



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

# *Milwaukee County*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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CONTACT: Kimberly Kane

414.202.5762

[kimberly.kane@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:kimberly.kane@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

## **Milwaukee County Mental Health Board Asks Public for Input on 2017 Budget**

*Local organizations and individuals share ideas to improve access, care for mentally ill*

**Milwaukee, WI** (March 24, 2016) The Milwaukee County Mental Health Board (MCMHB) held its first public hearing of 2016 on Thursday night, inviting the community to share ideas that will help shape the Behavioral Health Division's budget and programming for 2017.

"Transparency and community engagement are priorities for our board, leadership and entire team at BHD," says mental health board member Tom Lutzow. "While the organization historically has not provided consistent opportunities for public feedback, we do today. Constructive public feedback is welcome, and an important part of our decision making process."

The Milwaukee County Mental Health Board (MCMHB) was established in 2013 by Wisconsin Act 203. The legislation created this independent board to oversee governance of the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division. By law, all Milwaukee County Mental Health Board meetings are noticed and open to the public. Today, the MCMHB holds more public hearings than the law requires.

During Thursday's meeting the public contributed a wide variety of ideas including prioritizing access to community based mental health care services; early intervention programs; programs for disabled individuals with mental illness; increased availability of high-quality housing for the mentally ill; diversion from the correctional system; challenges to the board to help find ways to reduce stigma around mental illness; and encouragement for more feedback opportunities for the public.

"Access to exceptional mental health care is a clear priority for our community," says BHD's Interim Administrator Alicia Modjeska. "With the guidance and contributions of our board and leadership and our talented staff we are making strides the public can be proud of. The SMART Goals listed on our website show how far we've come in five years. We want to hear from the public, hearings like the one we held Thursday are an important avenue for candid feedback."

The MCMHB will use Thursday's public feedback in the development of the Behavioral Health Division's 2017 budget. On May 26, 2016 the public is invited to provide comment at the MCMHB Finance Committee meeting when the budget is presented, and on September 6, 2016 the MCMHB will hold another public comment session.

### **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.

**About the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services**

The mission of the Milwaukee County Department of Health & Human Services is to enhance the quality of life for individuals who need support living healthy, independent, and safe lives within our community. Our vision is to be recognized as the public model of excellence, leadership, and partnership in human services driving superior outcomes for our community.

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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](mailto:kimberly.kane@milwaukeecountywi.gov)