

2026

ANNUAL REPORT



— WILL COUNTY
**Community
Mental Health
Board**





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The Will County Mental Health Board is a special purpose unit of government operating in accordance with the Community Mental Health Act (Illinois Compiled Status, Chapter 405, Act 20, Section 0.1 et.seq.). The Will County Mental Health Board was established following the passage of a tax referendum in November 2022 allowing for an annual property tax levy to fund programs and services that serve individuals who live with mental health conditions, substance use challenges and intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families.

MISSION

To provide leadership to ensure prevention, early intervention, mitigation and treatment of mental illness, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse by identifying, planning, coordinating and contracting quality services for the citizens of Will County, Illinois.

VALUES

- Empower individuals and families toward mental wellness and resiliency.
- Committed to transforming lives and systems through advocacy, planning and collaboration.
- Provide education and offer support for services in mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse.
- Improve community perception and decrease stigma surrounding mental health services.

WCCMHB MEMBERS

Elnalyn Costa

President

Patricia Meade

Vice President

Jessica Parks

Secretary

Terri King

Treasurer

Tessa Quinlan

Member

Cristina Centeno

Member

Juhie Faheem

Member

Khadija Sufi

Member

Tim McGannon

Member



The WCCMHB meets the second Monday of the month at 3:30 PM at the Will County Health Department, 501 Ella Avenue, Community Room 1005A/B Joliet, IL unless otherwise specified on the web page.

<https://willcounty.gov/County-Offices/Boards-And-Commissions/Boards-and-Commission-Directory/Will-County-Community-Mental-Health-Board>

2025 GRANT CYCLE PROGRAM

INAUGURAL GRANT CYCLE CLOSING

2025 was the Inaugural Grant Cycle year for the WCCMHB.

\$5 million dollars was awarded to **42 Grantees**.



PROGRAM PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

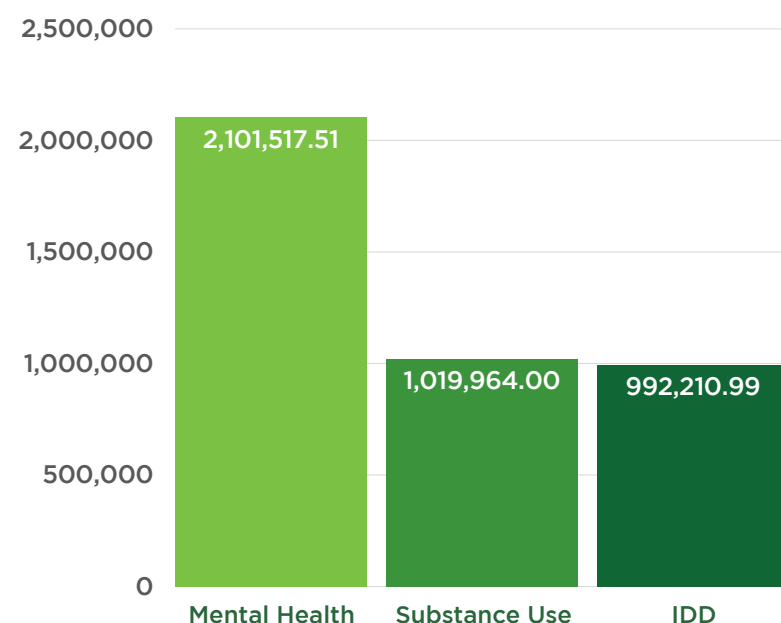
FISCAL YEAR 2025 | 4/1/25 – 3/31/26

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WCCMHB funded 42 programs across Mental Health, Substance Use, and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) which demonstrated continued implementation advancement, responsible fiscal management, and broad community impact throughout FY25. Expenditures remained within awarded funding levels, while funded programs supported active service delivery, expanded community reach, and sustained both new and existing program staff.

YEAR-TO-DATE EXPENDITURES | \$4,113,693

82% Awards Reimbursed

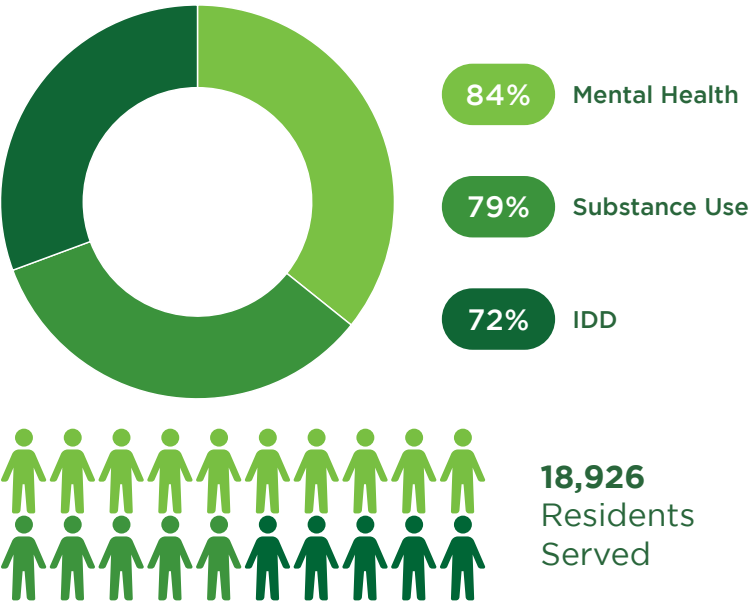


FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

FY2025 expenditures reflected continued growth and funding utilization across Mental Health, Substance Use, and IDD programs. Spending levels supported strong rates of program completion, sustained staffing capacity, expanded service accessibility, active community-based operations, ongoing service delivery, and continued provider participation throughout the fiscal year.

Year-to-date expenditures reflected the transition from early implementation and start-up activities into more stable service delivery and operational maturity. Overall spending remained aligned with grantee projections and approved budgets.

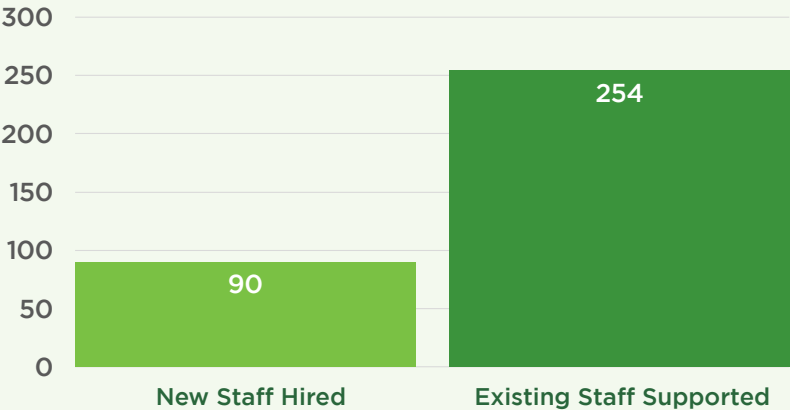
AVERAGE PROJECT COMPLETION



PROGRAM OUTCOMES & REACH

Average project completion rates indicated consistent progress across all funding pillars. Mental Health programs demonstrated the strongest rates of project completion and sustained implementation progress, while Substance Use and IDD programs continued active implementation and service expansion.

