

Milwaukee County Exec Crowley: Highlights new Milwaukee County Center for Youth, bringing treatment-focused care closer to home

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MILWAUKEE—Today, County Executive David Crowley and the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Children, Youth & Family Services (CYFS) held an open house event for the new secure residential care center for justice-impacted children and youth, providing an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to see the facility and experience the programming and services available. The facility, named the Milwaukee County Center for Youth (MCCY), is located within the Vel R. Phillips Youth & Family Justice Center and will serve up to 32 young people at a time in a secure, treatment-oriented residential setting designed to foster growth, accountability, and successful reintegration into the community.

“Young people are our future, and we have a responsibility to set them up for future success,” **said County Executive Crowley.** “This includes serving our youth closer to home in a treatment-focused environment, with proven programming to help them build the skills they need to thrive. The Milwaukee County Center for Youth is a major step toward transforming our youth justice system and moving us closer to closing Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake, as mandated by the Wisconsin State Legislature in 2018 - a bipartisan effort I was proud to help advance during my time serving as a state lawmaker.”

In 2018, the Wisconsin State Legislature enacted *Act 185* to reform the state’s

juvenile corrections system by replacing Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools with smaller, regional facilities, including Secure Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth (SRCCCYs). MCCY brings that vision to life in Milwaukee County, allowing youth to remain closer to their families, schools, and support networks during treatment. During his time in the Wisconsin State Legislature, County Executive Crowley worked with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to pass *Act 185*.

“The new Milwaukee County Center for Youth will improve the youth justice system and contribute to a safer community,” **said Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Executive Director, DHHS**. “We have been intentional in developing a well-integrated program model for the new facility based on national best practices. Each young person will have an individualized treatment plan, that includes Dialectical Behavior Therapy, medical services, education and vocational training, mentoring, and independent living skills. The support youth receive extends beyond the facility. We integrate families and community support into their treatment plan. With everyone working together, we are giving our young people hope for their future.”

The MCCY is a facility designed to support health and growth. Every aspect of the facility creates an environment that promotes safety, learning, and personal development. Key features of the new facility include:

- Education spaces—Classrooms, teacher support spaces and offices, a computer/learning lab, vocational programming, testing and consultation rooms, culinary arts programming, and other multimedia learning opportunities.
- Health care—Dedicated space to meet the youth’s medical, mental wellness, and dental health needs within the facility.
- Recreation space—Indoor and outdoor recreation areas, as well as outdoor green space.
- Amenities—A welcoming public entry and vestibule, private meeting spaces, family visitation areas, and dining and culinary arts programming.

At the MCCY, the environment and daily programming are grounded in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), a proven model that helps youth, especially those who feel emotions very deeply, build the skills needed to manage emotions, make healthier decisions, and develop positive relationships. When emotions become overwhelming, it can be hard to stay calm or react effectively. DBT provides a toolbox of skills to help youth navigate their feelings and find their way back to a sense of balance.

Support for youth extends beyond the facility. The MCCY integrates families and community support into treatment so youth can continue using these skills after they return home. Additionally, CYFS partners with the Wauwatosa School District to provide a full educational program that addresses existing academic needs while supporting continued growth.

Located within the Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center in Wauwatosa, the total capital budget for the 32-bed facility is nearly \$37 million, including over \$28 million in grant funding from the State of Wisconsin.