
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2020

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2020



Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

Cherokee Mental Health Institute

Background

The Cherokee Mental Health Institute (MHI), operated by the Department of Human Services (DHS), provides acute psychiatric care for children and adults who need mental health treatment. The Cherokee 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). After the MHI opened on August 15, 1902, treatment in the early years at the facility included working on the farm and other jobs within the hospital, as well as hydrotherapy and massage. In the 1950s, with the advent of psychiatric medication and the recruitment of qualified professionals, the emphasis at the MHI began shifting to treatment, rather than housing individuals. With the change in philosophy, the population decreased from over 1,000 individuals in 1960 to approximately 330 individuals in 1969. For FY 2019, the General Assembly provided funding for 36 beds at Cherokee.

Populations Served

The Cherokee MHI provides services for both children and adults and includes 24 adult psychiatric beds and 12 child and adolescent beds.

The most common diagnoses for the adults served at the Cherokee MHI are schizoaffective disorder, depression and other mood disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, and intermittent explosive disorder. In many cases, individuals have a co-occurring substance abuse disorder.

The most common diagnoses for 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.

The majority of individuals admitted at Cherokee 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.

Treatment Services Provided

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

- Counseling
- Psychotropic medication
- Psychiatric rehabilitation classes
- Leisure skills development

More Information

DHS Cherokee MHI: dhs.iowa.gov/mhds/mental-health/in-patient/mental-health-institutes/cherokee
LSA Staff Contact: Jess Benson (515.689.0598) jess.benson@legis.iowa.gov

- Recreational activities
- Discharge planning

Individuals have their own personalized treatment plans 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 Cherokee MHI is funded 86.5% by General Fund appropriations and 13.5% by third-party payments such as Medicaid, Medicare, or private insurance.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter [226](#)

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

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