

**CLEAR  
PATHWAYS**

An Initiative of Peg's Foundation

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# 2025 IMPACT REPORT

*Building the Foundation for Systems Transformation*



# Message from Our Leadership

## Dear Friends and Partners,

On behalf of Peg's Foundation, we are pleased to share Clear Pathways' 2025 Impact Report. This past year marked meaningful progress for the initiative, strengthening our foundation and expanding our work to improve behavioral health crisis response in Ohio and beyond.

In 2025, Clear Pathways finalized its Theory of Change and established a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework—key tools that sharpen our focus, measure progress, and demonstrate impact. These frameworks guide our four core impact areas: piloting innovations, building community capacity, improving policies, and generating knowledge that informs systems change at local, state, and national levels.

This work is unfolding at a pivotal moment. Communities across the country are seeking more effective, person-centered responses to behavioral health crises, and the need for coordinated, sustainable solutions has never been more urgent. Clear Pathways is uniquely positioned to meet this moment with clarity, evidence, and partnership.

A major milestone this year was Clear Pathways' selection as a partner in the Behavioral Health Emergency Response Initiative (BHERi), a multi-state collaboration with Michigan and Texas. This partnership provides new opportunities to scale impact, learn alongside peers, and advance best practices in crisis response over the next three years.

Since Clear Pathways' launch in 2020, Peg's Foundation and our Board of Trustees have championed and invested in this work, recognizing that transforming crisis response is both urgent and achievable. We remain deeply grateful for the Foundation's vision and support, which make this work possible and help ensure that communities have the systems they need to respond effectively when people are in crisis.

As we look ahead to 2026, we do so with a clear sense of purpose. We will deepen our partnerships, scale proven strategies, and generate the evidence needed to strengthen crisis response systems statewide and nationally. We invite partners who share this mission to join us in advancing solutions that are sustainable, scalable, and grounded in the lived experiences of the people they serve.

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we are building clear pathways to help.

With gratitude,



**Alicia D. Smith, MHA**

Executive Director, Clear Pathways

Vice President of Policy & Strategy, Peg's Foundation



## About Peg's Foundation

Clear Pathways operates as an initiative within Peg's Foundation, Ohio's largest private mental health funder. The Foundation's vision, resources, and stewardship make this work possible and empower us to pursue innovative approaches to behavioral health crisis response.

# About Clear Pathways

## Our Mission

We help partners accelerate the implementation of best-practice crisis response models to reduce reliance on jails and hospitals and ensure adults experiencing behavioral health crises have a clear, person-centered pathway to care.

## Our Vision

Our vision is for people experiencing behavioral health crises to have a path to help, across Ohio and the nation.

## How We Define Impact

Clear Pathways transforms systems, builds partnerships, and influences decision-making to shape how crisis response functions in practice. Our impact is reflected in increased alignment, informed decision-making, and growing demand for our expertise.

## From Assessment to Action

Clear Pathways' origins date to 2018, when Peg's Foundation—Ohio's largest private mental health funder—commissioned a comprehensive assessment of the state's behavioral health crisis response system. The assessment revealed significant gaps and a clear need for a coordinated, strategic approach. In 2020, Peg's Foundation responded by establishing Clear Pathways as a dedicated initiative to transform how Ohio responds to behavioral health crises.

By 2025, Clear Pathways has evolved from a state-focused initiative into a multi-state partner in the national Behavioral Health Emergency Response Initiative (BHERi), working alongside peers in Michigan and Texas. What began as a team of two has grown to more than 30 members including consultants, national subject-matter experts, and external partners.

## Our Approach: Four Core Impact Areas

Clear Pathways' work is guided by our Theory of Change and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework—ensuring our strategies are grounded in evidence, responsive to community needs, and continuously evolving.

