


**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
**Interoffice Memorandum**

DATE: October 10, 2012

TO: Supervisor Peggy Romo West, Chair, Committee on Health and Human Needs

FROM: Jennifer Collins, County Board Research Analyst 

**SUBJECT: Staff referral of File No. 12-709, Professional Services Contract with the Planning Council for Health and Human Services for the Behavioral Health Division**

Background

At the September 19, 2012, meeting of the Committee on Health and Human Needs, the committee reviewed a proposal from the Department of Health and Human Services-Behavioral Health Division (BHD) requesting authorization to execute a professional services contract with the Planning Council for Health and Human Services allocating the remaining \$1,114,296 of the over \$3 million budgeted in 2012 for the Mental Health Redesign and Community Resource Investment so that the Planning Council could manage the distribution of the funds.

The committee referred the item to Department of Health and Human Services and County Board staff, requesting assistance in determining whether the proposed is the best way to spend the \$1.1 million by providing more information on specific initiatives, including viability/sustainability of programming. The committee also asked DHHS staff to renegotiate the fiscal administration fee proposed to be paid to the Planning Council so that more funding can be spent on patient care initiatives.

As stated in the accompanying report, BHD revised their initial list of priority projects to provide a bit more detail, and directly tie funding initiatives back to recommendations contained in the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) study and Mental Health Redesign and Implementation Task Force's January 2012 report. Additionally, \$400,000 in funding is directed to the expansion of case management services—this is a new proposal, and was not submitted in the original report. The suggested substitute resolution submitted by BHD includes language stating that the County Board will review and approve projects, vendors, and allocations prior to the release of any funding. Finally, the department negotiated a new administrative fee structure for the Planning Council to allow more funding to go directly to programs and services.

The following analysis is intended to respond the questions directed by committee members to County Board staff.

## Analysis

### *Project Review*

Committee members had asked staff to review the list of projects to assist policymakers in determining whether the proposed projects were both viable and sustainable. Defining viable as “capable of working successfully” and sustainable as “able to be maintained at a certain rate or level,” County Board staff believes the recommended projects have the ability to be both viable and sustainable in the near term.

Project viability can be predicted by looking to see whether a similar program or service is already up and running and whether there are agencies and vendors in the area currently providing similar programs and services. Most of the projects listed (particularly supportive housing and case management) expand upon efforts already underway at the department. The other projects presented either seek to enhance current programs (peer support), tweak existing models (step-down housing), or build upon programs which have been successfully implemented for other target populations in the community (employment placement and support). In all cases, County Board staff believes there are already current models on which the proposed programs and services can build upon.

Some initial indicators of whether a program or service will be sustainable might be whether it has a stable funding source and/or whether there are possibilities for additional funding sources (outside of relying solely on property tax levy). According to the report, there is adequate funding remaining in the 2012 Adopted Budget to support the initiatives in the near term. The County Board adopted File No. 12-575, allowing Milwaukee County to be added to the State of Wisconsin-Department of Health Services Medicaid State Plan Amendment for Community Recovery Services in July, 2012. According to that resolution, Community Recovery Services funding would add funding for a service array that does not currently exist in Milwaukee County, including supportive employment, community living supportive services, and using peers as providers. Funding sources like this could help sustain the proposed programs and services.

### *Performance Measures*

Though the analysis is subjective, the “viability/sustainability” evaluation discussed above is intended to respond to the question posed by committee members at the September meeting. County Board staff understands that there is an action team of the Mental Health Redesign and Implementation Task Force whose work focuses on the development of quality measurements. As the action team’s work continues, their recommendations should help to provide policymakers with more evidence-based evaluations of program performance.

In the near term, it would benefit policymakers to have a more clear mechanism for reporting mental health redesign to the County Board. County Board staff recommends that a single report format with some sort of visual tracker be consistently used to report redesign progress. For example, the Office of the Comptroller-Division of Audit has consistently used the same report format and chart to track the progress of audit

recommendations. The reports submitted to the committee on the electronic medical records project contained graphics showcasing project status including a bar highlighted to show the percentage of the project, which has been completed. Such a reporting mechanism would make it easier for policymakers to determine what has been achieved, and what remains to be done.

### *Funding Options*

Finally, policymakers requested that County Board staff review whether it would be possible to move funds into a trust fund for mental health. According to the State Statutes, monies that are not spent or encumbered prior to the end of the year lapse and are used to calculate the department and countywide surplus or deficit. In working with the Comptroller's office, staff was advised that the County cannot simply declare its own trust for these monies. When the County controls a trust, it is because another entity has put requirements on how the monies are to be used that the County is obligated to follow. Therefore, the only way to establish a trust in this case would require the County to transfer the monies to another entity and have a Memorandum of Agreement that spells out how the funds will be used.

Policymakers could also seek to have any surplus related to this initiative transferred to the debt service reserve at the end of the year, which could free up other tax levy to appropriate back to BHD in 2013. While this process would be permissible, it is more complicated, and could serve as an awkward precedent for other department surpluses.