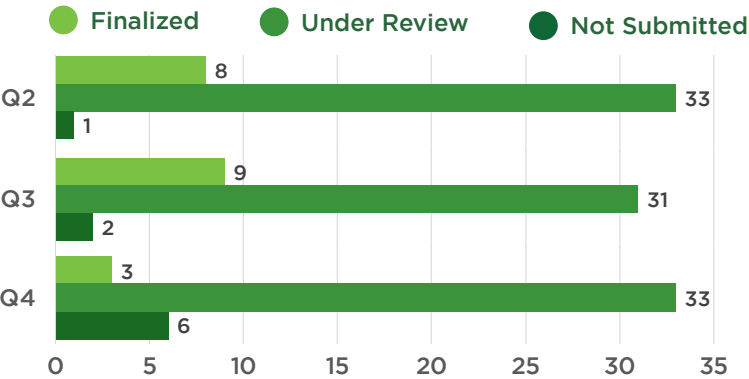
WCCMHB funded programs continued expanding community reach and service accessibility across Will County, while IDD programs maintained targeted, specialized support for a focused population.



PROGRAM STAFF UTILIZATION

WCCMHB funding supported both new staff hiring and the retention of existing personnel across funded programs.

Continued staffing growth has strengthened provider operations, expanded service availability, and supported continuity of care.



REPORTING STATUS

Reporting and compliance activities continued, with submissions progressing through review and document tracking. Ongoing outreach and follow-up efforts supported reporting completion, documentation tracking, and continued fiscal oversight

SUMMARY

Throughout FY2025, the 42 WCCMHB funded programs demonstrated continued progress across Mental Health, Substance Use, and IDD service areas through sustained service delivery, operational growth, expanded community reach, and continued investment in provider capacity. Program outcomes reflected continued utilization, strengthened provider participation, strong levels of program completion, ongoing staffing support, and continued advancement of community-based services and funded initiatives.

2026 GRANT CYCLE CALENDAR

FRIDAY January 2	N/A	708 Board Grant Application Launch
TUESDAY January 7	10 AM & 5 PM	Technical Assistance Sessions (Hybrid)
FRIDAY January 10	2 PM – 4 PM	Virtual Office Hours for Grant Applicants
FRIDAY January 30	N/A	2026 Grant Cycle Application Deadline
FEBRUARY – MARCH 2026	N/A	Grant Applications are Reviewed and Scored
~TUESDAY April 1	N/A	Grant Awards are Finalized and Recipients Notified
TUESDAY July 15	N/A	First Quarter Performance Reporting and Reimbursement
WEDNESDAY October 15	N/A	Second Quarter Performance Reporting and Reimbursement
2027		
MONDAY January 4	N/A	2027 Grant Cycle Launch. Applications accepted through Friday, January 29, 2027
THURSDAY January 15	N/A	Third Quarter Performance Reporting and Reimbursement
TUESDAY April 14	N/A	Fourth and FINAL Quarter Performance Reporting and Reimbursement

2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Community Health Needs Assessment commissioned by the Will County Health Department, conducted by MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships) and approved by the Illinois Department of Public Health will serve as the needs assessment data for the Will County Community Mental Health Board 2026 Grant Cycle. The MAPP IPlan identifies Behavior Health and Substance Use as one of three core health priorities for the residents of Will County.

The Strategic Priorities for the 2026 Grant Cycle are outlined below.



- 1 Crisis Supports and Service Gaps:** The Will County Community Behavioral Health Needs Assessment identifies a lack of programs and services that focus on the early identification and timely support of mental health, substance use and/or developmental disability challenges for early childhood, youth and young adults and their families. The WCCMHB is eager to partner with providers to increase education, raise awareness and improve clinical and peer support programs and services. Families often carry the responsibility of obtaining services, coordinating care and working hard to meet the needs of family members with mental health, substance use and/or developmental disability challenges. Case Management and peer support are valued services for families who are facing the challenges of finding, obtaining and maintaining support and assistance for their loved one.

Prisons and jails incarcerate a disproportionate number of individuals with current or past mental health conditions, yet these facilities often struggle to meet the demand for adequate treatment. Successful transition back into the community requires specialized support and coordinated assistance. The WCCMHB seeks to collaborate with local providers to implement case management services for individuals discharged from the Will County Jail, ensuring they receive the continuity of care needed for stability and recovery.

- 2 Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD):** People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) benefit most when they have access to a coordinated set of supports that promote independence, inclusion, safety, and quality of life. The WCCMHB is eager to provide funding to providers that offer direct care and supervision in community-based settings for the purpose of promoting social, physical, and emotional well-being in a structured setting. Additional consideration will be given to services that provide relief for unpaid family or primary care givers, who are currently meeting all service needs of the customer.

3 Early Intervention and Prevention: Experiencing a mental health challenge or substance use disorder can be overwhelming. Yet recovery is possible when individuals have access to the right tools and supportive systems. Unfortunately, the stigma surrounding mental health and substance use remains pervasive in our communities. This stigma can have serious consequences—sometimes even causing individuals experiencing suicidal ideation before seeking the support they need.

Early intervention is crucial for individuals living with a mental health challenge or substance use disorder, as it can significantly improve outcomes and support long-term recovery. Beyond the impact of stigma, individuals frequently encounter practical barriers to accessing care, including the cost of services, limited provider availability, and insufficient transportation options. These obstacles can significantly delay or prevent people from obtaining the timely and appropriate support they need.

Suicide prevention involves identifying risk factors early, increasing access to care, reducing stigma, and ensuring individuals receive timely, compassionate support.

Implementing **prevention** for mental health and substance use requires a layered, community-wide approach that strengthens protective factors, reduces risk, and ensures that children, youth and young adults receive support early—before challenges escalate.

The Will County Community Mental Health Board is committed to funding providers who prioritize early intervention and prevention and demonstrate a strong commitment to collaborative service delivery across agencies.

4 Transportation: Transportation is a persistent barrier to mental health services, particularly for individuals who lack access to a personal vehicle, live in areas with limited public transit, or face mobility limitations. These challenges often result in missed appointments, delayed treatment, and inconsistent engagement in care. The Will County Community Mental Health Board seeks to fund agencies who have practical solutions when a lack of transportation is a barrier to efficient and effective services.

