



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First of its Kind Behavioral Health Center On the Rise

Twelve years after its closure, the building that once housed the original Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital building is being repurposed into the first of its kind Martin Luther King, Jr. Behavioral Health Center.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas led the ceremonial groundbreaking for the \$335-million project, which is intended to serve people struggling with mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and homelessness, as well as those who have been in the criminal justice system.

"We are breathing new life into this building, transforming it into a one-stop-shop for helping some of the most vulnerable members of our community," he said. "With the MLK Behavioral Health Center, we are creating a cutting-edge continuum of care that promotes mental health, recovery, trauma prevention, rehabilitation, and many other essential wrap-around services that foster long-term wellness."

The MLK Behavioral Health Center will house clinical and behavioral staff from the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health and Health Services. Meanwhile, the Departments of Probation and Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, along with the Office of Diversion and Reentry, will sponsor rehabilitative, vocational and training opportunities to give people the skills they need to reintegrate into society. This is the first time all of these County services will be available under one roof.

LA County Mental Health Director Dr. Jonathan Sherin said, "The BHC is an expression of LA County's commitment to shared leadership and collective action. It showcases our strong belief that with care-based solutions, we can and will divert those with significant

needs from the institutions of our streets and our jails, as well as from the emotional, social and spiritual isolation that comes with internal suffering. Today is a proud day for us all as we plant a flag for a future direction that is invested in restorative care and societal justice."

Exodus Recovery is among the community-based organizations that will partner with LA County to provide critical services at the MLK Behavioral Health Center. Exodus Recovery President and CEO Luana Murphy said, "This forward-looking, first of its kind facility will be a model for mental health care of the future and a tribute to the community."

California State Treasurer Fiona Ma attended the ceremonial groundbreaking and presented a scroll in honor of the occasion. "As chair of the California Health Facilities Financing Authority board that approved a \$40 million grant under the Investment in Mental Health Wellness Act of 2013, I am happy to be part of this important milestone achievement for LA County," she said. "This Behavioral Health Center will include 16 of the total new Crisis Residential Treatment beds that are to be funded by the CHFFA grant at four different locations around the County. These programs and facilities save lives, keep people out of jail and hospital emergency rooms, and prevent needless suffering. They steer people away from severe mental illness and toward the road to recovery."

The MLK Behavioral Health Center is the latest addition to the 42-acre MLK Medical Campus in Willowbrook, which already houses the MLK Community Hospital, Outpatient Center, Recuperative Care Center, Mental Health Urgent Care Clinic, and Center for Public Health, which includes the Community Healing and Trauma Prevention Center. The Child and Family Well-Being Center and the Medical Office Building are under construction and will open next year.

Over the last decade, well over \$1 billion has been invested in Willowbrook, dramatically improving the community's amenities. In addition to the still-expanding MLK Medical Campus, Willowbrook has also seen improvements in its public transportation system, streets, parks and libraries, as well as a significant expansion in its pool of affordable apartments.

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