



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wilkes County, Vaya Health announce plans for expanded behavioral health crisis center

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Wilkes County and Vaya Health today announced plans to use \$1.4 million in state funding to expand and add new services at a North Wilkesboro crisis center that provides mental health and substance use treatment to individuals living throughout northwestern North Carolina.

Under the proposal, Synergy Recovery and Daymark Recovery Services will partner to expand Synergy's existing North Wilkesboro facility-based crisis center to 16 beds and perform extensive renovations to modernize the building. Additional plans for the center include:

- Serving as a designated involuntary commitment facility other than the Wilkes Medical Center emergency department to offer law enforcement a more efficient means for transferring individuals to treatment
- Adding a Peer Support Drop-In Center that will provide a safe, positive environment for individuals who want to connect with peers as part of their recovery journey
- Providing meeting space for Peer Support Specialist Trainings and other recovery-oriented groups and classes

Vaya manages Medicaid and other public funding for behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability (IDD) services and supports in western North Carolina. Synergy and Daymark are two Vaya network providers serving Wilkes County. During the 2017-18 legislative session, the N.C. General Assembly allocated \$1.4 million in one-time funds to Vaya for crisis center construction in Wilkes County due in large part to the advocacy of former state Sen. Shirley Randleman. In her honor, the new facility will become the Shirley Randleman Recovery Center.

"The Randleman Recovery Center not only increases crisis bed capacity," said Vaya CEO Brian Ingraham. "It will also offer services and supports that help people with behavioral health needs stay well and reduce their likelihood of experiencing a crisis in the future. We believe our plan meets the General Assembly's original intent for these funds and will serve as a community resource for individuals in recovery throughout the region."

"I look forward to working with Vaya Health, Daymark, Synergy and other community partners on this project," said Keith Elmore, chairman of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners. "We have a shared vision for an enhanced facility that provides quality, accessible services and helps residents find hope and recovery."

Commissioner Gary Blevins said, “I want to thank everyone involved in this ongoing initiative for continuing to work diligently toward developing an alternative solution. This concept, which is the result of an effort to utilize the legislative funding in an effective and affordable way, meets those criteria.

“I hope this project can come to fruition, as the behavioral health needs of our region will be significantly and positively impacted. As a member of the Vaya Board of Directors, I am proud to support this project and applaud the efforts of everyone involved. When community leaders work together to find viable solutions, the citizens we serve benefit greatly.”

Synergy’s existing 14-bed center focuses on detoxification and is housed in a Wilkes County-owned building at 118 Peace St. The center currently operates primarily on the building’s ground floor, leaving an entire floor available for other uses. Under state law, facility-based crisis centers may offer a maximum of 16 beds.

The Peace Street facility began operations in 2001 and requires modernization to increase capacity and enhance individuals’ treatment experience. The Randleman Recovery Center will offer secure, residential stays for people with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, as well as people in need of non-hospital detox and/or involuntary commitment. The short-term, medically supervised program will provide services and supports to individuals in crisis who need a secure environment, with the goal of alleviating acute crisis situations through stabilization, treatment and crisis planning.

The Randleman Recovery Center will include a Peer Support Drop-in Center to provide a safe respite in times of behavioral health stress, opportunities to explore self-development and connections with others in recovery. The center will promote a resiliency-informed culture staffed by certified peer support specialists who have life experience with mental health and/or substance use challenges. Peer support specialists will facilitate recovery-oriented trainings and groups, such as Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP), Whole Health Resiliency Model, Healthy Boundaries and Mental Health First Aid.

The Peer Support Drop-in Center will be available to any individual in the community wishing to engage with other people in recovery. It will also serve as the training hub for peer support specialists in Vaya’s northern region. Vaya, a statewide leader in peer support training, has facilitated classes for more than 700 graduates to date.

In addition to General Assembly funds, Vaya will dedicate \$225,000 in non-recurring community reinvestment funding for center operations over two years. Vaya will also maintain Synergy’s existing annual funding of \$855,000 and commit an additional \$400,000 annually in Medicaid and non-Medicaid funds to support operations.

Wilkes County commissioners are working with Vaya to develop a final proposal, which will include a detailed project timeline and final construction costs, for review by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Once DHHS approves the proposal, design and construction may begin. Members of the Wilkes County FBC Expansion Steering Committee are:

- Daymark Recovery Services: President/CEO Billy West and Regional Operations Director Sarah Dunagan
- Former State Sen. Shirley Randleman

- Home Instead Senior Care: Community Service Representative Tina Nuger
- Project Lazarus: President/CEO Fred Brason
- Synergy Recovery: President/CEO Carl Spake, Clinical Director Verena Miller and attorney Bruce Kaplan
- Wilkes County: Commissioner Chairman Keith Elmore, Commissioner Brian Minton, County Manager John Yates and County Attorney Tony Triplett
- Wilkes County Department of Social Services: Director John Blevins and Child Welfare Program Manager Hal Wilson
- Wilkes County Health Department: Director Rachel Willard
- Wilkes County Sheriff's Office: Sheriff Chris Shew and staff member Logan Kerr
- Wilkes Medical Center: Chief Nursing Officer Susan Bachmeier
- Vaya Health: Chief Community Operations Officer Christina Dupuch and Senior Director of Community Relations Brian Shuping

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.

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