5 Workforce Development: Increasing the supply of behavioral health professionals is one way to work toward increasing access to behavioral health, substance use and intellectual/developmental services in Will County. The 2026 MAPP IPlan again makes clear that there is a shortage of mental health professionals resulting in limited availability of services and extended wait times for psychiatric, medication management and counseling services. The WCCMHB seeks to collaborate with area providers to incentivize individuals to enter the social services field of study.

The Will County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) relies on the October 2025 Will County Health Department IPlan as the primary source for county-wide behavioral health needs assessment data. The IPlan reaffirms Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorders as critical public health priorities due to their widespread and cross-cutting impact on individuals, families and communities throughout Will County. These challenges continue to place significant strain on healthcare systems, social services, schools, law enforcement and community support networks.



Although recent improvements have been made in expanding access to behavioral health providers, substantial service gaps persist. The county's mental health provider-to-population ratio improved from 1,010:1 in 2019 to 560:1 in 2024; however, this remains significantly below both state and national benchmarks of 320:1. This disparity underscores the urgent need to expand provider capacity, particularly in under-served and high-need communities where residents continue to face limited or delayed access to care.

Mental health outcomes across the county have also deteriorated. Self-reported poor mental health days increased from an average of 3.1 days per month in 2019 to 4.8 days per month in 2025, reflecting the growing emotional and psychological burden experienced by residents. Community stakeholders and providers consistently report ongoing impacts associated with anxiety, depression, trauma and social isolation, many of which have been exacerbated by the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access to services remains one of the most significant barriers to care. Residents continue to encounter challenges related to transportation, limited local crisis response infrastructure, insufficient residential treatment options and shortages of specialized providers. These barriers disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including children under age 12, individuals living with a neurodivergent diagnosis, non-English-speaking residents, uninsured individuals, under-insured individuals and older adults relying on Medicare coverage. The limited number of providers accepting Medicare further restricts access for seniors and individuals with complex healthcare needs.



Behavioral health providers throughout the county report increasing rates of co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, as well as elevated levels of anxiety, depression, trauma-related conditions and neurodivergence. These trends demonstrate a growing need for integrated, trauma-informed and culturally responsive systems of care capable of addressing complex and overlapping needs. In addition, stigma surrounding mental health and substance use treatment, ongoing service shortages and limited community awareness continue to prevent many residents from seeking or receiving appropriate care.

Several risk factors contribute to poor behavioral health outcomes and substance misuse across the county, including diagnosed mental illness, untreated trauma, substance use disorders and social isolation. Collectively, these findings reinforce the critical need for sustained investment in prevention, early intervention, treatment access and recovery support services to improve behavioral health outcomes and strengthen the overall well-being of Will County residents.

CONNECT Will County is a countywide behavioral health initiative designed to replicate and expand upon the demonstrated success of the Community Cares Program, which has been facilitated in the City of Joliet and partially funded by the Will County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB). Building upon this proven model, CONNECT Will County seeks to address persistent gaps in access to behavioral health services across Will County by creating a centralized, accessible pathway to counseling and psychiatric support services for residents in need.

The program is designed to improve quality of life and promote emotional well-being by reducing barriers to care and increasing timely access to behavioral health resources. Initially facilitated through the Joliet Fire Department, CONNECT Will County will provide residents with direct access to a trained social worker through a centralized intake line at 815-724-3506. Individuals contacting the program will receive compassionate support, assistance navigating available resources and help securing an initial counseling appointment when appropriate.

815-724-3506 | CONNECT WILL COUNTY



CONNECT Will County is specifically designed to serve populations that frequently encounter significant obstacles when attempting to access behavioral health services. The program prioritizes support for individuals who are uninsured or under-insured, residents experiencing difficulty locating providers who accept Medicaid, children ages three and older and Spanish-speaking residents who may face linguistic or cultural barriers to care. The initiative also addresses the needs of individuals who have historically struggled to engage in consistent, effective and timely counseling services due to system fragmentation, provider shortages or limited service coordination.

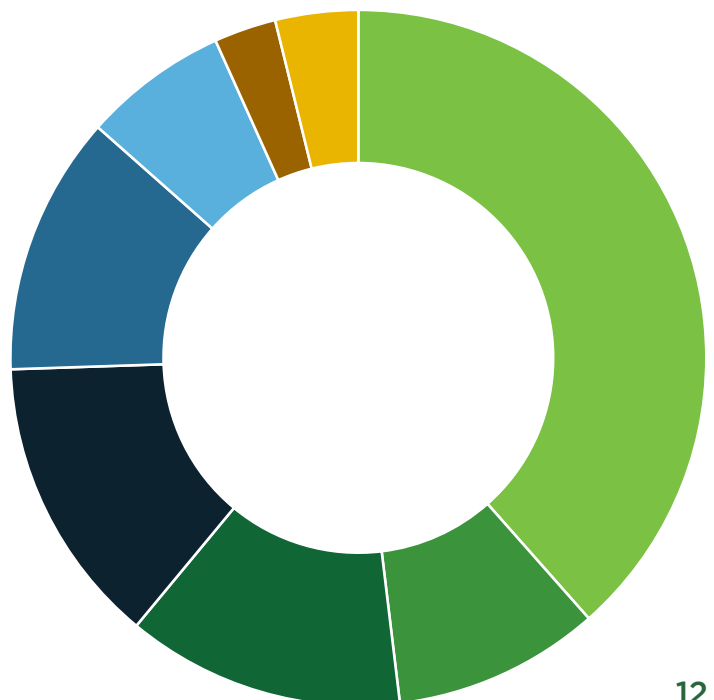
By offering a streamlined and supportive entry point into behavioral health care, CONNECT Will County aims to strengthen early intervention efforts, reduce unmet mental health needs and improve long-term outcomes for vulnerable residents throughout the county. The program's coordinated and person-centered approach is intended to increase access to care, enhance continuity of services and ensure that residents can more effectively connect with the behavioral health support necessary to achieve stability and improved overall wellness.

FINANCIALS

ITEM	EXPENSES	REVENUES
2026 Budget		\$2,676,538.00
2026 Tax Levy		\$10,000,000.00
Will County Health Department Behavioral Health Division	\$4,000,000.00	
2026 Sub-recipient Grant Awards	\$4,000,000.00	
Continuum of Care Grants	\$700,000.00	
CONNECT Will County	\$1,000,000.00	
2026 Emergency Funding	\$300,000.00	
2026 Operating Funds	\$400,000.00	

EXPENSES BREAKDOWN

- Will County Health Department Behavioral Health Division | \$4,000,000.00
- Connect Will County | \$1,000,000.00
- Mental Health Pillar | \$1,343,305.00
- I/DD Pillar | \$1,399,576.93
- Substance Use Pillar | \$1,253,614.83
- Continuum of Care Grants | \$700,000.00
- 2026 Emergency Funding | \$300,000.00
- Operating | \$400,000.00





WILL COUNTY Community Mental Health Board

2026 Will County Community Mental Health Board - Grant Recipients -

2morrowstartz2day Inc

Awarded \$40,000

Due to the violence, 2Morrow Startz 2Day's mission has been to support community through shaping youth within impoverished communities through the establishment of 2morrowStartz 2day Community Center programs and wraparound services. 2Morrow Startz 2Day will utilize the Communities That Care (CTC) Model, to improve effectiveness of the framework and outcomes of participants 11 – 24 years old. CTC is a prevention system that gives communities the tools to address adolescent health and behavior problems through a focus on empirically identified risk and protective factors.

