

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-office Memorandum

DATE: January 7, 2013

TO: Marina Dimitrijevic, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Héctor Colón, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Prepared by James Mathy, Administrator, Housing Division

SUBJECT: Report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, Requesting Authorization for the Housing Division to Enter into a Purchase of Service Contract with Milwaukee Center for Independence (MCFI) for \$500,000 to provide supportive services for the Pathways to Permanent Housing program

Issue

Section 46.09 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances requires County Board approval for the purchase of human services from nongovernmental vendors. Per Section 46.09, the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is requesting authorization for the Housing Division to enter into a purchase of service (POS) contract with Milwaukee Center for Independence (MCFI) for \$500,000 to provide supportive services for the Pathways to Permanent Housing program. This program will assist individuals with transitioning into permanent housing from Community Based Residential Facilities (CBRF) and those who are homeless and in need of service linkages. The program will be able to operate starting in March 2013.

Discussion

The structure and function of the Pathways to Permanent Housing program represents a new direction for transitional housing within the Department of Health and Human Services. Pathways will not function simply as a housing facility. Rather, through intensive care management and the presence of a robust level of peer specialist resources and expertise, residents will be assisted from the day of their arrival to move through the transitional housing setting into safe, affordable and permanent housing.

The recommendation for the Pathways to Permanent Housing program came out of the Community Linkages Committee of the Mental Health Redesign effort. Community Linkages looked at the HSRI recommendation of transitioning individuals from CBRFs into less restrictive settings and continuing to expand Milwaukee County's permanent supportive housing supply. The goal of the Pathways program is to offer consumers an additional transitional housing choice that does not currently exist in the Milwaukee County system. For those currently living in a CBRF, this would be a housing option for consumers where they could save a considerable amount of their own funds while working on goals from day one to move into permanent supportive housing. Currently, individuals living in CBRFs supported by Milwaukee County must contribute a majority of their SSI income for their living expenses. The fees for the Pathways program will be \$375, which is approximately half of what consumers living in CBRFs currently pay. This amount will include all rent and meals.

In order to ensure a safe and successful transition for consumers as they move from a CBRF to a more independent setting, person-centered decision making will be the foundation of this transition. Participation is strictly voluntary and all consumers have the final decision in his or her transition plan.

The current utilization review (U/R) team for the CBRFs meets every six months to review comprehensive individual service plans. This meeting will now include assessing a consumer's readiness to transition from a CBRF to a more independent setting. The U/R team currently consists of representatives from the CBRFs, SAIL staff, Division of Housing staff and some of the Community Support Program staff. The Behavioral Health Division (BHD) and Division of Housing are recommending adding a representative from Disability Rights Wisconsin to the U/R panel to actively participate in the discussion on the transition from CBRF to a more independent setting. Consumers can voice their desire to transition to a more independent setting to their CBRF resident care staff or case manager. In addition, the resident care staff or case manager can also recommend to the U/R panel consumers that may benefit from a more independent living setting. When appropriate, coordination with the client's legal representative will occur acknowledging their involvement in, understanding of, and agreement with the transition plan. At a minimum, consumers will have six months from last hospitalization and have shown increased independence in their activities of daily living as documented on his or her individual service plan.

All consumers considering participation in the transition from a CBRF to a more independent setting will be offered a tour of the proposed Pathways program and have an opportunity to meet the staff, ask questions and air concerns prior to the move. All consumers will also be offered a partial transition or trial period at Pathways to ensure a gradual transition based on the consumer's need to establish a successful placement. During the partial transition all clients will be connected with a certified peer specialist (CPS) to use as a support. CPS' will also be on-site at Pathways.

The comprehensive individual service plan created at the CBRF will follow the client to Pathways. The plan, however, will be further developed based on activities that are available at Pathways to strengthen activities of daily living, education, employment and include a plan for further independence. For consumers requiring assistance with medication management, coordination with community case management and/or nursing agencies linkages with organizations such as Affiliated Home Health and Visiting Nurses Association will occur. Clients also requiring additional rehabilitation services will be connected to Column Rehab Services, a vendor through BHD.

The length of stay at Pathways will be based on consumer need. Consumers who do transition to Pathways will be reviewed by the U/R panel to allow for continuity of residential care and for adjustments in intensity as needed. Consumers that may have difficulty transitioning from the CBRF to Pathways will be allowed to return to the CBRF; and, for clients that have shown success at Pathways will have activities in place to allow for a more independent placement.

Pathways will also have the ability to serve individuals who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. For those without the ability to pay, the Housing Division will secure funds to assist. Another major initiative through the Community Linkages Committee was the recommendation of a new Community Intervention Specialist position in the Housing Division. This position will assist the Milwaukee County Jail, homeless shelters and the private hospital system with discharge planning into appropriate housing options. The Pathways program will be a significant resource for individuals who are discharged without a proper housing plan.

Pathways will be operated at the previous location of Community Advocates Autumn West and Milwaukee County's Transitional Housing Program. This building is owned by the Council for the Spanish Speaking and has been a great provider of housing for consumers. The building can house 27 program participants.

MCFI was chosen for this purchase of service contract through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process. MCFI has been in existence since 1938. The organization focuses its efforts and resources on its mission: to assist individuals and families facing barriers to their success due to disabilities to reach their highest levels of independence in the community. MCFI now touches the lives of more than 50,000 families each year with an array of programs addressing all disabilities across the lifespan, including effective early intervention, education, therapies, employment services, long-term care, financial services and behavioral health programs, providing pathways to dignity and self-sufficiency. MCFI's programs have been used as a model by service providers across the country, and the agency has just received renewed three-year accreditation from the Commission for the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The agency collaborates actively with other community agencies and resources, and works closely with academic institutions and health care providers to identify more effective methods of treatment and, ultimately, to reduce the costs of, and the need for, long-term care.

MCFI has experience as a CBRF provider and as a provider of permanent supportive housing making them an ideal service partner for the Pathways Program. MCFI will also be partnering with Our Space to provide on-site peer support services. Our space has been a main provider of peer support services in supportive housing since the Housing Division was created in 2008.

Staff will be present on-site 24 hours a day. Program staff will include an Operations Manager, Case Coordinator, a Lead Peer Specialist, several peer specialists and resident managers. MCFI staff will immediately begin to work with each resident to identify their personal strengths and goals. These goals may be employment, development of independent living skills and personal recovery goals that will ultimately help them to achieve stable and permanent housing. Services that are not directly available on-site will be accessed through referrals. Staff will work with each resident, facility staff, case managers and peer specialists to identify and set up these services. Vocational skills and referrals for benefits counseling will also be critical to the success of Pathways, as residents will need to achieve sufficient income or employment to attain a permanent rental or other stable housing situation.

Funding for the Pathways program will come from rental income from occupants, funds previously dedicated to the Transitional Housing Program and BHD funds previously used for CBRF beds. Approximately ten individuals will be targeted to transition out of a BHD funded CBRF slot. The CBRF providers can then fill those ten vacancies with individuals enrolled in Family Care.

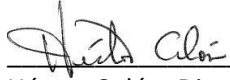
Recommendation

It is recommended that the County Board of Supervisors authorize the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, or designee, to enter into purchase of service contract with Milwaukee Center for Independence (MCFI) for \$500,000 to provide supportive services for the Pathways to Permanent Housing program for the time frame of March 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013.

Fiscal Effect

Through rental income and the transfer of CBRF and Transitional Housing Program funds, there are sufficient funds to support the Pathways to Permanent Housing program beginning in March 2013. A fiscal note form is attached.

Respectfully Submitted,



Héctor Colón, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

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