

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: June 3, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: Report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an informational update on the Mental Health Emergency Center

File Type: Informational Report

BACKGROUND

In December 2020, the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) signed a letter of intent with four area health systems to create a new psychiatric emergency room to quickly assess and treat individuals in psychiatric distress. This new facility will reduce criminal justice system involvement for mentally ill, provide meaningful connections to community mental health services, and reduce potentially unnecessary psychiatric hospitalizations. The facility will serve all residents regardless of ability to pay. Revenues are not anticipated to fully cover costs of providing care. The private healthcare partners have agreed to subsidize 50 percent of the operational deficit with the remaining subsidy coming from Milwaukee County. This project represents an innovative public-private partnership aimed at providing high quality emergency mental health services in a location that is convenient and accessible.

UPDATE

The Mental Health Emergency Center (MHEC) opening has been delayed to September 2022 due to staffing challenges. Originally expected to open this spring, the opening has been delayed due to difficulties hiring psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses necessary to staff the facility. The operator of the facility, Advocate Aurora Health, has recently made progress on filling critical openings and is on track to meet the new opening date of September 6, 2022. Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) will continue to operate the psychiatric hospital and psychiatric emergency room at the mental health complex until both the MHEC and the Granite Hills hospital in West Allis achieve safe staffing levels.

FISCAL EFFECT

No anticipated variances from existing project budget. This item is informational only.

PREPARED BY:

Michael Lappen, Administrator, Behavioral Health Division

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain
Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Sup. Shawn Rolland, Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs, Strategic Planning Committee
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director – Comptroller's Office
Allyson Smith, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk
Pam Matthews, Budget Analyst – DAS
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller's Office