### PILOT INNOVATIONS

Developing and testing new crisis response models

### BUILD CAPACITY

Strengthening community readiness and collaboration

### IMPROVE POLICIES

Shaping regulatory and payment systems

### GENERATE KNOWLEDGE

Building evidence for what works

# Our Impact at a Glance

81%

Ohio counties engaged

40+

requests for expertise

10

published resources

599

Community Leaders Mobilized

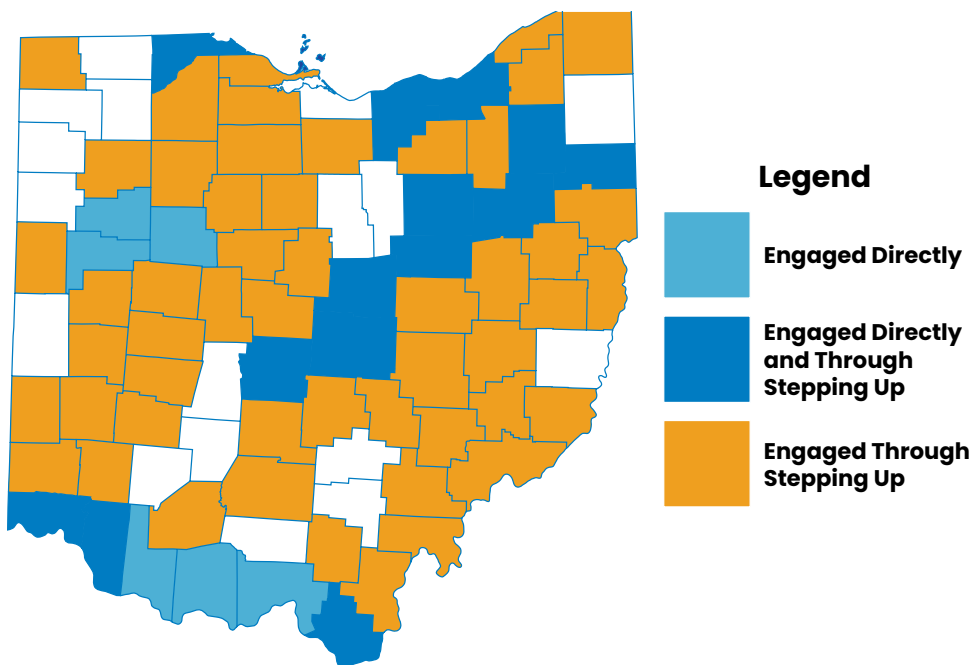
2,400

website visitors

254

LinkedIn followers

Building crisis response capacity across urban, suburban, and rural Ohio—with growing engagement from county boards, state associations, national organizations, foundations, and federal partners.



## Statewide Reach

Clear Pathways engages communities across Ohio through direct work, the Stepping Up Ohio partnership, or both—covering a significant share of the state’s population.

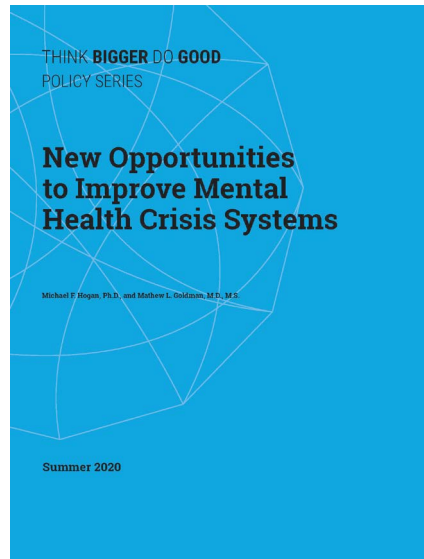
*“I think having the Clear Pathways folks kept us on track. Given their expertise, they came up with a lot of good ideas. I would say overall it was a pleasant experience.”*

— Public Safety Answering Point participant

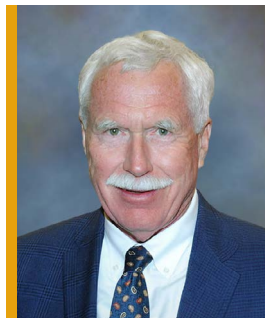
# Guided by National Expertise

Clear Pathways' work is strengthened by a team of national crisis response experts who bring deep knowledge across multiple disciplines essential to systems transformation—policy leaders, clinical experts, academic researchers, and people with lived experience.

