



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waynesville treatment center expands mental health, substance use services

Plans also underway to launch 24/7 behavioral health urgent care later in year

Oct. 11, 2017 – A recent expansion, extensive renovations and other upgrades will allow the Balsam Center in Haywood County to serve more local residents seeking mental health or substance use treatment.

The Balsam Center, operated by Appalachian Community Services (ACS) and located at 91 Timberlane Road in Waynesville, expanded its facility-based crisis unit from 12 to 16 beds and remodeled both the crisis unit and its outpatient facility. Other new features include upgraded technology to enhance safety and security, a substance use group therapy room, a nature trail and a primary care exam room. ACS also expanded the center's outdoor recreation and gazebo area for individuals staying in the crisis unit and modernized its telehealth stations, which allow people to speak with a healthcare provider via video chat.

The Balsam Center serves residents in need of treatment for mental health concerns, such as depression or anxiety, or for alcohol or drug use, including opioid drug addiction. ACS also provides services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. All people in need of care, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay, are eligible for evaluation.

Vaya Health, a public managed healthcare organization, contributed approximately \$374,000 in community reinvestment funds toward the total expansion cost of \$542,000. ACS and its parent company, ncgCARE, provided \$50,000, with an additional \$118,000 in funding coming from the Evergreen Foundation. The renovations will also allow the center to further expand the crisis unit in the future, if circumstances permit.

“By reinvesting in the Balsam Center, we’re investing in the health and wellbeing of residents of our state’s westernmost counties,” said Vaya CEO Brian Ingraham. “We’re excited to be able to complete what may be one of our last community reinvestment projects, using savings from effective Medicaid management, to meet local community needs for years to come. This expansion also strengthens our efforts to combat the opioid epidemic and will help people begin the journey toward long-term recovery.”

“This expansion will allow us to provide a larger continuum of crisis care for people in our communities,” said Duncan Sumpter, ncgCARE N.C. state director. “Residents of North Carolina’s western counties deserve to have access to quality care that is close to home and delivered in a comfortable, welcoming environment.”

The Balsam Center's crisis unit provides 24-hour care for individuals in crisis, with stays usually lasting multiple days until their condition stabilizes. The program serves both people seeking treatment voluntarily and those under an involuntary commitment order.

The center also provides outpatient services, including assessments, counseling, group therapy, integrated care and medication management. Individuals dependent on opioid drugs are eligible to receive buprenorphine, a type of medication-assisted treatment, to support the recovery process.

ACS, in partnership with Vaya, also announced plans Wednesday to launch 24/7 behavioral health urgent care (BHUC) services in the coming months. Once in operation, the BHUC will allow anyone experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis to come to the center at any time, day or night, for an evaluation.

Individuals seeking urgent care will be allowed to stay at the center for just under 24 hours while a treatment team works with them to identify their needs and next steps for treatment. Some individuals who visit the BHUC may be admitted to the crisis unit for a longer stay. BHUC services are specifically designed for individuals with behavioral health needs and offer a safe, more comfortable alternative to hospital emergency departments.

To contact the Balsam Center, call 828-454-1098 or visit www.acswnc.com. Additionally, anyone in western North Carolina needing help in a crisis or information about local treatment options can call Vaya's toll-free, 24/7 Access to Care Line at 1-800-849-6127.

About Vaya Health

Based in Asheville, N.C., Vaya Health manages public funds for mental health, substance use disorder and intellectual or developmental disability services in 23 western North Carolina counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey. Access to care and crisis assistance are available 24/7 at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at www.vayahealth.com.

About Appalachian Community Services

Appalachian Community Services (ACS) provides mental health, substance use and intellectual/developmental services to children, adolescents and adults. Founded in 2003, ACS serves more than 6,500 individuals annually in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon and Swain counties. ACS provides a comprehensive array of services, including facility-based and mobile crisis, community and supported living, outpatient counseling, psychiatric evaluations, medication management and a continuum of enhanced services to address intensive and specialized needs. Learn more at www.acswnc.com.

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