

PRESS RELEASE



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Mental Health Unit Will Provide Dedicated Space for Inmates with Behavioral Problems

Adams County, Colo. –The Adams County Sheriff's Office is managing a crowded Medical Unit by moving forward with plans to build a Mental Health Unit inside the Adams County Detention Facility. Opening in 2017, the Mental Health Unit will provide separate living quarters and treatment areas for 32 inmates who have mental health related behavioral problems. The Board of County Commissioners has pledged \$3.2 Million for design and construction of the unit. Nearly \$1 Million in additional funds have been earmarked to hire 10 deputies and two certified nursing assistants.

"The Mental Health Unit is a way to start addressing the majority of mental health problems from individuals who come through our facility and to provide continuity of care," said Adams County Sheriff Michael McIntosh.

Architectural plans from DLR Group include a renovation of an existing living area in the jail. The windows in the main area and the recreational area will be widened to let in more sunlight, which can be therapeutic for mental health patients. The cells will be situated along either side of the living area with a camera in each cell. Treatment rooms and offices for mental health staff will be built near the main living area. Additionally, a hallway from the Mental Health Unit will lead directly to the medical area. Two quiet rooms will accommodate agitated inmates and a nearby supply closet will hold bed linens and suicide prevention gowns.

"It's critical to have a Mental Health Unit at the jail and it demonstrates the quality and commitment that the Sheriff's Office has for this issue. Similar to national and state trends, we have experienced an increase in the past two decades of individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues in the jail," said Director of Community Reach Center Abigail Tucker.

In 2016, there was an average daily population of 938 inmates in the jail per month. The number of inmates who are incarcerated fluctuates depending on a variety of reasons. Individuals can be released for bonding, court ordered changes to sentences, served sentences, released to other law enforcement agencies, transferred to the Department of Corrections, transferred to Community Corrections or transferred to the Supervised Release Program.

Typically 25-35 percent of the inmate population in the jail has mental health needs, according to Sheriff McIntosh. Not all of them need the dedicated space the Mental Health Unit will offer. Many inmates diagnosed with a mental health problem do well in the general population of the jail once they're diagnosed and on medication.

The Medical Unit at the jail accommodates a maximum of 45 inmates, with 15 cells holding 3 inmates each. If the Medical Unit gets filled to capacity, those individuals with medical needs take priority over those with mental health problems.

The Mental Health Unit will be a dedicated space for people who have a mood disorder such as depression or a psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia. If inmates have substance abuse problems that are co-occurring with behavioral disorders, then they can reside in the Mental Health Unit.

"In behavioral health, our tools are our people—the staff, our computers and our capacity to listen. It's invaluable to have space for private conversations and quality clinical assessments," said Tucker.

Community Reach Center currently has 13 staff at the jail and those staff members are transition specialists. Individuals who struggle with mental health issues are at a higher risk for committing crimes in jail and receiving additional charges. Transition specialists provide treatment and coordinate services for inmates so their mental health issues aren't a barrier to integrating back into the community.

"Hopefully the care that inmates have received in the jail will be continued in the community and reduce the risk of those individuals from reoffending," said Chief Roger Kelley, who manages staff at the Adams County Detention Facility.

A secondary goal of mental health treatment in jail is making people aware of Community Reach Center so inmates with behavioral disorders have a first appointment at the center. The Mental Health Unit will enable staff to get these individuals setup for continuity of care outside of jail, which can reduce recidivism and length of stay for mental health patients.

"The Mental Health Unit is a service to the community. Fairness is part of that so that everyone has the opportunity to be provided with the same things that those without mental health issues do," said McIntosh.



Deputy Brown does a routine check of inmates in the Medical Unit at the Adams County Detention Facility.



The area in the Adams County Detention Facility that will be renovated into the Mental Health Unit.