Our experts have also published work in the Think Bigger Do Good Policy Paper Series. [thinkbiggerdoodgood.org](http://thinkbiggerdoodgood.org)



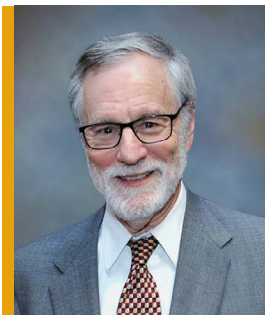
**Matthew Goldman, MD**  
*Psychiatrist &  
Crisis Systems Expert*



**Michael F. Hogan, PhD**  
*Former NYS Mental  
Health Commissioner*



**Rob Jackson, MPA**  
*Crisis Services  
Policy Leader*



**Mark Munetz, MD**  
*Co-Creator,  
Sequential Intercept Model*



**Debra Pinals, MD**  
*Forensic Psychiatry &  
Justice Systems*

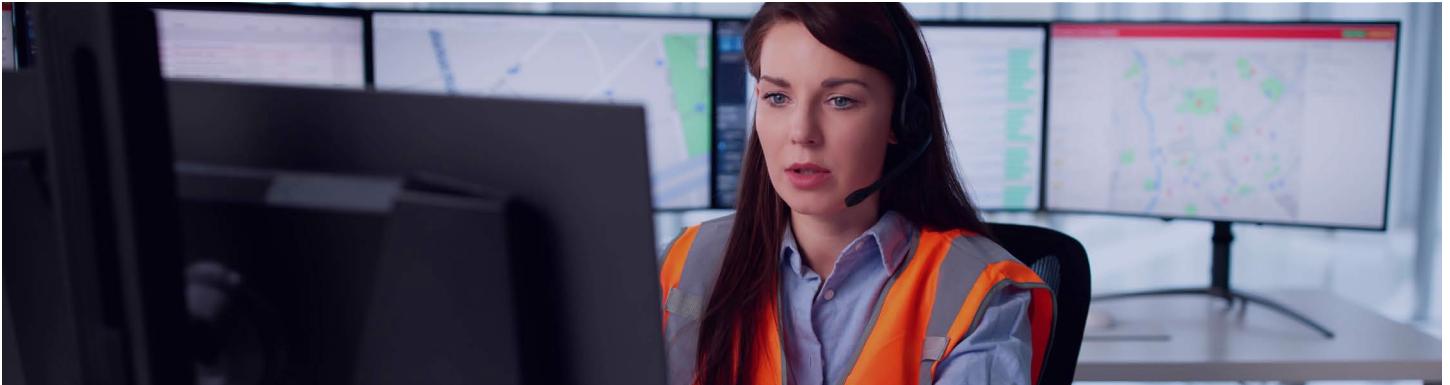


**Justice Evelyn  
Lundberg Stratton (Ret.)**  
*Ohio Supreme Court,  
Criminal Justice Reform*



This multidisciplinary approach ensures Clear Pathways draws on collective wisdom from those who understand crisis response from every angle—clinical care, policy reform, research evidence, law enforcement coordination, and lived experience.

# Bridging the Gap: 911/988 Interoperability



## The Challenge

When someone experiencing a behavioral health crisis calls for help, the response they receive shouldn't depend on the number they dial. Yet 911 and 988 operate as separate systems without formal protocols for transferring calls and coordinating responses.

## Our Solution

Clear Pathways developed and pilot-tested an interoperability strategy that goes beyond simple coordination—establishing formal protocols, procedures, and agreements for call transfer and coordinated response between 911 and 988 systems across five diverse Ohio counties.

## What We Learned

**Neutral third-party facilitation is essential.** Sites attributed interoperability progress to having a knowledgeable facilitator who built trust and maintained momentum across traditionally siloed systems.

**Leadership buy-in accelerates progress.** Involving PSAP and 988 leadership made it easier for agencies to share details about policies and authorize call transfer protocols.

**Structured tools drive results.** The materials allowed sites to account for local contexts and expanded understanding of call transfer procedures.

