

Dept. of Administration: Visit highlights state investment to expand access to mental health services in Fond du Lac County

Posted on Thursday, May 25, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Ripon, Wis. – Today, Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary Kathy Blumenfeld visited with healthcare leaders from Fond du Lac County to discuss how state investments are helping to expand access to critical mental health services in the area.

Blumenfeld joined DeAnn Thurmer, SSM Health Ripon Community Hospital/SSM Health Waupun Memorial Hospital President, Nicole Gill, SSM Health Ripon Community Hospital/SSM Health Waupun Memorial Hospital VP of Patient Care & CNO, Amy Bayer, SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac Lead Psychotherapist, and other SSM Health staff and officials in a tour of the new mental health outpatient SSM Health Ripon Community Hospital Day Stabilization Services.

The facility is the first of its kind in Wisconsin and renders assistance, services, and support for individuals experiencing mental health crises. The project was supported by a \$158,000 grant from Gov. Tony Evers' [Healthcare Infrastructure Capital Grant Program](#), which supports transformational capital projects to expand access to quality, affordable healthcare in communities across the state.

“We’re proud to support our medical professionals and facilities because mental health is the bedrock of a healthy community,” Blumenfeld said. “Today’s visit underscores just how critical state support has been to address the growing demand for mental health services in our state. These investments have helped communities tackle some of their most pressing healthcare challenges, close gaps

in care, and enhance the quality of life for their residents.”



(L-R: Benjamin Van Pelt, SSM Health director of government affairs; Amy Bayer, SSM Health Greater Fond du Lac lead psychotherapist; Kacey Carroll, registered nurse; DeAnn Thurmer, SSM Health Ripon Community Hospital/SSM Health Waupun Memorial Hospital President; Brenda Panten, SSM Health behavioral health tech; DOA Secretary Kathy Blumenfeld; Nicole Gill, SSM Health Ripon Community Hospital/SSM Health Waupun Memorial Hospital VP of Patient Care & CNO; Brittany de la O, SSM Health foundation coordinator.)

The Day Stabilization Services program goal is to assist individuals in resolving their crisis and make appropriate community connections for ongoing services. Day Stabilization Services can accommodate as many as eight behavioral health patients experiencing mental health crises to receive immediate services.

“Thanks to our funding from the State of Wisconsin, we were able to remodel an existing unit within the Ripon Community Hospital to provide these patients with a

home-like living room setting that is a safe and comfortable alternative to the emergency room,” according to Thurmer. “We appreciate the outpouring of support we have received from Gov. Evers and the state of Wisconsin, as well as from our community partners who are instrumental in connecting individuals facing mental health concerns with our team.”

This program will help individuals who are facing a mental health crisis but don’t meet the medical criteria to be admitted to a hospital.

“In many cases, though they can’t be admitted to a hospital, they face great uncertainties returning home without guidance and important resources set in place,” Gill explains. “Psychiatry and outpatient mental health services often have wait lists six to eight months or longer. In our new program, we will have the ability to bring in these patients in the midst of crisis and provide them with an assessment, brief therapy, and family and discharge planning.”

May is recognized nationally as Mental Health Awareness Month, and Gov. Evers has since declared 2023 as the [Year of Mental Health](#). Indeed, to meet what he termed a “burgeoning crisis” in mental health, Evers’ 2023-25 biennial budget initiatives proposed to invest \$500 million in mental and behavioral health services for kids, workers, farmers, veterans, Wisconsinites working to overcome substance use disorders, and to support the Wisconsin mental and behavioral health workforce. Unfortunately, Republicans on the Joint Committee on Finance previously voted to remove many of these proposed investments along with more than [540 other provisions](#) from his budget.

Visit BadgerBounceback.wi.gov to view pandemic-related assistance information as well as the latest data and success stories about how COVID-relief investments are making a difference across the state. For updates on other recovery-related grant opportunities, sign up for the [Badger Bounceback update list](#).