
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2024

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2023



Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Independence Mental Health Institute

Background

The Independence Mental Health Institute (MHI), operated by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provides acute psychiatric care for children who need mental health treatment. The Independence MHI is licensed as a hospital and is also accredited by the Joint Commission (formerly known as the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations). The MHI opened on May 1, 1873, and for the first seven decades of operation, the Independence MHI was a custodial facility with individuals being hospitalized for the greater part of their lives. In the late 1950s, with the advent of psychiatric medication and the recruitment of qualified professionals, the emphasis at the MHI shifted to treatment rather than housing individuals. With the change in philosophy, the population decreased from 1,800 individuals in 1946 to approximately 300 individuals in 1970. For FY 2021, the General Assembly provided funding for 60 beds at Independence. Prior to 2023, the Independence MHI provided acute psychiatric care for both children and adults. In 2023, the General Assembly designated the Independence MHI for specialized treatment and care of complex youth, while transferring the treatment of adults ordered by a court into the custody of the State to the Cherokee MHI.

Populations Served

The Independence MHI provides services for children and includes 56 child and adolescent beds.

The most common diagnoses for the children and adolescents served are oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, depression and other mood disorders, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders.

Prior to 2023, the most common diagnoses for the adults served at Independence were schizoaffective disorder, depression and other mood disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, and intermittent explosive disorder. In many cases, individuals had a co-occurring substance abuse disorder.

The majority of individuals admitted at Independence are committed involuntarily by the court because they are a danger to themselves or others. Other admissions include individuals who have committed a crime and are at the MHI for an evaluation to determine if they are competent to stand trial and individuals found not guilty of a crime by reason of insanity.

More Information

HHS Independence MHI: hhs.iowa.gov/mhds/mental-health/in-patient/mental-health-institutes/independence

LSA Staff Contact: Lindsey Ingraham (515.281.6764) lindsey.ingraham@legis.iowa.gov

Treatment Services Provided

There are a variety of both subacute- and acute-care treatment services provided at the Independence MHI, including:

- Counseling
- Psychotropic medication
- Psychiatric rehabilitation classes
- Leisure skills development
- Recreational activities
- Discharge planning

Each individual has a personalized treatment plan based on individual assets and needs, including physical, psychological, educational/vocational, and social/cultural needs. There is a wide variety of therapies available in addition to psychotherapy including recreational therapy, music therapy, and creative arts. Patients at the MHI have a number of rights and privileges designed to safeguard personal dignity and respect cultural, psychosocial, and spiritual values.

Funding

The Independence MHI is funded 89.0% by General Fund appropriations; 10.0% by third-party payments such as Medicaid, Medicare, or private insurance; and 1.0% by federal funds.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter [226](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [441—28](#) and [441—29](#)

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