**Peer learning amplifies impact.** Participants found it helpful to understand how other communities approached interoperability.

3

implementation briefs

292

webinar attendees

342

resource downloads

5

pilot counties

*“We’re all on the same team, and from the beginning we said, this isn’t about us. It’s about getting help for the residents that we serve.” — PSAP pilot participant*

**Looking Ahead:** Clear Pathways will continue supporting interoperability implementation in new communities while advancing policy recommendations for sustainable, scalable 911/988 coordination nationwide. Evaluation conducted in partnership with Mathematica positions this work for multi-state scaling and replication.

# Building Sustainable Payment Models for Adult Mobile Crisis Response

**The Challenge:** Mobile crisis teams are essential to diverting people from jails and emergency departments, but inconsistent funding models threaten their sustainability. Providers across Ohio described financial strain as the single greatest barrier to system stability.

**Our Solution:** Clear Pathways launched a three-phase initiative partnering with providers across 23% of Ohio counties to analyze mobile crisis operations, assess costs, and develop alternative payment methodologies that support long-term sustainability.

## Phase I (2025)

### Best Practices Assessment

Interviewed 86 professionals working on mobile crisis teams to assess alignment with SAMHSA National Guidelines and establish baseline understanding of operations, staffing, deployment, and funding.

## Phase II (2026)

### Cost Analysis

Analyzing actual costs of service delivery across different geographies and service models, accounting for workforce considerations and identifying non-healthcare funding needs.

## Phase III (2026+)

### APM Pilot Implementation

Testing alternative payment models with selected Ohio Medicaid managed care entities, evaluating payment strategies for sustainability, and generating evidence for statewide adoption.



## Key Findings from Phase I

- 58%** of providers offer 24/7 mobile crisis coverage
- 92%** dispatch through behavioral health-led pathways
- 67%** involve law enforcement as backup to crisis calls
- 100%** described financial strain as a major obstacle to sustainability

## Great Lakes BH Emergency Response Work Group

Launched in partnership with Wayne State University's Center for Behavioral Health and Justice, the Great Lakes Behavioral Health Emergency Response Work Group is a multi-state collaborative uniting Michigan and Ohio partners to advance meaningful change in behavioral health emergency services. Together, the group is developing common service definitions, testing alternative payment methodologies, and building a regional policy blueprint — work that is already gaining traction. In 2025, the collaborative completed a comprehensive literature review, conducted a 20-state policy scan, developed an Alternative Payment Model assessment tool, and collected cost data from Ohio mobile crisis providers, laying a strong foundation for sustainable, systems-level impact across the region.

# Crisis System Matrix: Aligning Services for Transformation

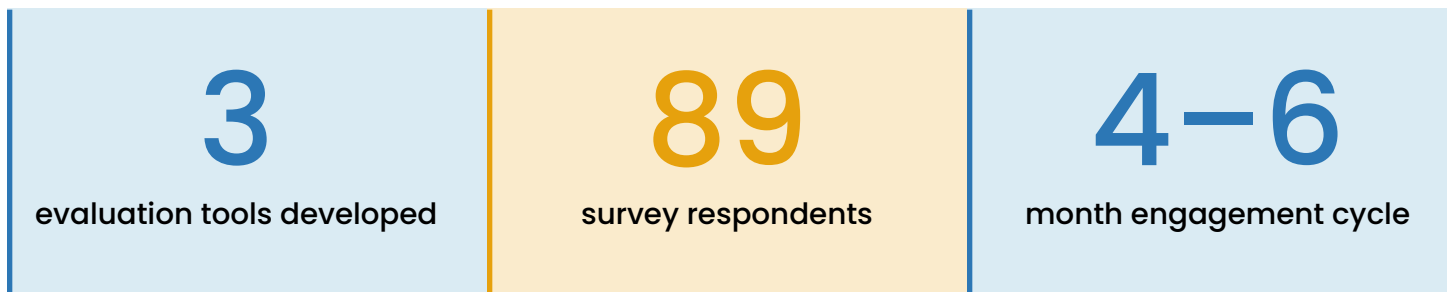
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**The Challenge:** Communities often lack a comprehensive understanding of their existing behavioral health crisis response landscape. Without a clear picture of available services, provider roles, and system gaps, it is difficult to strategically plan, sustainably fund services, or coordinate effective responses.

