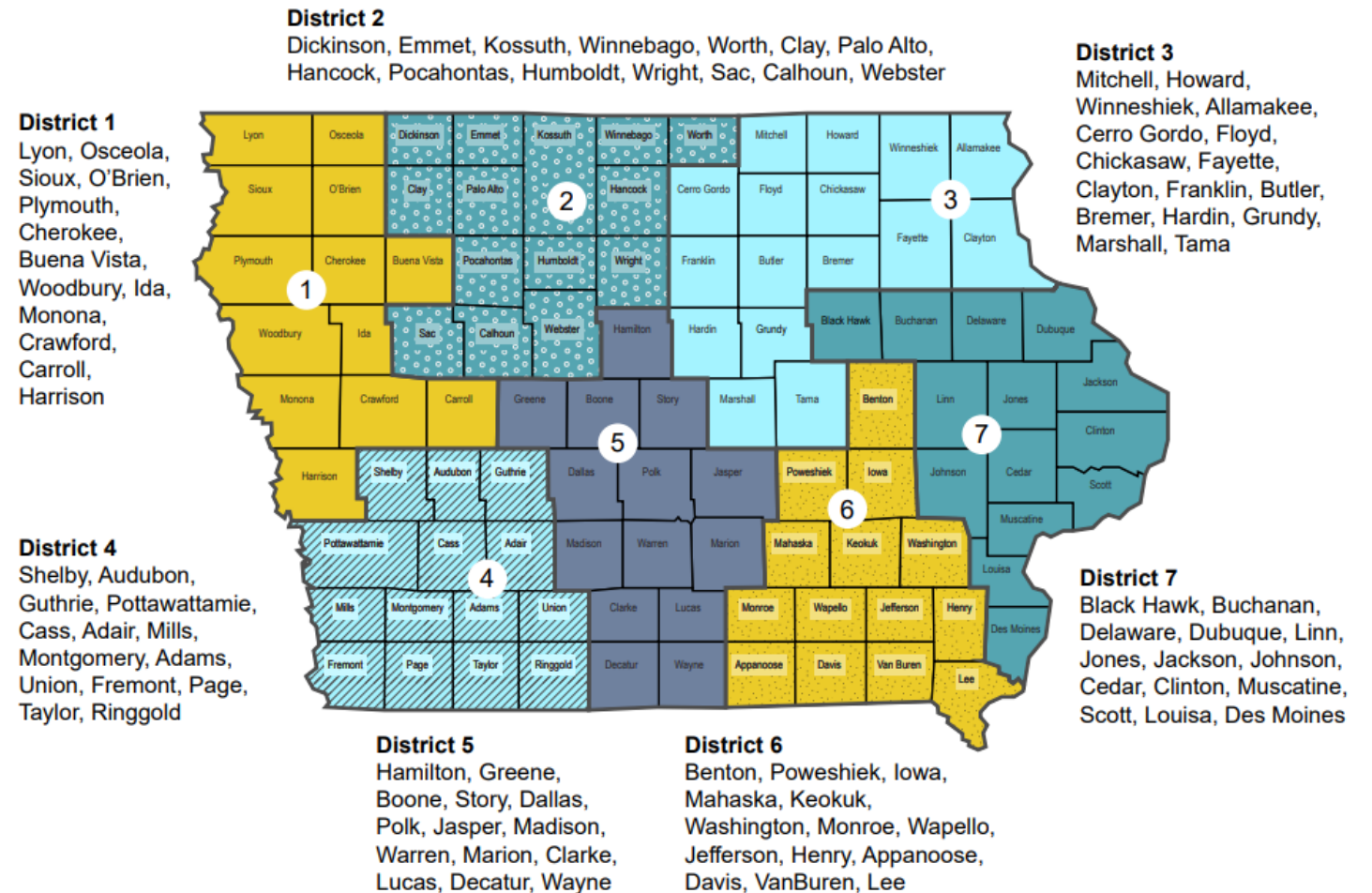
Respectful



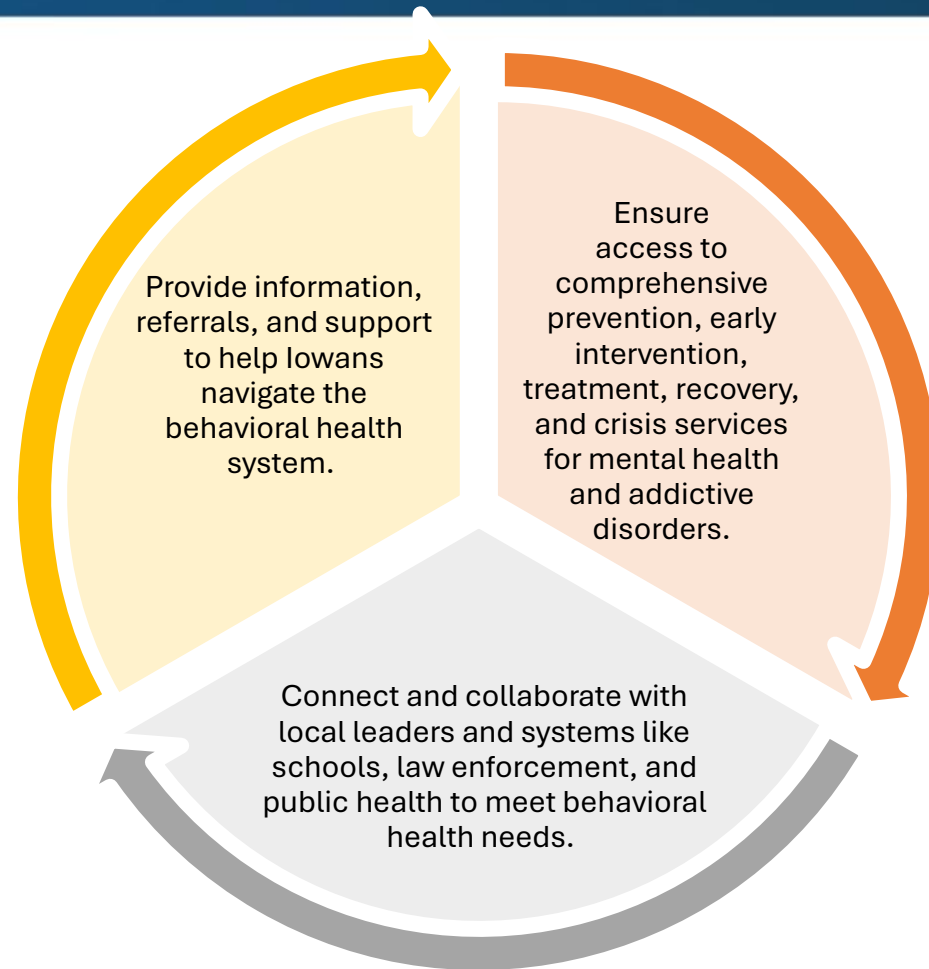
Transformative

Iowa PCA's Pivotal Role

Under the new statewide system, the Iowa PCA serves as the **central administrative and coordinating body** Iowa's 7 behavioral health districts.



System Alignment



Contracting

- As of August 2025, Iowa PCA has executed more than 125 BH-ASO contracts with providers/partners.
- Contracts that have gone out include services across seven program areas, as well as unique programs and services like co-responder models, jail, and school-based behavioral health services.
 - Integrated Provider Network – SUPTRS Block Grant
 - Tobacco Community Partnerships
 - Community Mental Health Centers – Mental Health Block Grant
 - Crisis Services
 - Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)
 - Peer Operated Organizations
 - Systems of Care – Mental Health Block Grant

System Navigation

Background and Overview

The Challenge: Navigating a Complex System

- Individuals and families seeking behavioral health support, and even the dedicated professionals trying to help them, often face a complex and fragmented system. This leads to delays, frustration, and missed opportunities for early intervention.
- This complexity can deter people from seeking help.
- When someone is stressed or symptomatic, navigating a complex system is even more difficult.
- Individuals facing stigma-related barriers need encouragement and support.

Leading the Charge: Developing System Navigation



The Iowa PCA is not just administering the system; we are actively leading and supporting the development of Behavioral Health System Navigation statewide.

Our efforts include:

- **Partnering with "Your Life Iowa".**
- **Developing comprehensive resources and training.**
- **Ensuring consistent application and availability.**
- **Collaborating with diverse stakeholders.**

This leadership ensures that System Navigation is **standardized, effective, and truly person-centered** for every Iowan.

What is System Navigation?

Personalized, One-on-One Support: A crucial direct connection helps the navigator understand unique needs and provide tailored support and follow-up, building trust and operating with a person-centric model.

System Navigators DO:	System Navigators DO NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide extensive information, education, and guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer application assistance for services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prescribe medication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify options to overcome barriers to access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide counseling
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support during key transitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide crisis intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide referrals and warm handoffs to appropriate providers and long-term services.	

