



Mendocino County Health & Human Services Agency

Healthy People, Healthy Communities

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Mendocino County Psychiatric Health Facility

Under the state of California's Medi-Cal program, counties are obligated to provide medically necessary psychiatric inpatient services to Medi-Cal beneficiaries with a severe and persistent mental illness. While the County's obligation is specific to Medi-Cal beneficiaries with a severe and persistent mental illness, **due to the lack of crisis services provided by commercial insurance companies, the County has stepped in to provide crisis intervention and psychiatric inpatient placement for all residents of Mendocino County.**

Psychiatric hospitalization is the treatment of last resort for individuals who are suicidal, homicidal, or gravely disabled due to a mental illness. A shortage in psychiatric beds affects the individual needing this higher level of care, family members, and community agencies. Between 1995 – 2017, California lost approximately 30% of its inpatient psychiatric beds.

Currently, Mendocino County does not have a psychiatric inpatient facility within the County. All Mendocino County residents needing psychiatric inpatient services have to be transported out of County for this level of care. In the fiscal year 2019 -2020, Specialty Mental Health hospitalized 597 individuals (508 adults and 89 children).

Based on information obtained for a 16-bed facility, the operating costs are between \$5.7 million to \$7 million per year. The funding sources to cover operational costs include Medi-Cal, Medicare, Realignment, Measure B, and Private Insurance.

Due to the Medi-Cal payment regulations for psychiatric facilities, projected costs will vary widely based on the type of facility that contracts for the services. Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) recommends that the County focus on a 16-bed facility to ensure maximum Medi-Cal reimbursement.

BHRS has reached out to Lake County Behavioral Health to discuss their needs and interest in utilizing a psychiatric inpatient facility within Mendocino County. Lake County would be interested in utilizing the facility. BHRS recommends working with other counties such as Lake County on utilization of the facility to maintain capacity and to reduce operating costs. A PHF within Mendocino County would help close the gap in the psychiatric crisis care continuum, improve client care, and reduce impacts on community agencies.

Over the last couple of years, BHRS has worked with the Executive Office, Behavioral Health Advisory Board, and NAMI on options for building a PHF within Mendocino County including

reviewing requirements, building cost, operational cost, licensing, OSHPD and potential providers. Several sites had been considered which included Old Howard Hospital, the County's Orchard Street parcel(s), and a potential ranch parcel.

Whitmore Lane Facility

The Board of Supervisors recommended that staff evaluate the County-owned facility at 131 Whitmore Lane as a possibility for a 16-bed Psychiatric Health Facility, herein referred to as "Whitmore." In 2020, the County received CARES Act dollars for the purchase of a facility to provide isolation and quarantine. The County purchased Whitmore with CARES Act dollars to provide quarantine and isolation for individuals positive for COVID 19. The facility was built in 1965, is situated on 1.37 acres, and is 26,601 square feet. The facility was previously used as a Skilled Nursing Facility.

A Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) is required to be permitted through the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) as a level 5 facility. Whitmore Lane was previously licensed at an OSHPD level 2 facility, the required level for a Skilled Nursing Facility. In order to use Whitmore Lane as a PHF, the facility would need to meet the current level 5 OSHPD requirements. Based on the age of the facility and changes in OSHPD regulations, a partial demolition of the facility and rebuild would allow the facility to be brought in to compliance with OSHPD standards for a PHF.

While there are multiple services that could be provided at Whitmore; this location is a potential suitable site, pending feasibility study, for a PHF in Mendocino County. Should the Board of Supervisors decide to move forward with the development of a PHF, it is recommended that Whitmore be considered the site for a PHF. The property is owned by the county, was not purchased with general funds dollars, and had some initial review regarding the viability of the site for services. While Whitmore has been review and considered for a variety of services, it is believed that the development of a PHF is the highest service need for our community.