**Our Solution:** Clear Pathways developed the Local Crisis System Matrix—a structured planning tool that helps communities identify all mental health and substance use service providers and system partners, understand their roles in crisis response, and recognize gaps in services.

## Our Technical Assistance Process

Our intensive, collaborative engagement typically spans four to six months and includes establishing specific goals and objectives, convening cross-sector teams, completing the matrix by collaboratively mapping available behavioral health emergency services and providers, and delivering a comprehensive package with key findings, formatted Matrix, and recommended next steps.



## 2025 Highlight:

Building on Hamilton County Mental Health Recovery Services Board’s completed matrix, Clear Pathways provided sustainability support—developing evaluation tools with input from individuals with lived experience, creating a governance framework, and providing strategic advisory support for community rollout.

# Influencing Policy at State and Regional Levels



## Key State Recommendation

“Establish new and support existing statewide crisis services, including 988, to ensure that all Ohioans have someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go when experiencing a behavioral health crisis.” — Governor’s Competency Restoration Work Group, Final Report

## National Influence: Published in The Milbank Quarterly

Clear Pathways co-authored peer-reviewed research examining financing models for mental health crisis systems, contributing to national policy discourse on sustainable crisis response funding.

## Ohio Governor’s Competency Restoration Work Group

Clear Pathways contributed expertise to Governor Mike DeWine’s Work Group on Competency Restoration and Diversion, which released 15 recommendations to improve behavioral health treatment and diversion opportunities across Ohio. Our Role: Shared our approach to developing, funding, implementing, and evaluating systems of change, helping shape statewide policy recommendations.

## Key Result:

Clear Pathways’ influence helped position crisis services as a top-tier recommendation in the Governor’s official report.



# Selected as National Partner: BHERi

The Behavioral Health Emergency Response Initiative (BHERi) is a national effort to improve responses to 911 calls involving people experiencing mental health, substance use, or co-occurring emergencies. Clear Pathways was selected as a partner based on its strong track record of system transformation and active role in current crisis response reform efforts across Ohio.

## Clear Pathways' Role:

As Ohio's partner in this initiative, Clear Pathways leads work on interoperability strategy and alternative payment model development while learning alongside peers in Michigan and Texas.

## Long-Term Vision:

BHERi aims to make measurable progress across three states and scale nationally, using lessons learned from state implementation to inform crisis response transformation across the country. This three-year partnership provides unprecedented opportunities to scale impact and position Ohio as a leader in behavioral health crisis response innovation.

## Why This Matters for Ohio

Clear Pathways' selection as a BHERi partner places Ohio among just three states nationwide chosen to lead this work—validating five years of investment by Peg's Foundation and positioning the initiative to influence national crisis response policy. With backing from Blue Meridian Partners and Pew Charitable Trusts, this partnership amplifies every dollar invested in Clear Pathways by connecting Ohio's innovations to a national platform for systems change.

## Focus Areas

- Interoperability between 911 and 988 systems
- Alternative payment models for crisis services
- Scaling proven interventions across states
- Cross-state learning and collaboration

## National Partners & Funders

### State Partners:

Wayne State University (Michigan);  
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (Texas)

**Administrator:** NYU SCALE + Lab

**Funding:** Blue Meridian Partners;  
Pew Charitable Trusts



# Why Partner with Clear Pathways

Clear Pathways offers partners a proven methodology for transforming crisis response systems—combining national expertise, rigorous evaluation, community-centered implementation, and sustainable change strategies.

## Proven Methodology

Theory of Change framework, MEL infrastructure, evidence-based tools, and national subject-matter expertise.

## Rigorous Evaluation

Partnership with Mathematica and leading research institutions for high-quality data analysis and published research.

## Technical Assistance

Crisis system assessments, community readiness support, training and facilitation, and stakeholder alignment.