Accessing System Navigation: Your Entry Points

For Patients, Supporters, and Caregivers



Call: 855-581-8111



Text: 855-895-8398



Chat: yourlifeiowa.org

Accessing System Navigation: Your Entry Points

For Providers and Partners

Providers/Partners Will Be Provided Direct Numbers to District System Navigators

Providers and community
Partners can coordinate
directly with Iowa PCA System
Navigators by calling
(515) 505-8988.

- Providers and Partners (including hospitals and schools)
- Crisis (i.e., 988)
- Disability Access Points
- Other Support Lines (i.e., Warm Line, Iowa Concern)
- Managed Care Organizations
- Law Enforcement, Jails

How System Navigation Works: Addressing Barriers



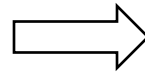
Navigators help overcome common barriers including:

- **Financial & Access Barriers:** Finding low-cost or no-cost options.
- **Communication & Information Barriers:** Ensuring clear, understandable options and next steps.
- **Behavioral Health System Barriers:** Streamlining connections, reducing delays.
- **Fear, Distrust, & Emotional Barriers:** Providing a trusted guide to reduce anxiety and foster safety.

System Navigation in Action: Supporting Individuals & Families



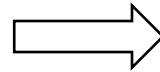
Situation: A rural resident newly diagnosed with depression doesn't know what behavioral health services are available in their small town or nearby, and they are worried about stigma.



Navigator's Role: Identifies local or telehealth options, helps them connect with care, and ensures the services are appropriate and accessible while providing reassurance to address stigma.



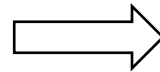
Situation: A parent notices their 15-year-old is isolating, skipping school, and possibly using substances, but doesn't know where to start.



Navigator's Role: Assesses needs, educates, and guides the family through referrals to adolescent mental health and substance use resources, ensuring they get connected.



Situation: An individual leaves the hospital with a list of outpatient providers but no appointments scheduled, feeling overwhelmed.



Navigator's Role: Helps set appointments, arranges transportation, and ensures a warm handoff to ongoing care and follow-up.

System Navigation Updates

- Statewide Referrals to System Navigation
Total Calls July 1, 2025-November 14, 2025
 - 7,853 navigation contacts
 - Actual client calls 2,329
 - Referrals to services 5,524
- Call Types
 - Mental health referrals 1,161
 - Housing 527
 - Substance use disorder 372



Your Role in a Supported Iowa



Iowa PCA Leads System Integration: As the BH-ASO, we're actively developing and supporting a unified behavioral health system and System Navigation across the state.

System Navigation Improves Access: Through early intervention, seamless coordination, and cross-sector collaboration, BH SN reduces barriers and connects Iowans to timely, non-crisis behavioral health support.

You Can Make a Difference: Understand when System Navigation is needed and how to effectively connect individuals and partnering professionals to navigators via Your Life Iowa or the dedicated professional line. Spread the word!

Collaborate for a Healthier Iowa: By utilizing and understanding System Navigation, we collectively strengthen our ability to support behavioral health needs in our state.

