

Milwaukee County Exec David Crowley: Appointed to nationwide Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing

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MILWAUKEE, WI - Today, National Association of Counties (NACo) President Denise Winfrey announced the appointment of County Executive David Crowley to a new Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing. The group, featuring a total of 14 county leaders from across the nation, is tasked with leading the development of policy and programmatic recommendations at the federal, state, and local levels to address systemic issues contributing to the ever-growing mental health crisis.

“In 2021, nearly one in four U.S. adults and one in five adolescents experienced a mental illness,” **said NACo President Denise Winfrey.** “This commission understands the urgency of the moment. It’s made up of people who, in their own communities, are seeing the effects of the mental health crisis, and have an idea of where we need to start in order to address it.”

Over the last decade, Milwaukee County has worked with community leaders, health care industry leaders, and county residents to transform the county’s behavioral health system into a community-based model for behavioral health care. The goal of the redesign is to move away from inpatient and institutional care to create a community-based system that meets people where they are and emphasizing best practices like holistic and trauma informed care, stigma reduction and racial equity.

“Milwaukee County is reinventing the substance abuse and mental health treatment spectrum. Instead of centrally locating a mental health hospital, we are focused on

providing public-private partnerships that meet people where they are to ensure the best outcome for the greatest number of people,” **said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley.** “I look forward to bringing the lessons learned here to national discussion. While there are myriad factors that contribute to the epidemic of substance abuse and mental health issues, county governments can ensure that we bring resources to the doorstep of the community so that those struggling with mental health issues can know they don’t have to travel the road to recovery alone.”

Counties are well-positioned to lead action on the mental health crisis because counties play an integral role in local health, justice, and human services systems.

Direct mental health service delivery responsibilities are falling increasingly to America’s counties, which serve as the nation’s safety net for residents in need, act as first responders, operate crisis lines, and manage public hospitals and detention centers.

Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) has partnered with four Milwaukee community health centers (FQHCs) to co-locate crisis behavioral health services in high-risk neighborhoods for increased accessibility to higher-acuity services.

In early 2022, Granite Hills Hospital, the new inpatient behavioral health hospital, opened in West Allis. In August of last year, the new Mental Health Emergency Center on 1525 12th Street.

The Mental Health Emergency Center is a historic public-private partnership between Milwaukee County and the area’s four health systems. – Advocate Aurora Health, Ascension Wisconsin, Children’s Wisconsin and Froedtert Health.

In addition, over the last two budgets Milwaukee County has expanded crisis mobile services for children and adults, and Crisis Assessment Response Teams (CART) have brought psychiatric crisis services directly to people in the community.

These improvements have resulted in a 76% decrease in adult inpatient admissions, a 53.2% decrease in psychiatric crisis services visits, a 64.2% decrease in emergency detention visits to psychiatric crisis services.

For more information about NACo's Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing, click [here](#).