Public Health and CTC mobilizes community leaders and a community prevention coalition to plan and implement a set of tested interventions to reduce elevated risk factors and promote protective factors in the community. 2Morrow Startz 2Day has established mentors for youth development to help them navigate with life skills, and prepare for tertiary education and career opportunities; this includes, but is not limited to, resume building, job readiness skills, tutoring and mentoring, access to behavioral health and trauma informed care, college visits, mock job interviews and access to real income earning workforce opportunities. 2S2D creates individualized plans and tracks the progress through the individualized plans to help them grow into their full potential and seek higher quality of life.

Agape Missions, NFP

Awarded \$40,000

Agape Missions, NFP seeks to continue its Reentry Behavioral Health Program to better support justice-involved and socially vulnerable adults in Will County as they transition back into the community. Agape would provide transitional case management, holistic supportive services, and a behavioral health component to reduce risk factors of recidivism and increase success of post-release. Agape is experienced in delivering the direct services required to support individuals involved with Parole and Probation. Core program elements include individualized case management, behavioral health coordination, referrals to treatment and supportive services, assistance with compliance requirements, and ongoing client monitoring to promote stability, accountability, and successful community reintegration. The program serves adults age 18 and older, with a focus on individuals returning from detention/incarceration who often experience trauma, instability, and limited access to behavioral health services.

Blueprint Agency**Awarded \$79,000**

BluePrint Agency NFP (BPA) offers workshops and literacy programs, transportation services and an increase in closed loop referral. BPA expanded local partnerships by 58% since FY24 to provide additional reciprocity and holistic referral and care for their clients, including but not limited to an expanded partnerships with Agape Missions to offer HIV/STI Testing and treatment to women, Justice-Involved Services, and with 2morrow Startz 2Day Inc. and offering after-school programming, workforce development services to high risk youth in Joliet. BPA also partnered with four universities (Governor's State, University of St. Francis, Lewis University, and University of Chicago) to provide BSW and MSW internship opportunities, expanding capacity and offering educational experiences.

Beecher Fire**Awarded \$80,000**

The Beecher Fire Protection District developed the Beecher Community Support & Mental Health Program in response to a documented and sustained increase in mental health-related emergency responses within Washington Township. Over a twelve-month data collection period, BFPD identified significant growth in calls involving behavioral health crises, particularly among youth ages 10-19 and older adults ages 60-69. Traditionally, fire departments transport these patients to emergency departments, where access to ongoing behavioral health services is limited, often resulting in short-term stabilization without continuity of care or reliable follow-up. The program provides residents with direct access to professional behavioral health services through Thriveworks, including stress management counseling, anxiety and depression treatment, couples and family therapy, psychiatry, medication management, and related services. Firefighters and paramedics distribute program resource guides during emergency responses and community interactions, ensuring immediate access to referral pathways.

Bridges to a New Day**Awarded \$100,000**

Bridges to a New Day serves the residents of Will County who are under-insured, under-served, in economic crisis, or are victims of domestic violence and their children. We provide services to adults, children, families and couples of any age. When providing parenting services, we are indirectly reaching that infant/toddler who is a member of the household. As people age, life-altering events occur, and we provide the counseling services needed to navigate the challenges that come with them, be it family counseling, parent services, grief counseling, and more.

CASA of River Valley**Awarded \$199,980**

CASA of River Valley is requesting funding to support our advocacy services for abused and neglected children for whom the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has made a finding of maltreatment. The population served in this program will be children under age 18 who are under the jurisdiction of the Will County Court. These children are at very high risk due to the trauma they have experienced. Child victims of abuse and neglect suffer from trauma from the maltreatment and from the court process.

When abused and neglected children enter the court system, the court appoints CASA of River Valley as their Guardian ad Litem (GAL) to advocate for the best interests of each child. CASA of River Valley works to provide trauma-informed advocacy services. Each child victim is served by a team that includes a volunteer advocate, a staff advocate supervisor, and an attorney. This team works together to identify the needs of each child victim, including mental health treatment, educational services, and basic needs. CASA advocates and supervisors interview children, care providers, and others to assess the needs of the children and the quality of their living environments. CASA then advocates for court-ordered services and placements that will best meet the child's needs.

Center for Correctional Concerns

Awarded \$172,277

The ongoing purpose of the Center for Correctional Concerns (CCC) is to address the psycho-social needs of approximately 500 detainees housed in the Will County Adult Detention Center. CCC provides evidence-informed programming that supports emotional stability, personal responsibility, and successful reintegration into the community.

Programs include grief and depression support; substance abuse education, recovery, and prevention; and anger management and domestic violence education for both victims and perpetrators. CCC chaplains also support detainees in continuing to practice their faith while incarcerated, recognizing the importance of spiritual well-being in overall rehabilitation. In addition, CCC staff provide materials, resources, and training designed to promote success upon re-entry into families and the broader community.

These efforts include parenting education and reintegration classes that focus on life skills, accountability, and community connection.

City of Joliet Fire Department

Awarded \$740,000

The main element of the program is to provide no cost mental health care. The focus population is all residents of Will County. Since the inception of the project, the age range of people who have received services is 3-84 years old. Services provided are mental health services. The services include everything from family counseling to psychology. These services are provided either virtually or in person depending on the person's preference. Other needs are often identified during the patient intake and may be addressed during the client's initial appointment.

This program allows the Joliet Fire Department to act as a liaison for the resident in need, referring them to needed mental health service providers that offer either in-person or telehealth options to ensure a quick turn around to be seen.

This program is specifically for mental health services and it is the intention of the Joliet Fire Department that people continue to be seen by a mental health provider within 48 to 72 hours of a their call. The JFD social worker currently receives all intake calls for mental health services and provides a referral as soon as possible. However, as the volume of these calls increase with the expansion of services from just the City of Joliet to County-wide, additional personnel will need to be hired.

Cornerstone

Awarded \$150,000

This project aligns with the needs of individuals living with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Priority emphasizing increasing community inclusion, engagement, and meaningful participation for individuals with I/DD.

The program will serve Will County residents ages 18 and older with intellectual and developmental disabilities, a population that often experiences social isolation, limited access to inclusive community activities, and barriers to full participation outside structured service settings.

Through a coordinated approach, Cornerstone will provide individualized employment readiness supports alongside structured, inclusive recreational programming that promotes social connection, skill development, and community presence.

