

Dept. of Health Services: Winnebago Mental Health Institute Admissions Unit now serving patients

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Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary-designee Andrea Palm has officially [opened the new admissions unit at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh](#). The new unit is part of a series of investments being implemented this year across the state's mental health services system to ensure people have access to a full range of prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery support services.

"The admissions unit at Winnebago Mental Health Institutes provides a dedicated space to address the immediate needs of a new patient," Palm said. "It's another step toward achieving our vision of providing person-centered care to all patients. By separating the assessment and stabilization functions from other services provided by the hospital, staff now will be able to tailor the services in other units to create specialized therapeutic environments."

The admissions unit serves adult civil patients. Civil patients are admitted because county health and human services staff and law enforcement have found them to be dangerous to themselves or to others as the result of a mental health concern. When they arrive, they are frequently in a state of high distress and require the full-time attention of multiple staff members for at least the initial days of their stay. The admissions unit is designed to provide this short-term intensive treatment. If more care is needed after the patient is stable, they are moved to another unit for the remainder of their stay.

"Improving access to mental health is a priority for my administration," said Governor Evers. "These investments into our mental health system will help ensure

Wisconsinites have access to the full range of services to get the care they need when they need it.”

The 2019-2021 state budget included funding to hire staff for the admissions unit and to enhance community services designed to support people experiencing a mental health challenge.

“Thanks to past investments, and with new and continued investments promoted under the leadership of Governor Evers, we are developing a system of care that help ensure access to the right service at the right time in the right way,” Palm said. “We are working with our partners at all levels to help everyone live their best life.”

Investments in community services being implemented this year include:

- **Crisis intervention services.** County human services agencies are a key component of the state’s behavioral health system as one of the primary providers of services to both Medicaid and non-Medicaid individuals. Counties also have primary responsibility for responding to individuals in crisis. Our current system limits critical access, hampers coordination with the acute/primary and long-term care systems and puts financial strain on counties. To ease these challenges, the budget improved access to mental health treatment by providing \$13.3 million for the Medicaid Crisis Intervention benefit.
- **Youth crisis stabilization facilities.** DHS expects to issue one or more grants this spring to support the initial operations of a youth crisis stabilization facility. A youth crisis stabilization facility provides a place where people ages 17 and under can de-escalate from their mental health crisis, begin the healing process, and learn coping strategies to reduce the likelihood of future mental health crisis situations.
- **Peer-Run Respite Center for Veterans.** The budget provided \$1.8 million over the biennium to fully fund a peer-run respite center for veterans. This center will provide peer support services and hospital diversion services at no cost to veterans struggling with a mental health or substance use disorder.

Call 211 or [visit their website\(link is external\)](#) to learn about mental health services available near you.