

Department of Health of Human Services

2016 - QUARTER 1 NEWSLETTER



Note from the Department Director

Friends of DHHS,

I hope you are having a great start to the year! At the Department of Health and Human Services, we have started the year strong and are excited to share more with you about the great work we are doing through this edition of our community e-newsletter.

Every day, our teams at the Behavioral Health Division, Housing Division, Disabilities Services Division, Delinquency and Court Services Division, and Management Services Division work with our contractors and partner organizations to enhance the quality of life for individuals who need support living healthy, independent and safe lives within our community.



*Héctor Colón, MS, OT, Director
Department of Health & Human Services*

Together, we have made an incredible impact on our community, improving thousands of lives. I am humbled and grateful to work with such dedicated staff, partners and community members on this innovative, data-driven and person-centered work.

I'm proud to share what we been working on as a department the past few months:

Strategic Planning: As an organization, we are continually looking for ways to better improve our internal operations as we know this affects the outcomes for those we serve. Our strategic plan we launched last year has been and will continue to be a driving force for improvement this year and beyond.

As part of these efforts earlier this year we asked all of our staff to take an employee survey to focus on our Workforce Investment and Engagement goal. 60 percent of our staff shared feedback on where we, as an organization, could make improvements. I am proud to say that we are now using these results in work groups, motivating each other to research, plan and act on making improvements in specific areas of "trust & communication," as well as "growth and development" and "recognition."

Do The Right Thing: One example of how we are putting our strategic planning recommendations into action is through the creation of a new values program called "Do The Right Thing." This is an employee engagement program will build morale, trust and an enthusiastic culture across the Department of Health and Human Services by empowering employees to live the DHHS values and recognize them for doing the right thing as they fulfill the work they are called to do. *Watch our short video below to learn more about this program.*

Community Impact Report: We've compiled an update from each of our divisions, including some great stories of those impacted by our work to share with you! Stay tuned for more division updates and information that will be released in our 2015 Report to the Community in the coming weeks. Consider this newsletter a sneak peak of some of our report's highlights!

With all the work being done, I want to again thank you for your support of DHHS. We know that with your partnership, we are creating positive outcomes for our community.

I hope you enjoy our new e-newsletter format and I look forward to sharing more success stories and exciting updates with you in the months to come.

Thank you,

Héctor Colón, MS, OT
Director
Department of Health & Human Services



Watch the video to learn more about
our Values program!

Division Updates

Behavioral Health Division Long Term Care Closure



Cory Wells hugs mom, Elizabeth and dad, Dan after he wins their card game at kitchen table in his new home.

Cory Wells came to Hilltop in the summer of 2008. Diagnosed with Klinefelter's syndrome and bipolar disorder, Cory had struggled for years. He'd been in and out of several institutional settings. When Cory came to BHD, his father Dan says, he received good 1:1 care.

"Cory liked the attention he got," says Dan. "He took to behaviors that would get him back into the hospital."

But Cory got sick a lot in the institutional setting and frequently had pneumonia. When Cory was healthy enough to move, his new care team from

Background

Milwaukee County's commitment to individuals with chronic mental illness began more than 100 years ago with a hospital facility designed for more than 3,000 people. The current complex was built in the late 1960s with 900,000 square feet and 900 patient rooms.

"Back then, people were expected to come here and live out their lives," said former BHD Administrator Patricia Schroeder. "That was the philosophy that guided mental health care at the time."

Community Care, Inc. worked closely with the BHD team and his new group home to make the move a smooth one. Today, his caregiver at CCI says Cory is thriving.

“Cory is surrounded by professionals who care about him, understand his support needs and his goals,” she says. “Along with the team and the behavioral health coordinator at CCI we assist in on-going management of his changing behavioral and health needs. Cory is very clever and always finds a way to let us know what he needs.”

On Friday, January 11, 2016 the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division quietly ushered in the end of an era. Four individuals living at Rehab Central, the final long term care unit at the Mental Health Complex, left for their new homes in the community. This transition to community based care ended more than a century of long term care for people with chronic mental illness on the Milwaukee County grounds.

“The vision and commitment of countless people around the state made this possible,” notes Department of Health and Human Services Director Héctor Colón. “Our staff worked with advocates, providers, community leaders, people with lived experience, our own patients and so many others to develop thoughtful transition plans for these individuals, plans that will guide their recovery in less restrictive settings and respect their dignity.”