Easterseals DuPage & Fox Valley

Awarded \$50,000

The purpose of Pediatric Outpatient Medical Rehabilitation Services is to strengthen the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual abilities of children (ages birth – 18) with developmental disabilities and delays (DD/D) and medical complexities through individualized, outcome-focused rehabilitation therapy and services that address each child's developmental challenges.

Our innovative, outcome-focused pediatric outpatient rehabilitation therapies and supportive services help children with medically complex disabilities and those requiring assistance in one specific area of development. Core services include Physical, Occupational, and Nutrition Therapy, Speech-Language Pathology Services, Audiology Services, Assistive Technology, Mental Health and Family Services, Inclusive Childcare, Behavioral Therapy, Social Work Services, and Specialty Clinics.

We also offer multidisciplinary diagnostic and consultative services, via our dental, vision, neonatal, positioning and mobility, and respiratory clinics, hosted in consort with medical professionals. Specialty clinics include the Feeding Clinic; the Autism Diagnostic Clinic and the Medical Diagnostic Clinic offered with University of Chicago Medical Center.

Easterseals Joliet Region

Awarded \$83,000

Easterseals Joliet Region maintains a wait list for pediatric speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral services. We are proposing a 12 week Summer Program that will address the service requests for up to 200 children with I/DD.

This proposed intensive program will provide the following benefits: address the wait list; educate families with evidence-based intervention strategies to implement into home routines; address Communication, Motor, Behavioral, and Sensory needs of children through services from speech language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling.

Direct services will be provided on an individual, basis, co-treatment, and/or group basis depending on the functional needs of the children inclusive of Spanish-speaking supports as needed. Licensed therapists will provide this programming based out of Easterseals Regional Pediatric Center in Joliet. The target population is Will County youth 3-12 years with a diagnosis of a developmental disability. This program admissions process will begin May 11, 2026 with the duration concluding August 14, 2026.

Fighting Chance

Awarded \$40,000

Fighting Chance NFP proposes the Mental Wellness & Access Program, a community-based initiative serving youth ages 8-18 in Will County, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program combines structured boxing and fitness, mentorship, and life skills with partnered mental health services, including education, screenings, and on-site short-term therapy for youth in crisis or experiencing trauma.

Staff will receive professional development in trauma-informed care, recognition of emotional distress, and referral protocols, while families benefit from respite and connection to resources. Delivered in a safe, inclusive, and structured setting, the program promotes social, emotional, and physical well-being, builds resilience, reduces stigma, and provides equitable access to coordinated mental health supports for under-served youth and their caregivers.

FOCUOS**Awarded \$40,000**

F.O.C.U.O.S. proposes the Integrated Youth Wellness & Workforce Pathways Initiative, a community-based program primarily focused on crisis supports and service-gap reduction for youth and young adults ages 12–24, with integrated prevention services for younger children and structured supports for caregivers. The initiative provides crisis-responsive case management, reentry and transition support, care coordination, and peer-informed engagement for Will County residents who are at risk of or experiencing behavioral health challenges, justice involvement, academic disengagement, substance use concerns, or barriers related to intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program is anchored at the F.O.C.U.O.S. Youth House in Bolingbrook and delivered in close partnership with courts, the PEACE Center, schools, community organizations, and faith-based partners. In addition to its core crisis and case management services, the initiative integrates I/DD-inclusive group programming, early intervention and prevention activities, transportation supports to reduce missed appointments, and workforce-readiness exposure to behavioral health and human services careers. Together, these components ensure continuity of care, reduce system fragmentation, and promote stability, recovery, and long-term well-being for Will County youth, young adults, and their caregivers.

Gateway Foundation, Inc.**Awarded \$40,000**

Gateway Foundation's Joliet outpatient clinic seeks funding to support four months of salary for a Behavioral Health Therapist (BHT)—defined as a licensed LCSW or LCPC—while their Medicaid and commercial insurance credentialing is finalized. This credentialing period, which is required for clinicians to bill for services, often lasts up to 120 days and creates a financial barrier so significant that organizations frequently cannot afford to hire highly qualified clinicians, even though they are ready and licensed to provide care. As a result, communities experience gaps in access to essential behavioral health services. This project will allow Gateway Foundation to enhance the behavioral health services provided at our outpatient clinic in Joliet, including treatment for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. Once credentialed, the BHT will provide individual mental health counseling, evidence-based interventions, and recovery-focused support to adults 18 years and older, to meet the complex needs of this population. By bridging the gap during the credentialing process, this funding will allow Gateway to attract and retain a highly trained behavioral health professional, improve the quality of care available to residents of Will County struggling with substance use and mental health conditions, and enhance the behavioral health workforce in the county.

Governors State University**Awarded \$89,000**

The Jaguar Jumps Mental Health & Wellness Expansion at Governors State University (GovState) is a comprehensive Academic Year 2026–2027 initiative designed to bridge the gap between academic instruction and independent living for Will County residents (ages 18–26) with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). The program is anchored by two distinct 10-week phases: Jaguar Jumps 1 (Fall 2026, Sept–Dec) focuses on "Navigation & Discovery," where participants meet virtually for weekly for 90-minutes to map out independent living and degree opportunities. This progresses to Jaguar Jumps 2 (Spring 2027, Jan–March), which shifts focus to "Action & Implementation," requiring participants to execute their transition plans. To ensure holistic development, this academic framework is fortified by a strategic partnership with Will County counseling agency Beyond Healing located in Homer Glen. Participants will complete six specialized Mental Health and Independent Living workshops delivered by Beyond Healing's clinical experts, covering essential topics like Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), workplace boundaries, and resilience. This clinical instruction is paired with robust experiential learning, including funded attendance at the Illinois Statewide Transition Conference and the Will County "Pathways to Professions" event. Crucially, these experiences include hands-on public transportation training, ensuring participants possess the mobility, self-regulation, and professional social skills required to secure employment and improve the mental health of Will County's vulnerable citizens.

Heart Haven Outreach

Awarded \$180,000

Heart Haven Outreach provides weekly, relationship-centered programming for middle and high school students in grades 6–12, typically ages 11–18, who reside in Will County. The proposed project creates safe, consistent spaces where teens can build trusted relationships with caring adults and peers while receiving support for their social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual development. Relationship-building is a core element of the program model, with staff and trained volunteers intentionally investing in students through regular engagement, encouragement, and one-on-one support.

Services include weekly Real Life Support groups, after-school OverFlow programs, and a Thursday evening Going Deeper program. These programs offer structured group discussions, lessons, and activities focused on personal life skills, emotional expression, and peer connection. Academic support such as homework help and test preparation is incorporated into programming, along with opportunities for students to explore educational and vocational pathways.

