



Contact:

Karrey Britt
Communications Specialist
785-330-2894 or cell 785-393-4109
kbritt@douglascountyks.org

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Douglas County dedicated to opening the Treatment and Recovery Center as soon as possible

County working to resolve concerns, maintain local collaboration

LAWRENCE, KS – Douglas County is dedicated to opening the Treatment and Recovery Center as soon as possible and staff are working tirelessly to ensure our community has a state-of-the-art center that provides affordable, quality services.

Douglas County has a responsibility to its citizens to ensure that the TRC – a locally-owned, county-controlled, vital community resource - will deliver the right care in the right setting, every time. The TRC's complex clinical model, pioneered by Connections Health Solutions and embraced by LMH Health, Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, and Behavioral Health Partners Inc. (BHP), will be the first of its kind in the state of Kansas. The TRC will provide urgent psychiatric care in a 24/7 facility that must be prepared to receive high-acuity patients experiencing psychosis, under the influence of controlled substances, or placed on an involuntary hold because they are a danger to themselves or others.

"Community members who bring loved ones to the TRC for crisis stabilization and urgent care need to have confidence that they are in good hands," County Administrator Sarah Plinsky said.

The County was hopeful that BHP, a management company formed by Bert Nash and LMH Health in 2000, would be in a position to manage the TRC when it opened. Since September 2021, the County has paid BHP over \$1 million for the purpose of developing and opening the TRC. BHP's contractual commitment to Douglas County was to open the TRC on July 1, 2022.

During the past seven months, County Administration repeatedly raised questions and concerns about BHP's progress and readiness to operate the TRC.

More recently, on Aug. 1, Plinsky informed BHP leadership that the County had serious concerns about BHP's ability to open and operate the center successfully. Plinsky asked to see BHP's plan for how it intended to open the center. BHP was not able to provide a plan at that time. The County gave BHP a list of tasks that the County deemed necessary for the TRC to open and operate successfully.

On Aug. 23, BHP presented various written documents to the County. Those documents were internally inconsistent, incomplete, and demonstrated that BHP was not ready to open and operate the center. Many essential tasks were incomplete; some had not even been started.

On Sept. 1, 2022, Plinsky informed LMH and Bert Nash leadership that plans to open and operate the TRC were insufficient and she intended to recommend that the County engage Connections Health Solutions to augment local partnerships and help manage the TRC, in collaboration with community partners, for an initial period of time.

Connections Health Solutions is a physician-founded and led behavioral health crisis care provider whose model is widely regarded as best practice by leading institutions and organizations including SAMHSA and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. Connections Health Solutions has been a consultant in the development of the TRC since March 2019. Douglas County, Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center, and LMH Health have relied on Connections' expertise in the development of the facility design and clinical model.

"Douglas County residents approved a quarter-cent sales tax in November 2018 to improve behavioral health services and facilities in Douglas County, so we want to be the best stewards of that funding. We want to open a facility that will provide the best services possible for our community. I am deeply committed to serving that mission," Plinsky said.

Plinsky added, "Regardless of who is engaged to manage the TRC, it will remain a local, public facility, subject to local oversight and control. Douglas County's community partners will remain integral to the services provided there."

Any approvals or agreements will go before the Douglas County Commission for approval.

Douglas County has invested significant public funds in the Treatment and Recovery Center. The County's total investment in the facility is more than \$10 million. Together with the supportive housing on the TRC campus, the total cost of these public assets exceeds \$14 million.

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