

PSYCHOTIC, from page 4

Multnomah County, according to multiple providers interviewed for this story.

Traditional hospitals often discharge patients who use meth as soon as they're stabilized, sending them back out into the community only to return to an E.R. at a later date when they have another episode.

Providers and people with mental health diagnoses told Street Roots that while mental health facilities point patients with dual diagnosis to drug treatment programs, alcohol and drug treatment facilities point them toward mental health treatment – both sides of the provider spectrum tell the patient they're ill-equipped to treat them until the other issue is dealt with, leaving the patient without any treatment at all.

This problem was also a key finding of an independent study of Multnomah County's mental health care system released earlier this year. It revealed a mental health care network that's tough to navigate and challenging to access for those who need it most.

County Commissioner Meieran, who initiated the study, said she knows this is an issue.

"The issue is so profound," Meieran said, "and it intersects with so many different areas of public safety and housing and workforce, and all of these different issues."

Now that the study has been completed, she said she's trying to untangle funding sources and their requirements so she can determine if there are more effective ways to utilize mental health care dollars.

She said the county is still in the "idea phase," but in many ways, she's attempting to re-imagine what a mental health care system that would serve the county's most vulnerable would look like.

It might be mental health counselors placed strategically at places in the community where people experiencing homelessness already congregate. It could be a center where people could hang out, paint, read and if they want, get a little mental health counseling.

Angel Prater, executive director at peer-support provider FolkTime, Inc., thinks investing in peer-run respite might be a solution for some folks dealing with dual

diagnosis, rather than traditional psychiatric hospitals that have risk factors determining what policies and procedures are in place.

"They're done all over the world, but we don't have any in Oregon," she said. Everyone who works at these facilities has some level of lived experience, there are more negotiations than rules, and it's a place where people can go "hit their reset button" without losing their power, she said.

A recovered methamphetamine user, Prater has experienced psychosis while using the drug, she said. She said that when a person is experiencing these delusions, she knows from her own experiences that being approached by someone who is willing to listen and validate their experience is more powerful than someone who is only interested in telling them what they need to do.

Ultimately, Multnomah County is responsible for the solving the problem – mental health and addictions treatment services are in its portfolio, but it will likely need some help from the city to fully mitigate what's become a humanitarian crisis.

But as the county struggles with figuring out the right way to handle the problem, resources for new programs just aren't there. The county has to make 3 percent budget cuts across all its departments in the upcoming budget cycle, Meieran said.

In 2019, however, Multnomah County will be asking Oregon Legislature to increase Health Share's reimbursements to service providers for drug and alcohol treatment.

While reimbursements to pay for mental health care are already low – Meieran's study also found the mental health care workforce across the county is "overburdened and underpaid" – reimbursements for drug and alcohol disorder treatments are even lower.

"By bringing those two on par, the hope and expectation would be maybe you can better integrate services to treat both of those conditions," said Meieran.

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**Executive Director**

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- ◆ Gather to name and remember the people who died on Portland's streets in the last year.
- ◆ Show support for the Foster Street Shelter and commit to collaborative care of our shared space.
- ◆ Call on our civic leaders to end punitive sweeps and over-policing.
- ◆ Commit as a community to ensuring equitable access to
 - bathrooms,
 - garbage services,
 - safe overnight camping areas.

When: December 21st
5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Where: St. Mark's
Lutheran Church
5415 SE Powell Blvd.
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We will gather at St. Mark's for 3/4 mile silent procession to the Foster Street Shelter, where we will hold the vigil.

Follow this link for updated information and details on options for those who are not comfortable walking.

www.smpdx.org/vigil.html



Our growing list of sponsors: Southeast Organizing and the Southeast People of Faith, Right to Survive, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, and Operation Nightwatch.

For more information contact Katy Rustvold (katyrustvold@mac.com) or Bonnie Beadles-Bohling, (hbeadlesbohling@gmail.com)

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