



Andy Beshear
GOVERNOR

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Team Kentucky, RiverValley Behavioral Health Partner to Care for Vulnerable Youth with Complex Mental, Behavioral Health Needs

The BIRCH, the 10-bed unit begins admitting male youth in the state's care

Owensboro, Ky. (Aug. 27, 2024) – Team Kentucky is announcing a partnership with RiverValley Behavioral Health that will provide complex mental and behavioral health care to vulnerable youth in the state's care.

The BIRCH, a 10-bed inpatient program, is designed to meet the behavioral health needs of male youths ages 12-17 who are in the care of the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), or dually committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice, and who cannot be served in existing treatment settings.

“Today we are providing a little hope -- because now there is help,” Gov. Andy Beshear said. “This program is helping us meet the needs of those who could not be served in our existing programs. This special space will assist the youth who need and deserve a higher level of care.”

As the Community Mental Health Center for Owensboro and the surrounding area, RiverValley Behavioral Health operates a psychiatric hospital for children and adolescents where the new program will be housed.

“We are profoundly grateful for the partnership between the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and River Valley Behavioral Health Hospital and the BIRCH Program. Together, with this one of kind program, we are creating an opportunity for a model program to support children facing the most complex behavioral and mental health challenges,” said DCBS Commissioner



Lesla Dennis. “This collaboration embodies our shared commitment to nurturing their well-being and ensuring they receive the comprehensive care they truly deserve. Together, by joining forces, we will make a meaningful difference in the lives of children within the Commonwealth of Kentucky.”

“We are thrilled to open The BIRCH Program at RiverValley Behavioral Health Hospital, an initiative that represents a significant advancement in the care and support of our most vulnerable youth,” states Dr. Wanda Figueroa-Peralta, RVBH President & CEO. “This program reflects our commitment to providing the highest level of care for those who need it most, ensuring every young person has the opportunity to heal, grow and thrive. We are proud to be part of this innovative partnership and excited to see the positive impact it will have on our community.”

The new program is funded through a contract with DCBS in partnership with the Department for Medicaid Services (DMS).

DMS Commissioner Lisa Lee said, “Medicaid and the Kentucky Children’s Health Insurance Program (KCHIP) serves over half of Kentucky’s children. We are excited about the opportunities this partnership brings to the health care system for Kentucky’s children. We are seeing an increase in the need for behavioral health services for children and the BIRCH program at RiverValley Behavioral Health Hospital is designed to fill a gap in care that has existed for too long.”

The BIRCH Program is a part of a larger ongoing transformation of Kentucky’s system of care for youth inclusive of prevention, early intervention, as well as higher levels of residential and inpatient psychiatric care.

The BIRCH program is designed to serve youth with a history of challenging behaviors related to their mental health conditions. Lengths of stays will be longer than typical inpatient acute psychiatric hospitals.

Admissions will be determined by an admission review committee that includes clinical representation from the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (BHDID), Department of Juvenile Justice Mental Health Treatment Director, DMS as well as DCBS and RVBH.

“In partnership with our Community Mental Health Center, RiverValley, we are committed to continuing to grow a comprehensive behavioral health system of care,” said BHDID Commissioner Dr. Katie Marks. “The BIRCH Program reflects the dedication of state and community partners, working hand-in-hand to meet the individualized needs of each and every Kentucky youth.”

The first youth have already arrived. A ribbon cutting was held on Tuesday, August 27 at the RVBH Hospital, 1000 Industrial Drive, Owensboro, at 11 a.m.

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