

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health
and Substance Abuse Services

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ODMHSAS Announces Additional Budget Cuts

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) today announced an additional \$13 million cut from the current year's budget. In total, the department has been forced to slash \$22.8 million from operations and services since January. Cuts were announced at the agency's regularly scheduled March board meeting held at ODMHSAS' central office in Oklahoma City. It is estimated that more than 73,000 Oklahomans will experience reduced services as a result.

With only three months remaining in the current fiscal year, the most recent cuts mean immediate action must occur in the following areas:

- A \$7 million cut to contracted mental health and substance abuse services statewide;
- Rate cuts for multiple service levels and provider networks throughout Oklahoma, including cuts to rates paid for mental health inpatient care;
- Tightening an annual "cap" placed on psychotherapy services for individuals in treatment.

Because many of these services receive federal matching funds, the actual impact on the statewide treatment network will exceed \$36 million.

"It's heartbreaking that we have to make these cuts," said ODMHSAS Commissioner Terri White. "It is not something that we want to do, but there are no other options at this point."

White says that cuts will mean increased difficulty in finding services for people entering the treatment system, longer delays for those who do qualify for services, reduced treatment options for many Oklahomans already receiving care and some that will lose services altogether. She also makes the point that the cost for treatment is much less than the cost of dealing with the consequences, and worries about reversal of gains made by the state in recent years.

"As a state, we have made progress in the areas of prevention, and have nationally recognized programs that address children's behavioral health and criminal justice diversion," said White. "It will be difficult to regain momentum once services are lost.

"We know that treatment works, but only when services are available. The impact of these cuts will be deeply felt by individuals, families, communities and the state as a whole."

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