



October 8, 2024

King County Department of Community and Human Services
401 5th Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Tiffany Ngo and Crisis Care Centers Request for Proposals Review Team:

We, the undersigned, represent a coalition of five cities in north King County and in the North Crisis Response Zone: Bothell, Kenmore, Kirkland, Lake Forest Park, and Shoreline. We are writing to express our unwavering support for Connections Health Solutions (Connections) to be selected as the operator for the North Crisis Response Zone as part of King County’s Crisis Care Center’s initiative.

Since 2019, our five cities have worked together find solutions to those suffering from a behavioral health crisis. Our coalition invested considerable time and resources to stand up the North King County RADAR and Kirkland Community Responder programs—both of which provide mental health professionals that support our first responders on calls aiding individuals struggling with behavioral health challenges. We then merged these two programs into the North King County Regional Crisis Response (RCR) Agency that launched in January of 2023 and has been successfully providing crisis response services in all five cities. During the course of this work we recognized a glaring unmet need for our community: a place for those in behavioral health crisis to go instead of our local emergency rooms and/or jails. With the recent launch of the 988 system, we knew that this need would only intensify.

With that in mind, our coalition spent the better part of 2022 and 2023 researching best practices, engaging crisis service providers from across the nation, and undertaking multiple site visits (both virtual and in-person). Overall, our research both confirmed the need for a crisis facility in our region and underscored the importance of finding the right provider partner who could leverage their expertise to design the right solution for North King County. Our hard work paid off when we discovered Connections.

By way of background, Connections is the founder of the 23-hour observation model of crisis care and has driven the evolution of what is now known as the ‘Arizona model’ via their system-wide leadership. They currently operate the nation’s largest crisis receiving centers in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona, treating over 30,000 individuals in crisis annually. They are successful in stabilizing 65-70% of individuals in crisis within twenty-four hours and connecting them to community-based care. Furthermore, Connections’ crisis metrics have set the national standard for best practices in crisis system evaluation and performance measurement, which have been incorporated into crisis guidelines published by SAMHSA and the National Council for Behavioral Health.

The five RCR cities invited Connections to explore clinic locations throughout the north end and Connections was able to find a suitable site in Kirkland. Connections’ Crisis Clinic opened in Kirkland on





August 10th of this year with a 24/7 walk-in mental health clinic that includes a 23-hour observation unit, and two 16-bed units to treat individuals requiring extended stabilization, treatment, and evaluation services. We are happy to report that the clinic has already served over 250 people.

An operator like Connections is paramount to the regional network of Crisis Care Centers, as proposed in the RFP. Our region deserves crisis centers lead by operators who understand the needs of our diverse communities. By establishing four geographically distributed Crisis Care Centers and a dedicated Youth Crisis Care Center, this network will provide residents across King County a much needed “no wrong door” approach to behavioral health services. These centers will reduce the strain on emergency responders and offer an alternative to incarceration for individuals experiencing mental health or substance use crises.

We are grateful for King County’s commitment to enhancing behavioral health services and for the opportunity to offer our strongest support for Connections to be selected as a launch ready site to serve as the North Crisis Response Zone Crisis Care Center. The creation of these Crisis Care Centers will have a profound and lasting impact on the health and safety of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink.

Mason Thompson, Mayor
City of Bothell

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Tom French, Mayor
City of Lake Forest Park

A handwritten signature in black ink.

Nigel Herbig, Mayor
City of Kenmore

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Chris Roberts, Mayor
City of Shoreline

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Kelli Curtis, Mayor
City of Kirkland