Throughout the week, staff and volunteers also provide dedicated one-on-one mentoring support to help students set goals and grow in internal beliefs and skills, as well as external behaviors and attitudes. To reduce barriers to participation, the program incorporates transportation support when needed, helping ensure students can consistently access services regardless of family or logistical constraints.

Heartlife Ministries

Awarded \$50,000

Heartlife Ministries (HLM) Hopeline: Recovery Empowered is a continuation of a community-driven initiative providing comprehensive, evidence-based prevention and peer recovery support services for youth, adults, and families in Will County impacted by substance use and co-occurring mental health challenges. Building on successful implementation and strong community partnerships established during the prior grant cycle, HLM is now in a position to significantly expand its prevention reach during Year Two.

Through coordinated school-based suicide prevention efforts, the program will reach approximately 1,000 Will County students and school-connected individuals with evidence-informed education, early intervention strategies, and resource linkage. This expanded prevention focus strengthens upstream support while maintaining targeted recovery services for individuals facing elevated risk factors such as trauma, social isolation, and behavioral health challenges.

HHH Ranch

Awarded \$180,000

HHH Ranch seeks funding to support its Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) and Rooted In Work programs, which provide early intervention, prevention, and skill-building support for Will County residents from early childhood through adulthood. Through structured, relationship-based equine-assisted activities, the EAL program serves children, youth, and adults navigating mental health challenges, trauma, disabilities, or life transitions, helping participants develop new skills and strengthen emotional regulation, communication, confidence, and overall stability.

The Rooted In Work program serves adults facing barriers such as mental or physical disabilities, substance use recovery, or past incarceration by offering paid employment and hands-on vocational experience within daily ranch operations. Participants build consistency, healthy routines, and practical skills while exploring interests that may lead to future stable employment, self-employment, or contracted work.

Holsten Human Capital

Awarded \$87,475

The proposed Workforce Readiness & Stability Program (WRSP) aims to provide comprehensive employment services and support for relocated individuals seeking stable employment and self-sufficiency. The program will serve adults aged 18 and older who face barriers to employment, including mental health challenges, substance use recovery, and limited work experience. Through a holistic approach combining workforce training, supportive services, and ongoing case management, participants will receive individualized support throughout their employment journey.

Joliet Township High Schools Foundation

Awarded \$30,780

The JTHS Foundation African American Mentoring Program is dedicated to promoting high academic performance and personal growth among participants through a social and emotional learning framework. By fostering a supportive environment, the program seeks to help students develop essential skills that enable them to thrive academically and socially.

Little Friends, Inc.

Awarded \$180,000

Therapeutic programs supported by this grant will include Little Friends Wellness Center, Krejci Academy, Mansion High School, and Little Friends Family Respite Services. As Little Friends is asking for less than 3% of the programs' budgets from the Will County Community Mental Health Board while greater than 10% of all program participants reside in Will County, the organization can ensure all funding will only support Will County residents in accessing individual and group counseling, life skills training, educational services, speech and occupational therapy, applied behavioral analysis therapy, and free after-school and weekend family respite services. To best provide these services, Little Friends will use grant dollars to support therapeutic personnel costs and staff training for personnel directly providing these services in our aforementioned therapeutic programs.

LWSRA

Awarded \$150,000

LWSRA will purchase sensory items and supplies for the second and final phase of the Heroes Village Sensory Garden at the Lincolnway Special Recreation Center, an expansion that will transform an already successful inclusive space into a fully immersive, multi-sensory environment for individuals of all ages and abilities. Phase Two will add critical elements including a rain garden with native plantings, interactive play panels, a wheelchair-accessible water play feature, a children's maze with musical instruments, a greenhouse and flower garden, accessible pathways, and a central gathering space designed for rest, connection, and programming.

Together, these features will engage sight, sound, touch, smell, and movement, creating a therapeutic and educational setting that supports emotional regulation, sensory integration, and social interaction in a safe, welcoming outdoor environment. The Heroes Village Sensory Garden will primarily serve children, teens, and adults with physical, cognitive, developmental, and sensory disabilities from early childhood through adulthood who participate in Lincolnway Special Recreation Association programs across a multi-community service area.

The garden will be used for structured therapeutic recreation programming, inclusive play, life-skills development, and informal community use, while also supporting disability awareness and education for families, caregivers, and the broader public. By completing Phase Two, LWSRA will provide a lasting, accessible resource where individuals who are often under-served by traditional recreational spaces can explore nature, build confidence, manage stress, and experience the simple but powerful joy of belonging.

Lockport Fire Department

Awarded \$80,000

The Community Risk Reduction Officer (CRRO) plays a critical role in advancing the Community Mental Health Program's mission to reduce mental health crises, close service gaps, and promote early intervention and prevention. The CRRO serves as a central coordination point between emergency responders, mental health providers, and community partners to ensure residents experiencing mental health challenges are connected to timely, appropriate, and sustainable care.

Through referral coordination, follow-up, and community partnership development, the CRRO helps reduce repeat emergency department utilization and supports long-term stability and well-being for community members.

Mental Health Matters Fund, Inc

Awarded \$200,000

Mental Health Matters Fund, Inc. is dedicated to promoting mental health awareness, education, and access to services within our local communities. Our mission is to reduce stigma surrounding mental health concerns and to encourage individuals to seek timely support and treatment before reaching crisis levels. We accomplish this work through community education, training, and direct financial assistance for mental health services.

Moose & Me Baking Company

Awarded \$110,000

Moose & Me Baking Company primarily serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including Down syndrome, autism, and related conditions. The organization also supports transition-age youth and adults seeking meaningful employment, as well as families and caregivers impacted by disability-related mental health challenges.

Through intentional outreach and partnerships, Moose & Me is expanding access for residents of Will County, including students participating in school-based field trips, summer camp attendees, and individuals engaged through community recreation and transition programs. Our services promote inclusion, mental wellness, and community connection for both participants and their families.

Morning Star Mission Inc.

Awarded \$200,000

Addiction recovery at MorningStar Mission is a faith-based program designed to help our guests (ages 21 and over) gain the practical tools and skills they need to create lasting, positive changes in their lives. This comprehensive program addresses the whole person by offering life-skills classes, job readiness training, individual counseling, and other support to help participants make better choices and rebuild their lives.

Participants will work to overcome challenges such as addiction, homelessness, and emotional struggles by developing a strong foundation for personal growth and independence. Each individual is assessed by a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC), who will create a tailored recovery plan based on their unique needs.

Addiction recovery focuses on multiple areas of life, including emotional well-being, physical health, and financial stability. Participants will learn to manage their emotional and psychological health, develop healthy relationships, and explore their personal purpose in life. They will also gain skills for financial stewardship, prepare for independent living, and address their struggles with addiction. The goal is to help each participant gain the tools they need for sustainable, long-term recovery. In addition, our emergency Drop-In Center directs guests to case workers to address their current and emergent needs such as: Photo ID's, a mailing address, workforce development, counseling, clothing, food, shelter, laundry and hygiene products.