## Policy Development

Model policy language, state and regional convening, payment model innovation, and sustainability planning.

## Innovation Testing

Pilot programs designed with evaluation built in, iterative learning, data-driven decisions, and scalability planning.

## Knowledge Generation

Published briefs, peer-reviewed research, national conferences, and contribution to the national evidence base.

## Your Partnership Enables

Expansion of proven interoperability strategies to new communities

- Development and testing of sustainable payment models
- Generation of rigorous evidence that informs national policy
- Replicable frameworks that scale beyond pilot sites
- Strengthening of Ohio's crisis response infrastructure as a national model



Building Partnerships • Sharing Expertise • Advancing Crisis Response Innovation

# Partnerships Driving Community Impact



Clear Pathways' work is strengthened by partnerships and strategic relationships at multiple levels. We spotlight here partnerships that exemplify our collaborative approach to systems transformation.

## Stepping Up Ohio: Building County-Level Crisis Response Capacity

Ohio's Stepping Up Initiative, led by Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton (Ret.) and supported by Peg's Foundation, delivers a clear return on investment by reducing costly jail stays and strengthening behavioral health and justice systems serving people with serious mental illness. The initiative speeds adoption of evidence-based practices through statewide technical assistance, peer learning, and county engagement, resulting in more accurate identification, increased treatment connections, reduced jail days, lower recidivism, and decreased strain on law enforcement. Sustained engagement from leaders of key agencies and associations—with Steering Committee attendance averaging 40-50 of 65 members and Attorney General Task Force participation of 70-100 per meeting—demonstrates the high-level commitment needed to drive long-term cost savings and measurable human outcomes.

### Our Role:

Clear Pathways serves on the state steering committee and has delivered presentations about crisis systems transformation work. At every county-level Stepping Up meeting, Clear Pathways joins local leaders to spotlight crisis systems coordination, share emerging best practices, and highlight work with communities to build alternatives to jail-based crisis response.

### Strategic Alignment with State Partners

Clear Pathways maintained regular communication with the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health, Ohio Department of Administrative Services, and other state partners throughout 2025. These ongoing dialogues ensure community-level innovations align with state priorities and that insights from our work inform broader state crisis system planning.

# Looking Ahead: 2026 Priorities

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Building on 2025's foundation-setting work, Clear Pathways enters 2026 with clear priorities focused on scaling impact, deepening partnerships, and generating evidence that transforms systems.

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## Scale Interoperability Implementation

Support additional Ohio communities in implementing 911/988 interoperability protocols. Target: 5–6 new PSAPs establish formal call transfer agreements; 3 communities complete full implementation.

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2

## Launch Alternative Payment Model Pilot

Test sustainable payment methodology with Ohio mobile crisis providers and managed care entities. Target: Complete Phase II cost analysis; finalize APM design; prepare for pilot launch with 3–5 sites.

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## Expand BHERi Multi-State Collaboration

Contribute Ohio's learnings to the national knowledge base while learning from Michigan and Texas peers. Target: Advance policy blueprint; present at national conferences; publish peer-reviewed research.

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## Strengthen Community Capacity Building

Deepen engagement with Ohio communities through Crisis System Matrix and technical assistance. Target: 2 new county engagements; sustainability support to previous communities; develop online toolkit.

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## Generate & Disseminate Knowledge

Build evidence base and share learnings nationally. Target: Submit 1–2 articles for peer review; release 6–8 practice briefs; grow professional network to 400+ LinkedIn followers.

## Partner With Us

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Clear Pathways invites new partners to join us in transforming behavioral health crisis response. We work with a diverse range of stakeholders—each bringing unique perspectives, resources, and influence to this work.

### Funders & Foundations

- Co-fund pilot programs
- Support evaluation research
- Invest in scalable solutions
- Enable national expansion

### Communities & Providers

- Implement crisis models
- Participate in assessments
- Share data and insights
- Build local capacity

### Policy & Systems Leaders

- Shape policy frameworks
- Advance payment reform
- Support legislation
- Drive systems alignment





# CLEAR PATHWAYS

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## CONNECT WITH US

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