

Minnehaha County Board of Commissioners

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From the Desk of Commissioner Cindy Heiberger:

State statute requires county government to provide a number of services. Ninety-four percent of Minnehaha County General Fund expenditures are for responsibilities required by state law. The Commission works alongside other county elected offices to ensure services are provided in an effective, efficient manner.

Creative problem solving and collaboration play an important role in identifying strategic opportunities for partnerships to solve community challenges. The Sioux Empire Leadership Council and community triage center are two ideas that fit such a description.

In 2018, Minnehaha County was selected as a public safety grant recipient for \$750,000 over two years by the MacArthur Foundation. The grant's purpose is to ensure the right people, those we are scared of, not those we are mad at, are incarcerated. Individuals who are not a threat to others, are likely to show up for trial, and at low risk to reoffend are best placed at home, working to support their families. Individuals who primarily struggle with behavioral health issues are more appropriately connected with community-based resources through a warm handoff. Collaboration across the public and private sector is needed to find a solution.

In South Dakota, when we face challenges, we roll up our sleeves and work together to address community needs. Collaboration between Minnehaha and Lincoln County, City of Sioux Falls, Sioux Falls School Board, 2nd Judicial Circuit, Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, Sioux Falls Community Foundation, Avera, and Sanford has resulted in forming the Sioux Empire Leadership Council to address community-wide issues. One focus is to develop what a triage center could look like. The plan, to be issued later this year, will be evidence-based and utilize best practices from across the country.

The goal of the triage center is to connect individuals struggling with behavioral health or addiction issues to community-based resources. Part of being effective is ensuring efforts do not duplicate already existing private sector efforts. More information will be included in a triage center report issued later this year.

On a final note, County Commissioners and county officials gathered in Pierre for our annual convention in September. At the meetings we receive training, briefings, and plan for the legislative session. During the meeting, I was elected to serve as President of the SDACC for the next year. I look forward to partnering with county leaders across the state to find solutions, improve outcomes, and be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

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