NAMI Will-Grundy

Awarded \$200,000

NAMI Will-Grundy seeks to maintain and expand the current services by way of a stable workforce resulting in high-quality programs and awareness campaigns. Direct peer-led mental health support will be available for residents working on their own mental health recovery (teens and adults; Spanish and English) and those who support someone on their journey toward recovery (parents/caregivers of youth and other adults; Spanish and English).

In person and virtual support groups are offered throughout Will County nearly 20 days each month. These groups are led by a trained facilitator with lived experience. Groups focus on “group think,” stressing that we are only experts in our own lives. By sharing common experiences, participants gain insight and hope from peers. Support is offered to persons ages 13 years and older. Groups reduce social isolation and provide a sense of community and belonging. Education courses typically include a structured presentation which facilitates a better understanding of mental health conditions, increases coping skills and empowers participants. Available education curriculum is appropriate for youth as young as 12 years old. All services aim to reduce stigma and share local resources.

New Day Employment Network

Awarded \$50,000

In 2025, NDEN launched the Better Days Support Services, which expanded our workforce development program by providing wraparound support through case management and peer support. Peer support is provided during the day (8:00 AM – 4:00 PM), with follow-up and more in-depth assistance from the case manager. We surpassed our goal of assisting 100 individuals, serving 174 people who had reentered.

Over the past year, we learned that many returning citizens need assistance during hours when NDEN and other organizations are not offering services, as they have obligations during the standard day. For this reason, we are seeking funds to add another peer support specialist who will work from 4:00 PM to 12:00 AM to connect with those who need assistance after hours. Following peer support services, NDEN’s case manager will follow up within three days to assist with additional referrals and connections. Peer support specialists continue to work with each participant in bi-weekly meetings to help them access community services and maintain their recovery.

Reclaim13

Awarded \$50,000

Breaking the Cycle is a comprehensive, trauma-informed continuum of care designed to interrupt the cycle of sexual abuse and exploitation and promote long-term mental wellness for children, youth, adults, and families in Will County. The project serves survivors from early childhood through adulthood, with a particular focus on children and adolescents ages 3-17, young adults, and non-offending caregivers. Services include crisis response through a 24/7 hotline, trauma-informed therapy (including telehealth to address transportation barriers), child and family case management, survivor support groups, residential care for minor survivors, survivor focused parenting support, mentoring, and community-based prevention education.

Reclaim13 operates Cherish House, a licensed residential home for child survivors ages 10-17, located in Will County, providing a therapeutic environment that prevents re-victimization and supports long-term recovery. Cherish House is the only safe house program in Illinois serving survivors as young as 10 years old.

Riverwalk Adult Day Services

Awarded \$20,000

Riverwalk Adult Day Services Programs are comprised of varied and creative activities for seniors and neurodivergent adults who cannot safely be left at home alone. The Riverwalk Adult Day Seniors Services Program is designed for seniors 60 and over with some form of cognitive decline, such as Alzheimer's, dementia, Parkinson's, etc. Social, cognitive, and physical activities are planned daily for the participants by the Executive and Assistant Director.

The Recreational Services program is designed for adults ages 18-59 navigating neurodiverse conditions such as Autism or Down syndrome. The proposed project is to assist in staff salary support to enable Riverwalk Adult Day Services to continue to provide these life-affirming physical and mental health services for the targeted populations. Riverwalk is committed to keeping these programs affordable and is only able to accomplish that through grants and donations.

Steger School District 194

Awarded \$127,546

School District 194 proposes to continue its implementation of Leader in Me which was so generously funded in FY25 by the Will County Mental Health Grant. The Leader in Me is a whole-child framework that builds students' social-emotional skills, leadership, and personal responsibility through explicit instruction in self-management, goal setting, and collaborations. It fosters a positive, inclusive school culture that supports mental health, resilience, and student success. The Leader in Me curriculum has demonstrated measurable impact on student social-emotional learning, school climate, and mental health related outcomes across our district during the previous grant cycle. Continued funding will allow us to sustain, deepen, and expand these gains rather than disrupt a proven, effective framework.

The Leader in Me curriculum provides foundational support across the three pillar areas by fostering emotional resilience, social skills, and positive habits while emphasizing whole-child development. It complements mental health interventions by promoting social-emotional learning, fostering positive relationships, and reducing stigma through inclusivity and acceptance. The program supports students with developmental disabilities through flexible, adaptable strategies that encourage peer collaboration, teamwork, and a strengths-based approach, while also helping prevent substance abuse by building resilience and strengthening students' ability to cope with challenges. Leader in Me empowers students to be positive role models and influencers, creating a culture of accountability and support.

Stepping Stones Inc.

Awarded \$200,000

Stepping Stones is requesting support for the continuation of our Advanced Nurse Practitioner Program. The Advanced Nurse Practitioner (APRN), originally hired with WCCMHB funding last year, will continue to provide medical and psychiatric services that reduce the barriers to admission for high-risk and medically complicated individuals entering residential treatment, to address mild to moderate medical concerns or injuries for Residential Treatment clients to improve retention and successful completion of residential treatment, to help clients begin or continue the use of medication to assist with their treatment and recovery (MAT/MAR), and to allow Stepping Stones to provide Suboxone services on site to compliment available MAT/MAR medications.

The main elements of the program will be the continuation of the services of our APRN and support for the portion of the time of the Medical Director and Consulting Psychiatrist who provides medical support for the APRN, the Clinical Director who supervises the APRN, the Registered Nurse who provides backup and support to the APRN, and management staff providing program support.

The Arc of Illinois

Awarded \$50,000

The Arc of Illinois will hire a part-time Will County Coordinator (approximately 20-25 hours/week, \$35,000 annual salary) who reports to The Arc's Executive Director and works in close partnership with Will County Mental Health Support Services. This position gives Will County the dedicated, consistent focus needed to build true inclusion through assistive technology and community partnerships—something our statewide team cannot provide while serving all 102 Illinois counties. The result benefits everyone: Will County families receive intensive support, The Arc develops replicable best practices, and the broader disability community gains a documented model of what inclusive communities can achieve.

The Hive Day Program

Awarded \$161,000

The Hive Day Program provides direct care and supervision in a structured, community-based setting for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), primarily ages 18 and older, who benefit from coordinated supports that promote independence, safety, inclusion, and quality of life. The program serves individuals transitioning out of school-based services as well as adults who require consistent daytime programming to remain engaged in their communities. Currently, 39 adults are enrolled, with an active waitlist of 18 individuals, demonstrating continued demand for community-based I/DD services in Will County. The proposed project strengthens and expands a coordinated set of supports addressing social, physical, and emotional well-being while reducing the logistical and financial strain families experience in supporting adult children with disabilities.

