



Background on Milwaukee County's Psychiatric Hospital

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, the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex, opened in 1978 with 900,000 square feet and 900 patient rooms.

The philosophy, evidence and laws regarding care for those with mental illness are changing, and so are globally recognized best practices. The federal Olmstead Act passed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1999 requires care for people with disabilities to be delivered in the least restrictive setting. In 2007, the World Health Organization¹ 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 recommendations² still being implemented today. Those recommendations included reducing reliance on acute mental health services, reducing admissions to BHD and strengthening Milwaukee County's community-based network of care.

This plan included:

- Moving oversight of BHD to the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board, a governing body composed of mental health professionals and individuals with lived experience appointed to oversee BHD;
- Closing BHD's two long-term care units and transitioning residents into a broader network of community based settings;
- Expansion of community-based services that focus on prevention and treatment in the least restrictive, trauma-informed way;
- Redesign of crisis services to decrease over-reliance on emergency room visits that can be traumatic;
- Transitioning acute psychiatric inpatient care to a provider who would build a new psychiatric hospital in Milwaukee County.

In 2015, the Mental Health Board launched a process to identify an inpatient-care provider. The process was led by the Joint Task Force of the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board, a committee comprised of members of the Mental Health Board, Milwaukee County and BHD administration, community mental health leaders and individuals with lived experience. Through a comprehensive and public process, the Joint Task Force evaluated two national providers, conducting site visits and significant due diligence. A Milwaukee-based coalition expressed interest in the opportunity in spring of 2017, but withdrew that fall. In summer of 2018, the Joint Task Force recommended the board negotiate exclusively with Universal Health Services (UHS). The due diligence process from there was highly collaborative and included all key stakeholders.

On Sept. 26, 2018, the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board approved a contract with UHS to become the primary recovery facility for individuals requiring acute mental healthcare. The new hospital represents

¹ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2007/np25/en/>

² <http://county.milwaukee.gov/MHRedesign.htm>



a short-term stabilization strategy, while long-term care will be offered through community-based partners. In addition, the new hospital will offer an additional 50 beds for patients with acute psychiatric needs.

Background on Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division

The Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD) is the community's connection point to vital, high-quality behavioral health care. A division of the County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), BHD empowers safe, healthy and meaningful lives through connections that support recovery. BHD ensures that everyone gets connected to excellent behavioral health care, no matter the severity of need or ability to pay.

BHD has a responsibility to provide crisis services to those in need. Milwaukee County's vision is to not only provide high-quality safety net services, but to do so in a way that creates opportunities for individuals to lead independent and healthy lives.

Today, BHD operates an acute adult inpatient psychiatric hospital that had and child and adolescent inpatient services (CAIS) that served 1,000 unique individuals in 2017, the region's only emergency psychiatric department which served almost 5,000 unique individuals in 2017 with more than 8,000 visits, and a growing number of community-based programs and services.

Using best practices from the social service sector, BHD collaborates with community partners to provide personalized services that are integrated, trauma-informed, evidence-based and drive positive outcomes. Through BHD, the community has access to the largest network of behavioral health providers in the state focused in five key areas that include prevention, access, treatment, care management and recovery support services.

BHD provides care and treatment to adults, adolescents and children with mental illness, substance abuse disorders and co-occurring illnesses through crisis services, community-based services, hospital services, and child and adolescent services. It works to break down the barrier of stigma so individuals access prevention, treatment and recovery services.