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Press Release

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PBH Opens New Crisis Recovery Center in Union County

When the Crisis Recovery Center of Union County (CRC) opened for business on January 15, it was a glimmer of hope—both for those who experience mental health and substance abuse problems, and for their families and communities. PBH is a public authority organization established in 1974 that is a political subdivision of North Carolina, established under General Statute 122C. As a result of mental health reform legislation passed in 2001, PBH became a Local Management Entity (LME) with responsibility for managing financial resources and directing services for mental health/developmental disabilities/substance abuse needs in its catchment area of Cabarrus, Davidson, Rowan, Stanly and Union counties. As a public authority, PBH is managed by a Board of Directors that is appointed by the County Commissions from each of its five counties.

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“The 2001 business plan identified lack of a crisis continuum across the five counties,” said Pam Shipman, PBH Chief Operating Officer. “Development of a crisis continuum was—and still is—a high priority of the PBH board. We are continuing to work toward development of crisis facilities, with priority for our counties that do not have psychiatric units in their local hospitals. The idea is to divert people from hospital emergency rooms unless they have a medical condition requiring treatment. The goal is to ensure that people receive hospital level of care only when appropriate and that they have access to crisis center or outpatient treatment when hospital level of care is not needed. We want to take care of people locally and use the state hospitals only as a last resort.”

The Crisis Recovery Center is a win-win proposition for consumers and the community. For those requiring treatment for a mental health crisis or detox for substance abuse, it means no longer being transported by family or law enforcement to a hospital emergency room where waits are long and often treatment means being moved to a state psychiatric hospital. For the community, it opens emergency room beds for medical treatment and keeps law enforcement officers on the streets rather than sitting and waiting with a patient at the emergency room. Already, the benefits are being realized as the Union County facility accepted eight patients during its first five days of operation—that’s eight individuals who were able to get immediate treatment at a facility designed to meet their specific needs.

“The PBH Board of Directors is so proud of this new Crisis Center and for the benefits it will provide to citizens of Union County. The PBH Board is committed to offering services to consumers in their home communities. We know that recovery is best achieved when people can receive care close to home, where they have the support of their families and friends. We want to thank PBH and DAYMARK staffs for all the work that went into designing this safe, comfortable, and beautiful facility that will offer the care people need to start their journey to recovery,” said Betty Babb, Chairman of the PBH Board of Directors.

The Crisis Recovery Center will provide short stays—usually from four to six days but up to 15—for people 18 years of age and older who require crisis stabilization, medical detox, or both. After-care is an important part of recovery for people with mental illness or substance abuse conditions. The Crisis Recovery Center will ensure that the people they serve are connected with appropriate community treatment once they are discharged. The facility was developed by PBH and is located at 1408 East Franklin Street in Monroe across from the CMC-Union hospital emergency room. PBH has contracted with DAYMARK Recovery Services to operate the facility. The crisis center is the second of its kind in PBH’s coverage area. The first was opened in 2005 in Cabarrus County at 1309 S. Cannon Blvd. in Kannapolis, and also is operated by DAYMARK Recovery Services. The greatest need for psychiatric care is for adults that are under the age of 55, but there are only two psychiatric inpatient units located in the PBH counties. PBH has contracts with Stanly Regional and Rowan Regional hospitals for inpatient psychiatric services. PBH plans to open a third Crisis Recovery Center in Davidson County.

Each of the existing crisis facilities has a 16-bed capacity, with a 24-hour staff that includes licensed nursing care, physician supervision, qualified mental health professionals, certified substance abuse professionals and crisis workers. Services include: comprehensive assessment and screening; facility-based crisis stabilization; involuntary petition evaluations; discharge planning and placement; and transportation.