This transition is especially meaningful for Nursing Home Administrator Laurie Heinonen and her team. Heinonen oversaw the final phases of transition process.

“Rehab Central was home to the residents who lived here. The staff were family,” she said. “Making this process smooth took hard work, but I’m proud of our team and thankful for everyone, including our community providers, who supported us.”

Rehab Central is the second of two long-term care units at the Behavioral Health Division to wind down operations in two years. Hilltop closed early in 2015 after transitioning more than 130 individuals into group homes, CBRFs, and even their own apartments in the community. Rehab Central was home to 128 residents in January 2015. For the first time in more than 40 years, both units are now empty.

“Cory’s is just one of many stories that demonstrate the importance of the transformation of Milwaukee’s behavioral healthcare system,” says Director Colón. “We know care delivered in the least restrictive setting is the right thing for these individuals.”

Compassion and commitment are central to the way Laurie Heinonen and her team work. She reflects on the past for only a short time, and then she looks to the future. She and her caregivers still have very important work to do as BHD serves patients with acute needs and expands its supportive network across the community.

Today, the philosophy, evidence and laws are very different. The federal Olmstead Act passed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1999 requires care for the disabled to be delivered in the least restrictive setting. In 2007, the [World Health Organization](#) urged countries around the globe to provide “a network of community based mental health services” to create greater access and provide better care. (Sexana, 2007) Milwaukee County began the redesign of its mental health system in 2011 with the creation of the Mental Health Task Force and its years-long work that resulted in [multiple recommendations](#) still being implemented today. Those recommendations include reducing reliance on acute mental health services, reducing admissions to BHD and strengthening Milwaukee County’s community based network of care. Early in 2013, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele announced the County was ready to put plans in place to move all long-term care residents at the Mental Health Complex into community settings.

During his state of the county speech that year, he shared, “We will move as quickly as possible, with our many partners in the community ... so that people with mental health issues can live close to their families and friends with a person-centered, recovery-oriented approach to their wellness.”

Schroeder said the process was comprehensive and collaborative, with a transition team that included BHD staff, social workers, attorneys, law enforcement, advocates and others meeting twice per month for nearly two years to develop thoughtful, individualized transition plan for each resident. The team designed these plans around each resident’s needs, recovery goals and all laws. Innovative strategies led by BHD staff continue to monitor the progress of residents in community settings today.

“One of the strategies employed was the creation of the Community Consultation Team (CCT) comprised of staff who worked on Hilltop,” noted Schroeder. “Psychologist Dr. Gary Stark took the lead. This group is essentially the mobile crisis team for those with developmental disabilities, going out into the community to support individuals and try to intervene prior to a potential return to the hospital. I’m extremely proud of our employees. Think about it, we are moving from a system that focused on institutional care for more than 100 years to a system that delivers care, emphasizes awareness and supports prevention in the community. There is still much work to do, but we have an impressive team working to achieve many milestones.”

References: Saxana, Shekhar. (2007, June). Community Mental Health Services Will Lessen Social Exclusion, Says WHO. World Health Organization. Retrieved from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2007/np25/en/>

For more news on the Behavioral Health Division's long term care (and Cory), check out our FRONT PAGE article in the Journal Sentinel

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BizTimes covers Behavioral Health Division



Extra, extra, read all about it! Take a peak at this month's BizTimes' cover story, "**Milwaukee County's mental health system gets a dramatic overhaul.**" Things are changing at BHD and we're excited to highlight our employees' hard work and share more with you about our community-wide movement towards community-based care for those we serve.

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Delinquency and Court Services Division Leadership Transition



Tom Wanta has retired after 40 years of service to Milwaukee County

Farewell to a Great Leader...

On March 11, 2016 we celebrated the career of Division Administrator, B. Thomas Wanta as he retired after 40 years of service to Milwaukee County.

During his career with Milwaukee County, Tom worked in a variety of capacities including Human Service Worker, Children's Probation Officer, Intake Supervisor, Administrative Coordinator and Superintendent of Detention where he served for over 22 years.

Tom has been the recipient of many distinguished recognition and was most recently awarded the Norman N. Gill Award for Individual Excellence from the Public Policy Forum. He has also been instrumental in the Division's move to a data driven, evidence based, trauma informed system.

Under Tom's leadership the department has implemented several innovative programs and services for thousands of youth and families in Milwaukee County.

Tom's work has impacted thousands of lives. We will miss Tom's leadership, vision, determination



Mark Mertens joins the DCSD team as the new administrator!

and courage, but know he leaves a legacy that will not be forgotten. He has also created a tremendous foundation to build even more positive outcomes for the youth we serve at DCSD.

