



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
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CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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County Employee Named Mental Health “Advocate of the Year”

MILWAUKEE – A Milwaukee County employee has been named the “2014 Advocate of the Year” by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Eric Collins-Dyke, an Intervention Specialist in the Housing Division, received the award during NAMI Greater Milwaukee’s 35th Annual Awards Dinner. Collins-Dyke’s exceptional effort in identifying housing resources for individuals being discharged from hospitals, shelters and correctional institutions earned him this prestigious award.

Collins-Dyke’s position was created by County Executive Chris Abele as part of the County’s goal of reforming and redesigning the County’s mental health system. So far this year, Collins-Dyke has helped more than 150 homeless individuals find appropriate housing and supportive services, resulting in better outcomes for individuals, the community, as well as cost savings. His success has proven so important that County Executive Abele is proposing a second Community Intervention Specialist position in his 2015 Recommended Budget.

“Since taking office, we’ve been making important and focused changes in helping people transition back into the community. We know this effort is having a positive impact and it’s nice to see Eric’s hard work rewarded with such a prestigious honor,” County Executive Abele said.

Fostering strong partnerships between County agencies and private organizations, such as hospitals and non-profit service providers, is critical to initiatives such as this one. One of Collins-Dyke’s very first cases highlighted the importance of a strong partnership between county agencies. Collins-Dyke got information about a man who was being discharged from the House of Correction (HOC). The man had been arrested for stealing food and was homeless. After the man was discharged from HOC, Collins-Dyke helped enrolled him into mental health services and since that time the man has continued to receive care and is doing better.

More Awards

This recognition from NAMI comes on the heels of the Housing Division receiving honors from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Public Policy Forum.

Milwaukee County received HUD's *Innovation in Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing* Award after submitting a plan to conduct a regional study on the impediments to fair housing. The analysis will be the first of its kind in the state. Housing Division staff also received recognition from HUD for *Standout Performance in HOME*. The HOME Program provides homeownership and affordable housing opportunities for low and very low-income County residents. Housing Division Administrator Jim Mathy is one of the Public Policy Forum's 2014 Salute to Government Award Winners. Mathy was selected for the *Leader of the Future Award*.

"These awards are part of a continuing trend of significant housing program improvements that have taken place under the direction and leadership of Héctor Colón," said County Executive Abele.

Working with County Executive Abele, county staff and community leaders, Colón overhauled several programs in the Housing Division after he was appointed director of the Department of Health & Human Services in 2011. The most significant reforms include:

- Improving the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) by moving toward a transparent and competitive awards process.
- Creating a new administrative plan for the Section 8 program that helped significantly reduce the number of people on the waiting list.
- Playing a key role in the creation more than 500 units of supportive housing located across Milwaukee County.