District 6 Advisory Council

District 6 Advisory Council Seats



District Advisory Council Seats

Updated 10/13/25



Elected Official



Law Enforcement

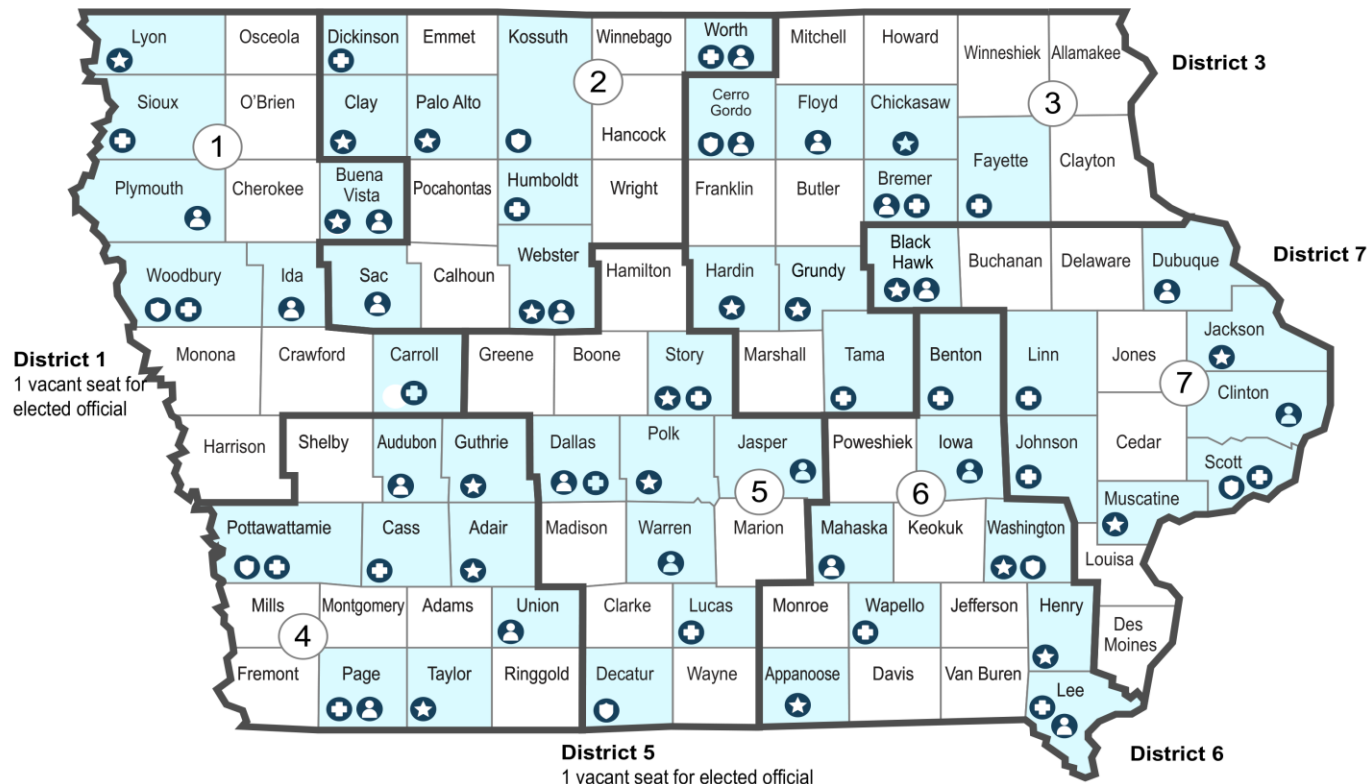


Providers



Lived Experience

District 2



District Advisory Council Roles and Responsibilities

Member Roles



Elected Public
Officials



Lived Behavioral
Health Experience



Behavioral Health
Expertise or Education



Law Enforcement

Responsibilities per Iowa Code 225.A.5:

- Identify opportunities and address challenges regarding implementation.
- Advise the Iowa PCA (as the ASO):
 - as it develops behavioral health policies.
 - regarding access to behavioral health prevention, education, early intervention, treatment, recovery support, and crisis services related to mental health and addictive disorders.

Behavioral Health Service System Statewide Plan

Why: Every Iowan, regardless of where they live, should have access to high-quality behavioral health resources that best fits their needs.

What: Together, we're building a full behavioral healthcare continuum that addresses prevention, early intervention, treatment, recovery and crisis services.

How: We will implement strategies to improve system collaboration, coordination, communication and improve health outcomes for Iowans through:



Where to find District Advisory Council information

[District Advisory Councils — Iowa Primary Care Association](https://www.iowapca.org/district-advisory-councils)

<https://www.iowapca.org/district-advisory-councils>

District 6 Advisory Council Meeting
December 3
11:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

*You can participate in the December meeting in person or via virtual options.
Details are coming soon.*

How Can You Help

1. Participate in the District Advisory Council meetings and public comment time. Share your observations, ideas and opportunities for collaboration.
We are stronger together!
2. Reach out to Unity, myself or contact the Iowa PCA at info@iowapca.org with questions, ideas or concerns.



Questions & Discussion



We welcome your insights and suggestions!

Your feedback is valuable as we continue to refine and strengthen behavioral health services statewide.

Resources

Key Contacts

- Provider/Partner Contract Questions: bhasoproviderrelations@iowapca.org
- Invoice/Payment Questions: asoacntpay@iowapca.org
- General Questions: info@iowapca.org
- Sign up for our newsletter at iowapca.org/administrative-service-organization

Iowa PCA Website and Resources



Thank you!

Sarah Berndt

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Unity Stevens

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Iowa PCA Website: <https://www.iowapca.org/>

For System Navigation Access:

- **Your Life Iowa** (for Public/Individuals): 855-851-8111
- **System Navigation Line** (for Providers/Community Partners): 515-505-8988