

# Milwaukee County Exec: Mental health board approves contract with Universal Health Services

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*New hospital for acute mental health care expected in two years*

**MILWAUKEE, Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2018** – Today the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board approved a contract with Universal Health Services (UHS) to become the provider of acute, inpatient mental health care for the service recipients of Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD). UHS will construct and operate a new, freestanding 120-bed inpatient mental health facility to provide inpatient behavioral health services for adolescents, adults and older adults in Milwaukee County.

“Milwaukee County’s mission around behavioral health is to give individuals the best possible opportunities toward leading empowered, safe and healthy lives,” said Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. “Engaging with a provider who can address the range of health needs for individuals who need these services is part of creating a strong safety net for those who need care, as well as building up community-based services that allow individuals to manage mental health and addiction while staying connected to their community. The agreement with UHS is a key step in the transformation that we’ve led at BHD in the past seven years, and I’m excited to continue to move forward.”

Milwaukee County's commitment to individuals with chronic mental health needs began more than 100 years ago with a hospital facility designed for more than 3,000 people. The Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex was built in 1978 with 900,000 square feet and 900 patient rooms. At the time, individuals with mental illness were expected to reside in the facility. In recent years, best practices in mental health care and related laws have changed. Collaborative reform efforts began nearly a decade ago when Milwaukee County started the redesign of its mental health system, moving to a community-based system of care that is less reliant on psychiatric inpatient admissions and emergency room visits.

The Milwaukee County Mental Health Board launched a Request for Proposal (RFP) process in 2015 to identify a provider to assume the acute, inpatient care. The public process included more than two years of due diligence, multiple site visits, and was led by a diverse committee that represents the board members, community advocates and individuals who received care.

"The decision is part of a significant change in approach in how we treat people seeking help for mental health concerns," said Mary Jo Meyers, director of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services. "The philosophy, evidence and laws regarding care for people with mental health needs are changing, and so are globally recognized best practices. We will be well-positioned to provide the up-to-date care that is needed to help support and serve people seeking help."

UHS will build the new, state-of-the-art acute mental health hospital in Milwaukee County over the next two years. The UHS facility will be an independent hospital open to all members of the community, including the individuals treated at BHD's inpatient hospital today.

"Exceptional inpatient mental health care plays an important role in an individual's recovery," said Michael Lappen, administrator for the Behavioral Health Division. "We welcome UHS to our community. As one of the leading providers of inpatient mental health care in the nation, UHS will introduce new best practices to our community, as well as increase the capacity of inpatient care so BHD can focus on community-based care."

BHD will continue to ensure everyone in Milwaukee County has access to high-quality, patient-centered behavioral health services - no matter their severity of illness or ability to pay.

### **About the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board**

The Milwaukee County Mental Health Board (MHB) was established in 2014 through Wisconsin Act 203. The board is made up of 12 members and includes mental health professionals, consumers and advocates. The MHB is responsible for setting policy for the Behavioral Health Division.

### **About the 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. BHD empowers safe, healthy and meaningful lives through connections that support recovery. BHD ensures that everyone gets connected to great behavioral health care, no matter their severity of need or ability to pay.

Through BHD, Milwaukee County residents have access to the largest network of behavioral health providers in the state. 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. For more information, visit [county.milwaukee.gov/BHD](http://county.milwaukee.gov/BHD).

### **About the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services**

The mission of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services is to enhance the quality of life for individuals who need support living healthy, independent, and safe lives within our community. Our vision is to be recognized as the public model of excellence, leadership and partnership in human services driving superior outcomes for our community.

### **About Universal Health Services**

One of the nation's largest and most respected hospital companies, Universal Health Services, Inc. (NYSE: UHS) has built an impressive record of achievement and performance. Our operating philosophy is as effective today as it was 40 years ago, enabling us to provide compassionate care to our patients and their loved ones: Build or acquire high quality hospitals in rapidly growing markets, invest in the people and equipment needed to allow each facility to thrive, and become the leading healthcare provider in each community we serve.

Headquartered in King of Prussia, PA, UHS has more than 83,000 employees and through its subsidiaries operates more than 326 inpatient acute care hospitals and behavioral health facilities, and 32 outpatient and other facilities in the United

States, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom.