

Hospital opens behavioral, psychiatric units

Mineral Area Regional Medical Center creates 52 positions

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FARMINGTON — For the past five years, two wings on the second floor of Mineral Area Regional Medical Center have pretty much been unused.

The hospital just spent about half a million dollars renovating those two wings to open two behavioral/psychiatric care units.

Kevin Thurman, marketing director for the hospital, said 52 positions will be created and 46 people have already been hired, not including two doctors and two nurse practitioners. He estimates the creation of these units will result in about \$2 million in payroll that will impact the local economy.

One 10-bed unit will be for adults, 18 to 54 years old, who have major depression, or other disorders such as schizophrenia.

The other 10-bed unit will be a geriatric unit for people over the age of 55. Most will suffer from some form of dementia such as Alzheimer's Disease.

Torie Young, community education manager for Mineral Area Behavioral Health, said the hospital took their first geriatric patient on Friday but it could be a week or two before the units officially open. Horizons Behavioral Health is the contracted company that oversees these two programs.

Both voluntary and involuntary patients will receive 24-hour inpatient crisis stabilization, a multi-dimensional diagnostic evaluation and short-term interdisciplinary treatment. Average length of stay will be 14 to 16 days.

Doctors will first try to rule out an underlying medical cause. While some patients will have dual issues, the primary issue must be psychiatric. It is not a chemical dependency unit.

Admission criteria for patients are that they are in actual or potential danger (to self or others) that can not be managed at a less intensive level of care; need 24-hour nursing care and ongoing clinical supervision for medication management; or need a differential diagnostic assessment that requires intensive clinical supervision and testing that can not be provided on an outpatient basis.

Patients can be referred by psychiatrists, nursing homes, other hospitals, a doctor or a family member. Joe Easter, program director of for the Mineral Area Behavioral Health Center, said Parkland Health Center does have a general psychiatric unit and they could refer any overflow to Mineral Area.

Easter said there is someone available 24/7 for crisis intervention. For more information, call 573-756-4581.

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