



NEWS RELEASE

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County of Ventura to Expand Crisis Treatment Unit and Inpatient Psychiatric Unit Beds *Carries out recommendations by Ventura County Mental Health & Safety Task Force*

The Ventura County Board of Supervisors has approved the addition of ten mental health nurses in this year's Health Care Agency budget. These nurses are a critical component of Ventura County Medical Center's plan to expand the Hillmont Inpatient Psychiatric Unit from 30 to 36 beds.

"Expansion of inpatient and crisis stabilization services is a demonstration of the County's belief that mental health care is an essential component of complete health. These expanded services will enable the County to increase capacity to provide care to individuals who are often in their most critical time of need. We recognize that this is one of many steps ahead and the County will continue to work with our local health providers, state and federal sources to continue to expand services in this vital area of healthcare," said County Executive Officer Mike Powers.

Along with this inpatient expansion, Ventura County will also be doubling the staffed capacity of the Crisis Stabilization Unit which resides in the same building and provides urgent and emergent outpatient care to those who are experiencing an acute mental health crisis.

"The Behavioral Health Department is excited for this expansion that will add 6 additional inpatient psychiatric beds and 4 crisis stabilization chairs to the crisis continuum here in Ventura County. When individuals are in a mental health crisis requiring a higher level of care, the ability to stabilize, assess and treat as clinically needed without having to exit the County is a favorable and best practice to ensure continuity and linkage to services upon discharge," said Behavioral Health Director Doctor Sevet Johnson. "Already having the same psychiatry provider organization for both the inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services helps to ensure this ease."

"There is a severe need for inpatient psychiatric beds not only in Ventura County, but throughout California," said Ventura County Medical Center and Santa Hospital CEO John Fankhauser. In the past twenty years, the number of inpatient beds has decreased by nearly 30%. Twenty-five of California's fifty-eight counties have no adult inpatient psychiatric services. (Feb. 2019, California Hospital Association, *California's Acute Psychiatric Bed Loss*. <https://www.calhospital.org/general-information/california-annual-report-behavioral-health-delivery-system>)

"This step forward shows the commitment from County Leadership to serve and protect one of our most vulnerable populations; individuals faced with severe and persistent mental illness," added Johnson. "We recognize this is not an end-all and more work still needs to be done to fully meet the needs of Ventura County residents. We are grateful for these additions to our County Health System and know that continuing to provide high quality care to individuals in some of their most vulnerable moments will remain our top priority."

This planned expansion of Inpatient Psychiatric Unit beds carries out recommendations made by the Ventura County Mental Health & Safety Task Force. This task force, which was organized by the Ventura County Board of



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Supervisors and County Executive Office was commissioned to develop a response to the Borderline Shooting on November 7, 2018. In their report presented to the Board on January 21 of this year, the recommendation was made to add additional adult inpatient psychiatric unit and crisis stabilization unit beds.