

State opens first mental health facility for adolescents, young adults

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

The Oregon Department of Human Services is working with community partners to open the state's first residential programs for older adolescents and young adults with a history of emotional disorders.

A five-bed home, operated in Clackamas County by ChristieCare, opened this week. Within the next year, two more treatment homes will open in Douglas and Linn counties, operated by ChristieCare and Trillium Family Services, respectively.

"These will be the state's first staffed homes designed to meet the unique needs of older adolescents and young adults ages 17-24," said Bob Nikkel, DHS assistant director for addictions and mental health. "The goal is to help young people make an important life transition and prepare them to live successfully in the community."

Nikkel said young people often do not transition well from youth-oriented services to those for adults. The new homes will focus on assisting these youth to pursue school and employment goals, prepare them for successful independent living and make mental health treatment available, he said.

Residents, who typically will stay in a treatment home for six to nine months, are expected to come from youth mental health and residential programs, foster care and Oregon Youth Authority facilities. Nikkel said approximately 100 adolescents approaching age 17 have been identified in the community mental health system as possible candidates for the treatment homes.

Treatment homes are intended to broaden services to young people who need and may not be receiving them. Data for children show mental health services peak at ages 10 to 14, drop off at age 16, then show an upturn in the adult system starting at age 25. Nikkel said DHS is doing research to determine what happens to youth with mental health disorders between the ages of 17 and 24.

"We believe age-appropriate support for this critical stage of transition will prove beneficial," he said.

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