Tom will continue to be a part of the DCSD team, acting in a consulting role through the next few months.

Welcoming a New Leader...

Last week, the division welcomed a new administrator, Mark Mertens to lead the team.

Mark joins us after eleven years as Manager of the Outagamie County Youth and Family Services Division. He has been nationally recognized for his work, has led initiatives to reduce the use of detention for youth in his county and has been responsible for integrating various programs. We are glad to have Mark aboard!

Delinquency and Court Services Division Power of Harambee Youth Employment Collaborative

Rothel is a 17-year-old student at Bradley Tech High School, pursuing dreams of becoming a businessman. But it hasn't always been like this for Rothel. Rothel was a troublemaker. He committed several crimes, including "driving without owner's consent," "armed robbery," and "party to a crime." The Delinquency and Court Services Detention Center is where he first learned that this path was not set for him and that he controlled his next actions and in turn, his future.

Through this experience, Rothel was introduced to several organizations and people that motivated him to get started on a path to a positive future.



Milwaukee County Accountability Program (MCAP) - Rothel's Judge offered him a spot in the MCAP program as an alternative to attending the Lincoln Hills detention facility. This program provided support and guidance and taught Rothel how to take responsibility for his actions and his life. With a smile, he describes his mentors from the program with a sense of pride and family.

"They care about me. Derron worked with me one-on-one to change my mind, getting me to look at the bigger picture and make a life plan. You have purpose if you can see a bigger picture."

Virtual Academy - Through partnership with the Wauwatosa School District, Rothel was able to attend virtual classes during probation. He learned he has a love for math, science and history, especially economics and geometry. He plans to apply this knowledge to owning his own business some day. First, he plans to attend college, likely at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, and may even want to get involved on the basketball team.

Power of Harambee Program - This program is an employment readiness program developed in collaboration with DCSD to provide curriculum on professional development, financial literacy and building communication skills before placing youth in employment at McDonald's. Through this program Rothel was able to get hands-on job training, learned how to budget, and even got his bank cards. Now, he's a crew member at McDonald's and is excited to learn more about the world of business.

Running Rebels - Running Rebels Community Organization provides programming for high risk youth, including mentoring, tutoring, anger management, daily living skills, an after-school and summer Safe and Sounds program and more. Rothel enjoyed participating in the recreation programs, meeting new friends

through basketball. He is appreciative for this alternate option to stay out of trouble.

Rothel is set to continue on a positive path and is looking forward to graduating this spring and starting his journey to accomplish his dreams out in the world. Now he understands the alternative of instead being confined to a jail cell for years of his life.

"I'm just happy. I could have been somewhere else, but instead I'm here."

Housing Division Ending Chronic Homelessness

The biggest need for a homeless person is housing. At DHHS, our Housing Division has been hard at work providing outreach and partnering with landlords to finding permanent housing for 64 individuals in just 75 days as part of a County-wide ending chronic homelessness initiative. One of the approximate 300 chronically homeless people in the county experiencing the benefits of this program is John "Grizzly" Affayroux.



Grizzly outside his new apartment, his home.
[Photo courtesy of Fusion.net](http://www.fusion.net)

Grizzly had been homeless for 24 years when he learned about Milwaukee's Housing First model, which follows similar efforts to that of Salt Lake City and Seattle. These models are supported by [research](#) that shows providing permanent housing to the homeless is the most effective way to keep people safe and supported, while saving the county money by decreasing emergency services and health-related care related to the homeless population.

Grizzly is most excited to have a kitchen where he can stock his food - and save any leftovers.

Grizzly had lost his job, began living under bridges and developed alcoholism. Now, he says this program is giving him a second chance. Case managers worked with Grizzly to find him a place of his own and continue to help him navigate everything from how to do laundry and fixing a clogged toilet, to dealing with his neighbors.



Grizzly takes pride in his wall décor and new TV!
[Photo courtesy of Fusion.net](http://www.fusion.net)

Case managers also will assist Grizzly, as well as others in the program, with applying for benefits and finding the right individualized treatments and services to confront the underlying issues of why they initially become homeless. When we provide resources for people like Grizzly to live quality lives, we give them the opportunity to be contributing members of our community.

To learn more about this initiative, or to get involved, visit www.Housingfirstmilwaukee.com.