Individuals experiencing a crisis may call the PBH Access Call Center line at 1-800-939-5911 for an over-the-phone assessment by a trained counselor who will authorize services as needed. The counselor may recommend that the individual go directly to the Crisis Recovery Center as a walk-in. Individuals can choose to walk in to the facility for help, or can be brought by family members, professional contacts or a law enforcement officer. No appointments are necessary. Calls may also be placed directly to the Crisis Recovery Center at (704) 635-2080 in Union County and (704) 933-3212 in Cabarrus County.

Union County was chosen as the site of the second crisis center because of the high need. The county has one of the fastest growing populations in the state. Location of the facility itself was strategically chosen because of its proximity to the Union County hospital, according to Shipman. “We were thrilled when we saw that this building was for sale just at the time we were looking because it is directly across from the hospital’s emergency department. We never even looked at another building.”

The building, formerly a gynecologist’s office, was gutted and remodeled at a cost of approximately \$2.5 million (\$1.5 million to purchase the property and an additional \$1 million to complete remodeling). The facility is spacious, bright and inviting. In addition to the 16 patient rooms, the facility includes space for individual counseling and visitation by family, as well as a special area for evaluation of people seeking help for a crisis or a substance abuse need. “The facility is designed to promote recovery,” said Shipman. “One of the things consumers have asked for is a place in the community where they can come for help other than the hospital. We want the facility to offer hope to people that need our help. Our goal is for people to *choose* to come to the crisis center for help. We recognize that most consumers don’t need to be hospitalized to treat their conditions. However, up to this point there haven’t been enough alternatives.”

Part of the PBH crisis continuum has been DAYMARK’s Advanced Access (urgent care) walk-in clinic which allows individuals to go to DAYMARK locations from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday through Friday without an appointment. The crisis continuum also includes a Mobile Crisis Response Team (also operated by DAYMARK) which takes services to the individual. Mobile Crisis services are for serious but not emergency situations because the team has a two-hour period to respond to the call. The Crisis Recovery Center offers another level of service on the crisis continuum which falls between Mobile Crisis and Advanced Access (urgent care), and inpatient treatment (emergency care) in a hospital.

It will cost about \$2 million annually to operate the facility, with almost \$280,000 of that provided by Union County especially for this program. To cover the cost of ongoing facility operations, PBH has re-allocated existing funds which would have been used to cover the high cost of inpatient services.

“There is no new funding for this,” explained Shipman. “PBH is re-aligning existing funds that would have been used for inpatient care. One of the main reasons that it is taking so long to put the crisis continuum into place is that we have to find the money to pay for the services. This is not easy to do, especially during a recession; we have had significant cuts in state funding for mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse funds that are managed by PBH. ”

Although located in Union County, the crisis center will serve individuals in all five PBH counties, just as the facility in Kannapolis has served consumers from all the PBH counties since 2005. The Crisis Recovery Center of Union County doubles the number of beds available in the PBH counties. The center is expected to serve about 1,000 individuals annually, and will promote the values of recovery, self-determination, person-centered planning, and consumer driven services.

PBH Chief Executive Officer Dan Coughlin said, “This new crisis facility represents our commitment to people who are experiencing some of life’s most disabling conditions: mental illness and addictions. Our goal is to offer a supportive and healing environment that will help them on their way to recovery. I want to thank the Union County law enforcement agencies that work so collaboratively with PBH every day to take care of people needing mental health or substance abuse treatment. I also want to recognize Lucy Drake of the PBH Board for her vision and Sheriff Cathey for his leadership in advocating for this facility. Support from the judicial system has been tremendous, and we especially appreciate the efforts of Judge Chris Bragg, also a PBH Board member. We also want to thank Matthew Delk and the Union County Commissioners for their confidence and increased financial support to help us operate the facility. We look forward to increased collaboration with CMC-Union in the ongoing operations; this collaboration will be a critical factor in successful operations. DAYMARK Recovery Services has been an

excellent partner for PBH in providing care for people in crisis, and we are pleased that they will be the operators of the Crisis Recovery Center of Union County. Making operations a success will “take a village” and we certainly have experienced this level of commitment from everyone in Union County.”

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