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## **OKLAHOMA INVESTS IN 'MUCH-NEEDED' MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS SERVICES**

In a move designed to aid both those in mental health crisis and law enforcement, the Oklahoma Legislature and Governor this year made history through the largest ever state investment in crisis services.

More than \$17 million in additional funds were appropriated to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) for this purpose, said ODMHSAS Commissioner Carrie Slatton-Hodges.

"This money was much-needed and certainly will be put to good use," she said.

The funding addresses a range of issues, from a lack of crisis centers statewide to the need for mental health professionals to better assist law enforcement in the de-escalation of crisis situations.

The bulk of the funding, approximately \$7.5 million, will add new mental health crisis/urgent care centers across the state, said Slatton-Hodges.

Three million dollars will fund additional mobile crisis teams, which will be deployed to respond to and diffuse crisis situations in communities; \$2 million will help decrease law enforcement's role in mental health transportations; and \$2 million will allow ODMHSAS to expand its highly successful mobile tech program with law enforcement officers statewide, allowing for on demand treatment access via tablet to Oklahomans experiencing a mental health crisis.

Approximately \$500,000 will continue a pilot project in five county jails that provides offenders with access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for opioid and alcohol dependence. Other crisis-related appropriations will fund mental health support services for law enforcement, more Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) courses for first responders and account for additional program growth.

"This investment in mental health crisis and early intervention services will have an immediate impact on Oklahoma," said Slatton-Hodges. "There is no doubt lives will be saved and people in crisis will more likely get the help they need."

A \$10 million appropriation to University of Oklahoma Health Physicians to expand children's behavioral health beds also is welcome news, said Slatton-Hodges.

“This year’s Legislature recognized the importance of good behavioral health in Oklahoma and spent a lot of time studying effective programs,” she said. “All the programs that received state funding are highly successful, evidence-based programs that will pay dividends for added quality of life, and taxpayer savings, for years to come.”

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