****

**Press Release**

Wednesday, October 18, 2017 at 1:00 PM

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
ODMHSAS Announces Plans to Eliminate Outpatient Services Statewide If Fix Is Not Found For Budget Needs**

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) today announced plans eliminating all state-funded outpatient services statewide. This is in response to the $75 million that was ripped from its budget due to the overturning of a cigarette tax. If additional funds are not appropriated for fiscal year 2018, ODMHSAS will be forced to initiate these plans.  A cut of this magnitude represents 23 percent of the ODMHSAS budget, with an additional loss of $106 million in federal matching funds.

The agency has no choice but to announce plans for cuts that must be initiated in November, and fully implemented during December and January. ODMHSAS has delayed this action as long as possible; however, we must initiate processes the first week of November to meet the shortfall that begins in December. If initiated, these cuts will impact nearly 189,000 Oklahomans currently receiving outpatient services, 700 treatment agencies in communities statewide and more than 8,500 therapists, case managers, doctors and nurses, not to mention hundreds of support staff.

“Our hope is that a solution is found in time to keep these cuts from happening,” said ODMHSAS Commissioner Terri White. “At the same time, as of now, we must move forward with plans and to allow those plans to move forward without notifying all impacted would be unfair and irresponsible. These cuts are unbearable and will decimate our state’s behavioral health care system. Yet, they are the only choices the agency has left to keep from completely eliminating services for Oklahoma’s most acutely ill.”

The services lost will include all state-funded outpatient services statewide for indigent and behavioral health Medicaid eligible clients, as well as the elimination of residential treatment services for children. Drug courts, mental health courts and other court related programs will no longer be funded. The state’s Systems of Care program that serves vulnerable youth and their families, in addition to other state agencies and local schools, will be discontinued.

Law enforcement agencies are already predicting an uptick in jail population and crime, as treatment providers close their doors and behavioral health services are no longer available. Additional impact will include an increase in suicides, drug overdoses, as well as significant loss of jobs to Oklahoma communities, increased demand on local hospital emergency rooms and first responders. All of these negative consequences will be more costly than simply funding these services, in terms of lives and dollars, said White.

###

**Press Conference Speakers**

**Commissioner Terri White, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services**

**Providers:** Joy Sloan, Chief Executive Officer of Green Country Behavioral Health Services in Muskogee; and Janet Cizek, managing partner and Chief Executive Officer at the Center for Therapeutic Interventions in Tulsa

**Office of Juvenile Affairs:** Steve Buck, executive director

**Hospital Association:** Craig Jones, president of the Oklahoma Hospital Association

**Law Enforcement:** Association of Chiefs of Police – Midwest City Police Chief Brandon Clabes; and Oklahoma City Police Department Deputy Chief Johnny Kuhlman, representing OKC Police Chief Bill Citty

**District Attorney’s Council:** Richard Smothermon, incoming president of the District Attorney’s Council and D.A. for Lincoln and Pottawatomie counties

**Chambers of Commerce:** Roy Williams, president of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce; Scott Martin, president and CEO of Norman Chamber of Commerce;and Brian Bush, president and CEO of the Altus Chamber of Commerce

**ODMHSAS Board:** Brian Bush, chair of the board (surrounded by board)

**Commissioner Terri White returns to take questions.**