

## Guy Herman Center for Mental Health Crisis Care - FAQs



*A new approach to psychiatric crisis care in Travis County*

Austin Travis County Integral Care is developing a new type of mental health crisis service for our community. Stakeholders in Travis County worked together over many years to identify the types of services our community needs and prioritized this level of care as critical to our continuum of services. Below is a series of frequently asked questions intended to provide more information about this initiative.

### **What is the purpose of the center?**

The center will provide short term emergency psychiatric crisis care that includes stabilization, assessment and treatment in a secure, protected residential environment for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. The center will accept both voluntary and involuntary individuals on Emergency Detention (ED) who are experiencing a psychiatric crisis. It will offer the right level of care at the right time, reduce cost of care and improve health outcomes for patients. Adding the center to the service continuum will ensure that psychiatric crisis treatment is available in the most appropriate, most cost-effective setting.

### **Why is such a center needed in Travis County?**

Historically, individuals experiencing a mental health crisis have only had the option of inpatient care, the most expensive type of treatment and one that is not readily available. However, the vast majority of crises resolve within 48 hours, indicating that inpatient care is not always necessary. The crisis center will offer assessment and treatment that will reduce the need for more expensive care. This means better outcomes for patients and reduced cost to taxpayers or other payers.

The center will fill a significant gap by expanding crisis capacity that will enhance Travis County's community-based behavioral health crisis continuum and address healthcare priorities highlighted in Central Health's Community Needs Assessment (2012) and an analysis conducted as part of Senator Watson's 10 Goals in 10 Years initiative. Both analyses identify adding psychiatric crisis services as a priority for the region.

### **What will be the impact of the center?**

Austin and Travis County have lacked adequate access to emergency psychiatric services, placing a strain on first responder and emergency healthcare services. The center will help relieve this burden by providing an alternative to higher-level, more expensive care. The center will support other pieces of the system by:

- Providing an additional location for law enforcement to take individuals who are picked up across the community, ensuring that law enforcement spends as little time as possible handling these types of crises, helping them get back into the community where they are needed most.
- Providing an additional step-down service alternative for individuals coming out of inpatient care who are not ready to return home.
- Providing an alternative to inpatient psychiatric facilities.
- Providing an alternative to incarceration. Lack of adequate mental health services in this community has resulted in individuals with mental health issues being incarcerated inappropriately. The center will offer the opportunity to ensure that individuals whose primary issue is mental illness have an appropriate and safe place to be assessed and treated.

### **What are sources of referral to the center?**

- Austin Police Department
- Travis County Sheriff's Office
- Integral Care's Mobile Crisis Outreach Team
- Community Mental Health Professionals
- Seton Psychiatric Emergency Department
- Integral Care's Psychiatric Emergency Services
- Self or Family

### **What will the center be called?**

The This new center offered the opportunity to recognize a true advocate in our community – Judge Guy Herman. For decades, Judge Herman has championed the interests of individuals living with mental health issues in Travis County. As the local Probate Judge, Herman is responsible for determining if and when an individual must be committed involuntarily for psychiatric care. In this role, he has seen, first hand, the needs of individuals experiencing mental illness.

### **When will it open?**

It is anticipated the center will open in early 2017.

### **Who will be served by the center?**

Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis who do not have serious medical conditions or active behavioral issues that would require a hospital level of care. Behavioral health issues that require a hospital level of care might include those that require restraint or seclusion.

### **How many patients will be served annually?**

An estimated 1460 patients will be served in the first year and 1655 patients in the second year.

### **How big will the center be?**

The center will have 16 beds and approximately 12,000 total square feet.

### **What services will be provided?**

- Crisis assessment
- Crisis stabilization and extended observation
- Medications
- Therapy – individual and group
- Nursing services
- Case management
- Discharge planning
- Linkage to ongoing care and community resources

### **What is the history of the development of this model?**

A workgroup convened by Central Health beginning in 2005, known as the Psychiatric Services Stakeholder Committee, (which includes St. David's Foundation, Seton Healthcare Family, Austin Travis County Integral Care, Central Health, the Austin Police Department, local judges, and mental health professionals), identified this collaborative community solution to respond the need for enhanced crisis services.

The center is modeled after Burke, the mental health emergency center, in Lufkin, Texas, which opened in 2008 and is a recognized best practice.

In 2013, St. David's Foundation hosted a "field trip" to Lufkin for local mental health stakeholders to visit the site and determine if this model would help address needs in Travis County. The consensus was that this model would fill a critical gap in the local mental health safety net. The Foundation began working with key partners (Integral Care and Central Health) to develop this community solution to what has been a long standing problem.

### **Who is funding the development and operations of the center?**

St. David's Foundation is funding the project with a grant totaling almost \$9 million. This funding will cover the majority of construction costs and a significant percentage of the operating costs during the first two years.

Central Health is making the land available, via a low cost (virtually free) long-term lease. The value of this land is estimated at \$1.2 million.

Integral Care will help raise the necessary additional funds from public and private sources.

### **Who will operate the center?**

The center will be operated by Austin Travis County Integral Care, the Local Mental Health Authority. The role of the Local Mental Health Authority is critical for the success of this model and will help ensure this service is successfully connected and integrated with other key mental health services and stakeholders.

### **How long can individuals stay at the center?**

The length of stay at the center will depend upon individual need. The average length of stay is expected to be 3-5 days. The goal of the center is to provide the length and intensity of treatment necessary to resolve the mental health crisis and stabilize the individual so that he or she can successfully return home or transfer to another Integral Care residential program for ongoing support and recovery. Transfer to a higher level of care, such as inpatient psychiatric services, can also be facilitated if clinically necessary.

### **How is this new center different from the Psychiatric Emergency Department at University Medical Center at Brackenridge?**

The Psychiatric Emergency Department is equipped to handle individuals who require acute medical attention and/or who are in need of restraint or seclusion. The center can handle minor medical issues but cannot use restraint or seclusion. The center, unlike the Psychiatric Emergency Department, is designed to offer not just assessment and triage but also ongoing treatment, with the average length of stay expected to be 3-5 days.

### **Where will the center be located?**

The center will be located at 6600 Highway 71 (E. Ben White Blvd) Austin, TX 78741. The center will be accessed from Highway 71/E. Ben White Blvd. The center is adjacent to the Southeast Health and Wellness Center, located at 2901 Montopolis Drive.

## What is the relationship between the Center for Mental Health Crisis Care and the Southeast Health and Wellness Center?

They are separate facilities run by different organizations. Austin Travis County Integral Care will operate the Center for Mental Health Crisis Care. The Southeast Health and Wellness Center is owned by Central Health and operated by CommUnityCare.



### For more information

For more information, please contact Brittany Alderman at [brittany.alderman@atcic.org](mailto:brittany.alderman@atcic.org) or (512) 440-4080.