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State to consolidate Northcoast psychiatric hospitals

By July 1, 2011, the Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH) will close its Cleveland campus of Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare at 1708 Southpoint Drive and expand inpatient capacity at its Northfield campus located 15 miles away in Summit County.

“Operating and maintaining the 80-year-old Cleveland facility is cost-prohibitive,” said ODMH Director Tracy J. Plouck. “The move will stretch dollars for inpatient care at ODMH’s state-run regional psychiatric hospitals and still ensure access is maintained. We expect to save the state \$4 million within the first year based on conservative estimates.”

Access to inpatient hospital care will be maintained throughout the consolidation. Units in existing Northfield buildings at 1756 Sagamore Road, just across the Cuyahoga County line, are already prepared for expanded occupancy, a move that was taken as a precaution in case of the need for prohibitively costly repairs or systems replacements at the aging Cleveland campus. Patients will relocate to Northfield by June 30, 2011, the end of the state fiscal year. Some patients may also be directed to unused beds at Heartland Behavioral Healthcare in Massillon. Staffing will also transition, which will result in some positions being eliminated.

In addition, the department recommends that the capital dollars originally allocated in 2008 for a new hospital instead be used for renovation of the current Northfield campus, and upgrades elsewhere within its system of six regional hospitals to promote efficiency and improve patient care. “Repurposing the capital dollars to current hospitals will allow us to serve people better for less, freeing up dollars to do needed work elsewhere in the mental health system,” Plouck said.

Four years ago, ODMH was allocated \$8 million in capital funds for development of a new hospital. Two years ago, the agency received an additional \$83.7 million for land acquisition and construction. A 14-acre site was identified on Euclid Avenue in Midtown Cleveland, but delays and site issues have prevented purchase.

Renovation of the Northfield campus on 71 acres already owned by the state will accomplish the mission of providing high quality patient services and upgrading to a state-of-the-art clinical facility to serve all of Northeast Ohio, but use fewer of the allocated capital funds to do so. The area’s providers and courts already routinely use the Northfield campus for residents of Northeast Ohio.

ODMH has been in contact with leadership from MetroHealth Medical Center, which is adjacent to Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare, about transferring the nearly four acres of property to MetroHealth. John Corlett, MetroHealth Vice President of Government Relations and Community Affairs, has indicated interest in the adjacent property for future expansion as part of a master facilities plan for strategic growth.

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John R. Kasich, Governor • **Tracy J. Plouck**, Director

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