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County Executive

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County Executive Parisi Proposes New “Dane County Universal Access Resource Center” to Improve Mental & Behavioral Health Care

Central Resource Point to Help Patients, Families, Providers Navigate Health Care Networks; Highlight of New Three-Part Initiative to Invest More Immediately in Mental Health, Addiction across Dane County

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi was joined by representatives of area health care providers, the head of NAMI-Dane County, State Representative Shelia Stubbs, and other mental health advocates in announcing the county's creation of a new one-stop resource center to help improve access to mental and behavioral health care. With new funding from the recently approved 2020 county budget, the new “Dane County Universal Access Resource Center” will bridge private and public mental and behavioral health care providers, making it easier for patients, their families, and even providers to navigate care and advocate for loved ones.

“By working together, bringing private health providers and the county together in this first-of-its-kind bold collaboration, we can better coordinate care and improve outcomes for those who struggle with mental and behavioral health and addiction,” Parisi said. “The very nature of mental illness can deter those who suffer from it from advocating for their own care and well-being. When you combine that with the maze of service options that are affected by whether one has insurance, where that insurance allows them to be seen, and potential overlap with publicly available services, it's clear we as a community can do better in the area of mental health access. This new resource center will provide hope and opportunity to families and compassion to their loved ones who struggle.”

This brand-new call center will be run by Dane County and designed after a model that's been effective with the Dane County Aging and Disability Resource Center, providing a direct link to seniors and those with disabilities to available community services. Pending review and approval by the County Board in the coming weeks, the goal is to have staff hired for the new “Universal Access Resource Center” this spring with a grand opening slated for early summer 2020. Initially the center will operate from noon until 4 a.m. 7 days a week with professional resource staff to help connect individuals with available care and treatment.

“Dean Health Plan, a member of SSM Health, is committed to supporting the County in developing a Universal Access Call Center,” said Lindsay Wallace, Behavioral Health Program Manager at Dean Health Plan. “We believe that our mission of improving the health of our community can be better accomplished with great community partners, and we look forward to being at the table in creating a roadmap to improve access and outcomes.”

The team at the “Universal Access Resource Center” will stay up to date on service delivery changes in the community of behavioral and mental health in Dane County. Their knowledge will be used to inform county

residents seeking information on how to access care regardless of the system they are in—public or privately funded. The call center would be rooted in integrated relationships with all providers and systems in the county, creating a mutually beneficial resource and referral exchange, thereby making a significant leap forward towards the vision of integrated care coordinated through a single access point.

“UW Health is ready to be an active collaborator with Dane County on these important initiatives,” said Beth Lonergan, Director of Behavioral Health Services at UW Health University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics. “We recognize the need for coordinated access and have been working to ready our system. In the past year and a half we have added 35 behavioral health providers to respond to this acute community need. We look forward to partnering with the county and other key providers.”

“NAMI Dane County is excited to continue partnering with Dane County by providing a Crisis Intervention Team and Crisis Intervention Partner training to law enforcement officials and first responders,” said Anna Moffit, Executive Director of NAMI Dane County. “This invaluable training provides first responders with greater awareness and ability to interact and support individuals that may be experiencing a mental health crisis in the community. By providing greater access to these trainings in Dane County, we will not only prevent individuals living with a mental illness from being unnecessarily incarcerated, we will also increase an individual's ability to access treatment and other community supports for learning to live in recovery.”

In addition to the Dane County Universal Access Call Center, County Executive Parisi today also asked the Dane County Department of Human Services to convene a new “Universal Access Work Group” comprised of private and public health care providers. Last month, Dane County released the results of a community mental health study which was aimed at finding gaps in existing mental health care and finding ways to address them. Two key findings of the report included the need for private health providers and insurers to coordinate facility and provider capacity and formalize partnerships with the county.

Parisi is requesting the group meet monthly for the next 12 months and focus on the most effective means for private and public partners to collaborate. This workgroup would strive for formal, tangible work products in the form of signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) detailing processes and procedures, data sharing, and other elements necessary to create a roadmap to achieve the vision of better access and care delivery across systems.

“Breaking down barriers and improving access to mental health care is fundamental to our community goals of equity, fairness, and looking out for one another,” said State Representative and County Board Supervisor Shelia Stubbs. “I am grateful to Human Services Director Shawn Tessmann and Charles and Cindy Tubbs for bringing this innovative, community based solution forward.”

County Executive Parisi is also asking the Department of Human Services to extend the county’s existing contract with the Dane County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and provide countywide crisis intervention training for all front line personnel—police officers, emergency medics, social workers and others who often first come into contact with individuals presenting in crisis and in need of referral to care. This training will help defuse situations and provide an entry point to necessary mental and behavioral health care. It is estimated this extensive training will cost \$60,000.

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