

VA Crisis Triage System User Journey

Critical System Goals

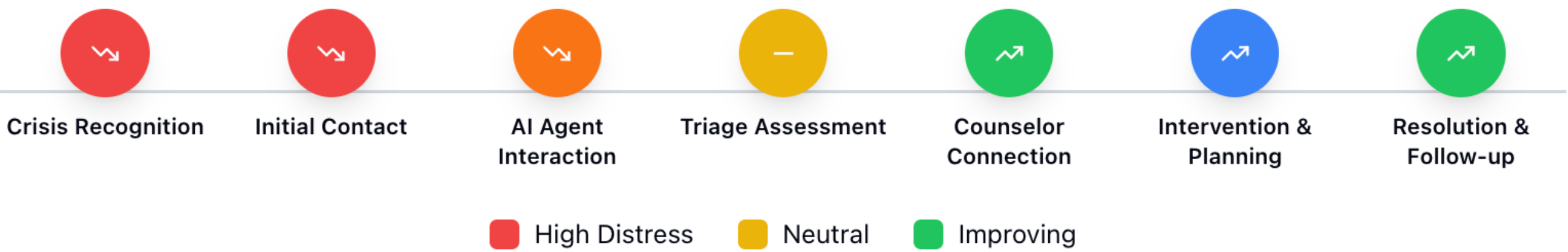
Shorter Time to Resolution

Rapid Connection to Human Support

Seamless Transition to Mental Health Services

No Story Repetition

Emotional Journey



1 Crisis Recognition

User Actions

Veteran recognizes need for help
Decides to reach out
Finds crisis line number

Emotions

Desperate Scared Isolated Hopeful

Goals

Get immediate help
Feel heard
Stay safe

Touchpoints

Phone Website Wallet card

Pain Points

Fear of judgment
Not sure if crisis is 'serious enough'
Difficulty finding number

2 Initial Contact

User Actions

Dials crisis line
Navigates phone tree
Waits on hold

Emotions

Anxious Impatient Vulnerable

Goals

Reach a real person quickly
Not have to explain situation multiple times

Touchpoints

Phone tree Hold music Wait time

Pain Points

Confusing menu options
Long wait times
Cognitive load during crisis

3 AI Agent Interaction

User Actions

Answers screening questions
Describes crisis situation
Provides basic information

Emotions

Frustrated Disconnected Anxious Misunderstood

Goals

Be understood
Get to human counselor
Receive appropriate urgency response

Touchpoints

AI voice agent Automated questions Voice recognition

Pain Points

AI can't recognize escalating distress
Repetitive questions
Feels impersonal during critical moment

4 Triage Assessment

User Actions

AI or initial counselor assesses crisis level
Determines appropriate pathway
Prepares for handoff

Emotions

Uncertain Hopeful Vulnerable

Goals

Accurate assessment of needs
Quick routing to right support
No gaps in care

Touchpoints

Assessment protocol Routing system Case notes

Pain Points

Inconsistent assessment criteria
Unclear next steps
Information lost in handoff

5 Counselor Connection

User Actions

Speaks with trained counselor
Shares full crisis details
Receives support and guidance

Emotions

Relieved Heard Supported Less alone

Goals

Feel understood
Develop safety plan
Access resources

Touchpoints

Human counselor Crisis intervention Active listening

Pain Points

Having to repeat story again
Long time to reach this point
Counselor lacks context from earlier steps

6 Intervention & Planning

User Actions

Develops safety plan
Receives resource referrals
Schedules follow-up
Establishes support network

Emotions

Calmer More hopeful Empowered Connected

Goals

Have concrete next steps
Know help is available
Feel less overwhelmed

Touchpoints

Safety planning Resource database Follow-up scheduling Local services

Pain Points

Overwhelmed by too many options
Unclear how to access recommended services
Fear of losing connection

7 Resolution & Follow-up

User Actions

Ends call with plan in place
Receives follow-up contact
Connects with ongoing services

Emotions

Grateful Cautiously optimistic Tired but hopeful

Goals

Stay connected to care
Successfully transition to services
Not fall through cracks

Touchpoints

End of call summary Follow-up call/text Service provider connections Check-in schedule

Pain Points

Gap between crisis call and ongoing care
No one verifies service connection
Feels alone again after call ends

Critical Insights & Opportunities

Highest Risk Moments

- Initial phone tree navigation
- AI screening phase (impersonal)
- Gaps during handoffs
- Post-call follow-through

System Friction Points

- Veterans repeat story 3+ times
- Information lost between stages
- Inconsistent triage protocols
- Long time to human connection

Design Opportunities

- Crisis escalation fast-track option
- AI that detects distress signals
- Seamless context handoff to counselor
- Automated follow-up verification