For more news on the Housing Division's Ending Chronic Homelessness initiative, check out our recent story on TMJ4!

Watch the newscast

It costs the County \$35 per person per day for this program - minimal compared to costs that may otherwise be spent in prison, law enforcement or emergency rooms dealing with issues that arise with homeless individuals.

Housing Division - Wisconsin's First New Harm Reduction Housing Development

Milwaukee County, Cardinal Capital Management, Inc. and Wisconsin Community Services announced a significant new development in efforts to end chronic homelessness in Milwaukee County. Financing in the amount of \$4.85 million has been closed on for the construction of **Thurgood Marshall Apartments**.

"Less than a year ago, we made a pledge to end chronic homelessness in Milwaukee County. This is just the latest development in the County's significant progress toward meeting that goal. The Thurgood Marshall Apartments will make it possible for us to provide safe housing for people who have no place to call home," says Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. "These are our most vulnerable, homeless citizens who need a safe place to begin their recovery."

Milwaukee County, the City of Milwaukee and multiple community partners launched Milwaukee County's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, a Housing First approach to homelessness, in the summer of 2015 with the goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2018. Housing First is based on the idea that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable permanent housing, only then can they find stability and begin rebuilding their life.

The **Thurgood Marshall Apartments** will be located at North 6th Street and provide 24 one-bedroom units of permanent, supportive housing for low-income adults who are chronically homeless and suffer from chronic alcoholism. Wisconsin Community Services will provide on-site social service support seven days per week, 24 hours per day. The supportive housing combined with support services is a harm reduction strategy that reduces the risks and harmful effects of substance use and guides an individual's recovery.

A Milwaukee County Innovation Grant in the amount of \$500,000, a City of Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund award in the amount of \$385,000 and \$300,000 from the Milwaukee County Housing Division for services were leveraged along with \$2.75 million in low-income housing tax credits awarded by WHEDA and purchased by PNC Bank, and a \$1.2 million construction loan with First Business Bank to create this innovative and important way to show that Housing First works in Milwaukee.

"We know that safe housing is a path to stability and recovery," says Erich Schwenker, President of Cardinal Capital Management. "We're proud to see our community commit to ending chronic homelessness by addressing the most pressing needs of this population, and our team is proud to be a partner in this work."

Other partners in this effort include the Halyard Park Neighborhood Association, Milwaukee 6th District Alderwoman Milele Coggs, Milwaukee County Supervisor Willie Johnson, Housing and Urban Development, the Milwaukee County Housing Division, the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division and many others.

Construction on the Thurgood Marshall Apartments has begun. A groundbreaking recognition event is being planned for the spring. The development is expected to open in October of 2016.

Disabilities Service Division - Employment Summit

The Disabilities Services Division has been busy increasing opportunities for young adults (age 17 to 24) to obtain meaningful employment. Its goal is to provide every exiting high school student in Milwaukee County with a disability who comes to DSD and wants a job, with the opportunity to get one. To date, we have made great progress towards achieving this by 2018! Take a look!

Collaboration and Coordination of Efforts

- Formed Employment Steering Committee to oversee employment initiative (with system representatives from DSD, DVR, school districts, Social Security)
- Subgroup to focus on system's coordination on data collection and review, service outcomes, gaps, staff coordination and best practices
- Disability Solutions Collaborative works with employers around challenges for people with disabilities
- Discussion with work centers about efforts to provide more opportunities for integrated and competitive employment programming in the community (consistent with new federal initiatives)

Outreach Initiatives/Activities (e.g. school personnel, students, parents)

- 47 events in 2015, reaching over 1,300 individuals

Employment Summits

- Coordinateresources to maximize competitive employment (by April 2016)
- Employerssummit to discuss barriers and challenges (e.g. benefits and litigation)

Reviewand Enhance Internal Processes within DSD

- Identifychangesin referral process or case management services to enhance focus on employmentsupports/ transition planning needs
- Developscreening questions and methods to ascertain interest by young adults alreadyparticipating in DSD programs (Children’s Waiver, Information and Assistance)
- Discussemployment options with new individuals (youth age 18-24 and referrals from Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare) coming to DSD
- Enhancefollow-up with persons in transition age group deemed ineligible for long-term support services
- Developand provide specific materials about employment and local support services
- Developand provide educational sessions on impact of employment on benefits

DevelopContracts

- Jobplacement and retention
- Jobcoaches
- Soft skillstraining
- Workbenefit trainings

Investigatefederal legislation that may be supportive of these efforts

DSD will be hosting an employment summit to support this initiative to provide people with disabilities with occupation options post-graduation. The Summit will be held on Friday, April 8 from 9 - 3:30 p.m. at Serb Hall. Milwaukee Public Schools, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Department of Workforce Development (DWD), and the State will all be participating in the Summit.

