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Commissioner Jesson visits Worthington to highlight vital mental health investment

\$39M in governor's budget will maintain critical mental health services for Minnesotans

WORTHINGTON, Minn. – A proposal in Gov. Mark Dayton's budget aims to help providers of intensive mental health services stay in business. The governor's two-year budget recommends more than \$39 million to enhance Minnesota's continuum of care for mental health, including \$5.5 million to stabilize and reform the mental health services payment structure.

"We've made good progress developing the right combination of services for people, but low payment rates are making it hard for providers to keep their doors open," said Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson. "Without the services these providers offer too many Minnesotans will be cut off from the care they need. The governor's budget recognizes this and is investing to ensure they get paid enough to stay afloat."

On Friday, Jesson visited Southwestern Mental Health Center's Unity House Intensive Residential Treatment Program in Worthington to highlight the proposal. Jesson toured the facility and met with program leaders, who said current state reimbursement rates are not enough to cover daily operating costs for the 10-bed center. The governor's budget proposal provides immediate one-time grants to these programs, as well as rate increases for mobile crisis services, to retain the programs in the short-term. The governor's plan also includes conducting an in-depth analysis of the state's payment structure for mental health services to develop reforms to stabilize the state's financially fragile mental health system over the long-term.

"This proposed investment is crucial to our continued ability to serve Minnesotans in southwestern Minnesota who need a high level of residential care," said Scott Johnson, executive director of Southwestern Mental Health Center, which has locations in Rock, Nobles, Pipestone, Jackson and Cottonwood counties. "I thank Gov. Dayton for his leadership to improve mental health services."

One in four people experience some form of mental illness in their lifetime. The governor's mental health package will impact the hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans with mental illness and their families through invests in a comprehensive range of care from prevention, early intervention and treatment, to supports for long-term recovery. In addition to rate stabilization, proposals expand mental health crisis services, increase capacity to serve individuals with complex conditions, develop more supportive housing options for adults with serious mental illness, expand access to community-based

services, grow the mental health workforce by expanding psychiatric residency programs, and invest in services to meet children's mental health needs.

Overviews of the governor's budget initiatives to [strengthen Minnesota's mental health system](#) and [focus on children's mental health](#), as well as more details about the proposals, are on the DHS [2015 session fact sheets page](#).