AVEL eCare
Virtual Crisis Care
IN ACTION
Clay County, South Dakota

Background

- The Clay County Sheriff Department has eight deputies serving an area representing more than 400 square miles, including the county seat of Vermillion with a population of 12,000 residents and more than 10,000 students at the University of South Dakota.
- Sheriff Andy Howe was looking for a solution to help his deputies manage the mental health crisis calls they received and was one of the first departments to adopt Avel eCare's Virtual Crisis Care program.

Before Virtual Crisis Care

- When a deputy encountered an individual who needed help, they would call the county mental health board chairman who would typically order a detention for evaluation.
- This would result in deputies having to transport these patients to the county jail to be held until an evaluation could be completed.
- These 'involuntary holds' were a time and cost intensive process for the Sheriff Department and stressful for the person in crisis.

Implementing Virtual Crisis Care

- Sheriff Howe and his deputies were some of the first to implement virtual crisis care, introducing the service to their community back in 2018.
- The team had to overcome some initial connectivity barriers but, once the problems were resolved, the service helped deputies treat many individual and help them remain in place.
- Initially, Sheriff Howe had to remind his deputies to utilize the service but, once his deputies started to realize the potential of VCC, they found a rhythm and developed a strong partnership with the crisis team at Avel eCare.

> "In most cases, when the iPad was used, the person in crisis was directed to resources rather than detained. We've seen some real value there since they are directed to the person that can really help them. It gives a deputy that has a multitude of other things to move onto some confidence that the situation was resolved properly."
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> **Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe**

The Benefits

- The Sheriff and his team appreciate the promptness of the Avel service. Once the iPad was initialized, Avel staff responded very quickly.
- Deputies also appreciate how the interaction feels comprehensive, how the individuals in crisis have immediate access to the resources they need to help.
- Virtual Crisis Care represented another tool in the deputies' tool belt to ensure they can provide the highest and best level of service to their local community.