

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health  
and Substance Abuse Services

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**DISCUSSION CONCERNING OPERATION OF BILL WILLIS CMHC WILL NOT AFFECT ONGOING CONSUMER SERVICES, SAYS DEPARTMENT ADVOCATE GENERAL**

Recent discussion by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services concerning the delivery of mental health services in the Tahlequah area should not cause alarm among local residents who depend on the Bill Willis Community Mental Health Center, says Deneka Cain, the department's Consumer Advocate General.

ODMHSAS recently announced its intention to review how services are delivered to persons living in Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah and Wagoner counties. Their objective is to increase cost efficiency and provide the best possible access to care. It is not expected that there will be any disruption of services for people in the affected areas.

"Potential changes may simply involve a restructuring of internal operating procedures, which would not necessarily have any visible effect on how a person receives services," says Cain. "Another possibility is that someone else begins delivering these services. In any event, the department is committed to making any transition as seamless as possible."

ODMHSAS is studying the best course of action to stretch available funding and may consider contracting with another community mental health center if such a move proves to be less expensive than having the current Center continue operations. The department will also review proposals from Center staff identifying internal changes that would significantly reduce costs while maintaining

community services. A formal review of all materials will be used to arrive at a decision about future actions.

ODMHSAS Commissioner, Terri White, has stressed that the agency's first priority is to make sure that Oklahomans have access to the services they need.

"In the end, we must ensure that we are doing the best that we can to effectively and efficiently manage state money," said White. "Our focus must be on the thousands of Oklahomans who are seeking help for their mental health and substance abuse issues, and who depend on us to help them recover from their illnesses and achieve wellness."

Cain emphasizes that the Commissioner's focus on consumer needs is assurance that individuals currently receiving services will be taken care of as will those who qualify for available services in the future.

"Services will continue to be available," said Cain. "Any changes to how the department is currently delivering services are expected to enhance access to treatment locally."

Individuals currently receiving services from the department who may have questions or concerns are encouraged to contact the ODMHSAS Consumer Advocacy Division at 1-866-699-6605 or [advocacydivision@odmhsas.org](mailto:advocacydivision@odmhsas.org).

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