

## FACT SHEET

### Acute Psychiatric Services at the Crossroads in Santa Cruz County

- The County of Santa Cruz is responsible for ensuring access to acute psychiatric mental health services in a safe, locked setting, when such services are deemed necessary.
- Since 1983, the County has contracted with Dominican Hospital, now a part of Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), for the provision of these services on the Hospital grounds in the 'Behavioral Health Unit,' or BHU.
- The County and Dominican CHW have mutually determined that due to the high and rising costs of hospital-based services and evolving mental health system needs, **continued operation of the BHU is no longer financially feasible and other approaches to providing acute psychiatric care demonstrate improved outcomes.**
- This determination resulted from a lengthy study and negotiation process regarding the best way to provide the services when the current County-CHW contract expires in June, 2010 (- a contract extension to December 2013 is expected).
- **The County has considered all possible options to enable it to fulfill its responsibilities assuming eventual closure of the BHU.** The remaining feasible options for the County include:
  - Require clients needing acute psychiatric services to receive them in facilities outside of Santa Cruz County which have active contracts with the County; or
  - Open a new acute psychiatric mental health facility within the county that will be licensed by the State Department of Mental Health as a 'Psychiatric Health Facility' or PHF.
- Based on best practices and current reimbursement models, and pending consultation with stakeholders, it seems apparent that **clients and families will be best served by a new Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) planned and built by the County and operated by a contractor which specializes in providing acute psychiatric mental health care.** Ideally the facility will be located near Dominican within the current hospital/medical/health services area and will include a range of acute services and clinical options.
- The County believes that **operating a PHF in concert with peer and crisis support services and supported housing will contribute to a more cost-effective and high quality mental health system overall and will reduce the need for locked acute psychiatric services in the future.**
- This situation is not unique to Santa Cruz County; **other California counties have successfully made the transition from providing acute psychiatric services in a hospital-based setting to providing them in a Psychiatric Health Facility.**
- Dominican CHW is working as a full partner with the County to ensure a smooth transition from the BHU to the new facility. Dominican CHW will provide substantive financial resources to the County to assist in the transition of these critical services.

#### For more information contact:

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