

Dept. of Health Services: Wausau youth crisis stabilization facility now open

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A youth crisis stabilization facility is now open in Wausau, with start-up funding provided by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). The eight-bed facility operated by North Central Health Care serves young people with non-life-threatening mental health needs.

“Increasing access to mental health care for all Wisconsinites is a top priority of mine, but particularly when it comes to our kids,” said Gov. Evers. “This facility will help meet a critical need in caring for youth in this region of our state, and I’m proud to be investing in what’s best for our kids—especially after the unprecedented challenges they’ve endured over the last 18 months.”

Wisconsin youth crisis stabilization facilities provide supports and services in a residential setting of no more than eight beds at earlier stages of a mental health struggle before more intensive, costly, and restrictive interventions are required. Young people may stay for up to 30 days—though most stays are only a few days in length—to recover from their distress. The supports and services offered are tailored to the youth’s needs and may include therapy to help them develop coping skills and the development of a plan to access resources in their community to help them better navigate their world so they don’t need high levels of care in the future.

“We’re pleased to partner with North Central Health Care to bring this new mental health treatment option to northern Wisconsin,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “Youth crisis stabilization facilities provide help for today’s struggles and a direction for better well-being tomorrow and in the future.”

The North Central Health Care youth crisis stabilization facility is open to all youth ages 17 and under who live in Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, and Vilas counties. Stays for youth from Lincoln, Langlade, and Marathon counties are initiated through the [North Central Health Care Crisis Center\(link is external\)](#). Stays for youth from Forest, Oneida, and Vilas counties are initiated through the crisis and emergency service program of [The Human Service Center\(link is external\)](#).

The Wausau facility joins a facility in Milwaukee that opened last year as the only certified youth crisis stabilization facilities in Wisconsin. Operated by Wisconsin Community Services in partnership with Milwaukee County, the Milwaukee facility is two six-bed units in one building. Both units serve boys only ages 10 to 17. Stays for youth from Milwaukee County are initiated through [Wraparound Milwaukee\(link is external\)](#). Stays for youth from other counties are initiated through Wisconsin Community Services. The Milwaukee facility has served 77 youth since it opened in October 2020.

DHS regulates the operations of youth crisis stabilization facilities. Organizations interested in opening a youth crisis stabilization facility can visit the [youth crisis stabilization facilities page](#) on the DHS website to learn about the requirements and process to become a certified facility.

Youth crisis stabilization facilities are one part of an [ongoing transformation of Wisconsin's system of care for people experiencing a mental health crisis](#). The goal of this work is to build a structure of community services for these situations that is on par with systems for medical and public safety emergencies that connects people from the point of their difficulty to the level of care that's right for them—a true safety net that can serve everyone, everywhere, every time by providing someone to talk to, someone to respond, and a place to go. To achieve this goal, [DHS is investing more than \\$16 million of federal funding over the next four years from the American Rescue Plan Act](#) to improve statewide services for emergency mental health care, including funding allocated to counties and tribal nations to address the unique needs of their communities.