



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Milwaukee County

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CONTACT: Kimberly Kane

414.202.5762

kimberly.kane@milwaukeecountywi.gov

Milwaukee County Mental Health Board moves forward to identify acute care solution

Milwaukee, WI (October 22, 2015) –The Milwaukee County Mental Health Board, the governing body for the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD), voted today to form two separate committees to investigate the next step in the process to identify a provider for inpatient, observation and emergency services. These services include psychiatric emergency department, observation beds, acute adult beds and acute child and adolescent inpatient beds. One will evaluate a local public-private partnership. The other will evaluate potential national entity options. Each task force will include three voting members of the board with a possible non voting member of the board and three members of BHD’s leadership team. Both groups will move forward simultaneously. The committees are expected to make recommendations to the Mental Health Board at its April 2016 meeting.

“I appreciate the very thorough discussion by our Mental Health Board today and the sense of urgency members have with this issue,” says Patricia Schroeder, Administrator for the Behavioral Health Division. “We are committed to identifying a therapeutic solution that aligns with the vision of our mental health redesign and we remain committed to having this solution ready by our 2018 deadline.”

The make up of each committee and the structure of the committee work will be determined in the coming weeks.

“We must remain focused on doing the right thing for persons with mental illness and their families in Milwaukee County,” notes Department of Health and Human Services Director Héctor Colón. “The steps we are taking today demonstrate a commitment by the administration and board to move forward together on this very important next step in our redesign efforts. I am confident the members of our Mental Health Board will leverage their expertise and their experiences to develop thorough and appropriate recommendations.”

Background

Today, only 10 residents remain in BHD’s long term care unit, Rehab Central. This unit is expected to close at the end of the year, with these residents transitioning into high quality community based settings. Since 2010, Milwaukee County has invested more than \$15 million in new and enhanced community based mental health services including recovery-oriented services, peer-run services, crisis services, housing and employment. This strategy reflects the national trend in strengthening community services, and supports the rights of individuals with mental illness to live in the community in the least restrictive setting. These investments have resulted in a 20% reduction in the utilization of the psychiatric emergency department, a 30% reduction in emergency detentions, and a 48% decrease in admissions to adult inpatient units.

In addition, the Mental Health Complex is no longer a suitable facility for the needs of patients today, nor is it an efficient building to run. The sprawling complex is 930,000 square feet and costs more than \$10 million each year to operate.

RFP Process

In July 2015, the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division released an RFP for acute care services as part of the next significant phase of the mental health redesign in Milwaukee. Viable providers were required to have substantial experience with person-centered, trauma-informed, recovery-oriented care that also engaged community-based services in mental health and substance use treatment. This new model would allow BHD to focus on what the organization does best – assure access to high-quality community based services.

In September 2015, BHD leadership, with unanimous support of the RFP review panel, suspended the RFP in pursuit of other alternatives.

Today's meeting of the Mental Health Board was the board's first opportunity to discuss the next step in this process.

About the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division

The Behavioral Health Division provides care and treatment to adults, children, and adolescents with mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities through both County-operated programs and contracts with community agencies. Services include intensive short-term treatment through our crisis services and inpatient services, as well as a full array of supportive community services for persons with serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

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For more information about this topic or to schedule an interview contact Kimberly Kane at (414) 202-5762 or kimberly.kane@milwaukeecountywi.gov