Disabilities Services Division - Disabilities Benefit Specialist



Ana spent much time as a young adult in and out of the hospital - she was weak, her vision was blurred, and she experienced spasms in her muscles to a point where some of her body would be paralyzed at times. While doctors tried to diagnose her mysterious symptoms, she felt she was without a support system living in Puerto Rico, miles away from her family who relocated to the United States.

When her symptoms worsened, Ana's sister moved her and her children to the United States for better care. Ana's sister took her to see a medical specialist, who diagnosed her with Devic's disease, a immunological disorder often confused with multiple sclerosis due to similar effects on the body.

Then, her treatment began. At Aurora Sinai Medical Center, she was referred to in-home care. However, coming from Puerto Rico, speaking no English, Ana had difficulties obtaining the help she needed for her and her children (nine-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son) to live a quality life.

One day Ana's rehab nurses told her about the County's disability program and how she could receive support. She was connected with Maritza, a disability benefit specialist (and fluent in Spanish!) who became

her biggest advocate, helping her obtain the benefits she needed.

Maritza educated Ana on the public services available to her. She ensured Ana received Social Security Insurance. She helped her fill out medical forms and communicate with her doctor about treatment. On days when Ana was wheelchair bound, Maritza helped accompany her to appointments.

Martiza gave Ana choices to allow her function at her full capacity so her family could lead the highest quality life possible.

"Maritza did everything for me - I am so appreciative," said Ana.

If you or a loved one could benefit from the DSD disability benefits program, connect with our [Resource Center](#).

Around Town



Energy Assistance

The Energy Assistance Program provides qualified Milwaukee County residents with a one-time annual payment to make energy (heating and electric) bills more affordable.

This year, we made it easier than ever for qualified residents to apply! DHHS partnered with Community Advocates and UMOS to offer residents a number of convenient ways to apply for the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as WHEAP. WHEAP is a state program that is administered in Milwaukee County by DHHS. It provides a one-time payment for eligible residents, covering a portion of their energy costs.

This year, residents should know:

Application sites have changed

The former sites are closed and have been replaced by more locations across Milwaukee County.

No long lines

Residents don't have to wait in line on October 1 to apply.

Appointments that fit your schedule

Residents can make appointments anytime between October 1, 2015 and May 15, 2016.

Residents can schedule these appointments by calling 414-270-4-MKE, or going online to www.energyassistancemke.org.



Watch our video on how to apply!

Light & Unite RED



Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division in partnership with Milwaukee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition took a lead role with public health departments, drug-free coalitions and other organizations to implement the Light and Unite Red Campaign earlier this year. The purpose of the campaign was to put a spotlight on the dangers of drug abuse and to unite the community to engage in prevention, encourage treatment and support recovery.

To assist participating organizations, Milwaukee County BHD provided drug fact sheets, school fact sheets, school morning announcements, banners, Facebook posts, Twitter feeds, and video news releases for use by TV stations and community channels. The videos spotlighted community partners and BHD psychiatrists and psychologists Dr. Steve Dykstra, Dr. Tony Thrasher, Dr. Matt Drymalski, Dr. Kelly Duggan, and Dr. Shane Moiso.

[WATCH ALL VIDEOS HERE!](#)

Other News



Healthy Communities

This month, President Barack Obama traveled to Milwaukee to celebrate our city's victory in the Healthy Communities Challenge, a competition to increase the number of Americans with health insurance during the latest open enrollment period.

Be Well Expo

Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services Director Hector Colon participated in a day of wellness at the [My24Milwaukee](#) and [Super18TV](#) Be Well Expo in January!

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Wellness Weekend

Congratulations to 2015 BizTimes Healthcare Heroes, **Mary Neubauer**, member our Mental Health Board and **John Chianelli**, former BHD Administrator and current Executive Director, MCFI's Whole Health Clinical Group.



Disabilities Services Division

Does your child have a disability? Let our Disabilities Service Division help connect you with resources to enable your child to lead the highest quality life possible. Call 414-289-6799 to speak with us.

If you are an adult with a disability and would like information and assistance, contact the Disability Resource Center at 414-289-6660.

<https://milwoodsd.assistguide.net>

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