Services include daily life skills instruction, vocational and volunteer opportunities, social skills development, and frequent community-based outings. Participants engage in community activities at least two days per week, with some groups participating three to four days per week, allowing individuals to practice skills in real-world environments. Transportation remains a significant limiting factor, as the program currently operates with one wheelchair accessible vehicle and one minivan, which restricts the number of participants who can safely access community activities at one time. As enrollment continues to grow, the program seeks to expand transportation capacity through the addition of a 15-passenger van to better accommodate group outings, vocational placements, and increased accessibility needs. Through enhanced staffing, expanded transportation resources, and strong community partnerships, The Hive Day Program promotes independence, reduces isolation, and supports long-term stability for adults with I/DD and their families in Will County.

The Recovery Community Center of Joliet

Awarded \$200,000

The Recovery Community Center of Joliet proposes a comprehensive recovery support and transportation project designed to address service gaps for individuals experiencing substance use and mental health challenges in Will County. The project will serve adults ages 18 and older through a combination of structured programming and low-barrier access. Core components include the Day 29 Program, walk-in peer recovery support, and transportation services. Individuals may engage through referrals from treatment providers, courts, sober living homes, and community partners, or through self-initiated walk-in services.

Recovery coaches with lived experience provide individualized peer support focused on engagement, stabilization, and connection to community-based resources. Services include one-on-one recovery coaching, goal-setting, emotional support, group-based recovery activities, and care navigation related to behavioral health services, housing, employment, and basic needs. Transportation assistance is provided to reduce barriers to care and support continuity of engagement, including rides to treatment intakes, behavioral health appointments, court obligations, employment activities, and essential services. By integrating structured support through the Day 29 Program with walk-in peer services and reliable transportation, the project aims to reduce crisis escalation, improve access to care, and support long-term recovery and wellness outcomes for Will County residents.

The Second Story Foundation

Awarded \$150,000

The 2nd Story Ranch is designed to fill the gap in supportive services that many people experience after completing substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. The focus community for our project is individuals age 21 and older in Will County experiencing severe SUD, behavioral health vulnerabilities, justice involvement, housing instability, and unemployment.

The main elements of our program include our Recovery-Oriented Community Service program (provides individuals from Will County Problem-Solving Courts with a stabilizing behavioral-health intervention and a compassionate, recovery-informed environment to complete community service hours), our First Furrow Fund Workforce Development program (provides supervised, structured, early-stage employment on the 2nd Story Ranch for men and women exiting inpatient treatment who face extreme relapse risk to reinforce recovery, build soft skills, provide immediate income, and create pathways to long-term employment), and Equine Program/Therapeutic Horse Care (participants build recovery skills through therapeutic horse care in a setting that reduces shame and strengthens self-efficacy).

We also provide daily transportation from Joliet Recovery Homes to the 2nd Story Ranch job-site and back, removing a major structural barrier.

Trinity Services, Inc

Awarded \$190,000

The proposed project will assist in funding an integrated, low-barrier continuum of care designed to engage individuals experiencing mental health challenges as early as possible and before needs escalate into crisis. Through the combined implementation of a Teen Wellness Center and a Recovery Café model, this site serves youth, young adults, and adults across Will County who are experiencing mental health concerns, substance use challenges, or social and emotional distress. The program prioritizes accessibility, prevention, and early intervention by offering walk-in, stigma-free support in a welcoming, community-based setting.

Services will focus on individuals ages 12 and older, including transition-age youth, adults, and families who may otherwise struggle to access traditional behavioral health services due to cost, stigma, transportation barriers, or system complexity. The program will provide a continuum of services that includes mental wellness screenings, one-to-one support, peer engagement, skill-building and psycho-educational groups, family support, and crisis intervention with warm hand-offs to higher levels of care when needed.

The Teen Wellness component focuses on early identification, emotional regulation, coping skills, and family engagement for adolescents and young adults, while the Recovery Café provides a supportive, non-clinical environment for individuals seeking connection, stabilization, and recovery support. Services are delivered by an interdisciplinary team of Mental Health Professionals, Recovery Support Specialists, and Family Support staff trained in trauma-informed and youth-centered care.

Together, these programs will reduce barriers to care, increase early engagement, strengthen natural supports, and promote long-term recovery by meeting individuals where they are and providing timely, compassionate intervention before crisis occurs.

Wheatland Township

Awarded \$155,000

Project Pulse is a one-year, trauma-informed mental health promotion and early-intervention initiative designed to strengthen emotional resilience, reduce substance-use risk, and improve equitable access to behavioral health supports for youth in Will County. The project will serve 45 students (ages 13–21)—15 students at each of three District 202 alternative high schools—along with their families.

The focus population includes youth experiencing elevated behavioral and emotional challenges, including increased classroom disruptions, disengagement, anxiety, and depression, as well as rising marijuana use on school campuses, which has become more prevalent in recent years and is often used by students as a coping mechanism for stress, trauma, and academic pressure.

Core services include small-group, evidence-informed mental health and substance-use prevention sessions that directly address behavioral regulation, decision-making, and marijuana and polysubstance use; light-touch screening and early identification; case management and warm referrals to 708-funded mental health, substance-use, and developmental disability providers; youth peer leadership development; and family engagement and navigation support.

The project also incorporates stigma-reduction activities, Naloxone education and coordination with first responders as appropriate, and transportation supports to reduce access barriers.

Will County Children’s Advocacy Center

Awarded \$155,000

This project will provide trauma-focused stabilization and support services for children ages 3–17 who have been impacted by sexual abuse, extreme physical abuse and/or witness to murder along with their non-offending caregivers. Services are designed to reduce barriers to care, strengthen caregiver functioning, and improve engagement in therapeutic and supportive services during periods of heightened stress.

By addressing both emotional and practical needs, the project promotes safety, continuity of care, and long-term recovery for vulnerable families. Core components include a Caregiver Therapeutic Case Coordinator who conducts individual and group therapeutic sessions for caregivers, providing psycho-education on trauma and vicarious trauma, assisting with service navigation for children with ADHD, dyslexia, traumatic brain injuries, and other trauma-related concerns, and supporting caregivers in accessing public assistance, employment, and educational resources.

A Child Life Specialist provides developmentally appropriate supervision and engagement for children while caregivers participate in services. Both roles collaborate closely with the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), including Will County Children’s Advocacy teams—Therapy, Advocacy, and Forensic Interviewers—to ensure continuity of care. Together, these services reduce missed appointments, decrease caregiver stressors, and improve overall treatment engagement.

Will County Problem Solving Courts

Awarded \$199,654

The Will County Problem Solving Courts program seeks funding to provide emergency housing for participants of its Mental Health Court program who are in crisis by partnering with local hotels who can house program participants while Clinical Case Managers from the program can work with the program participants to obtain permanent housing. Staff from the Mental Health Court program will seek hotel partners who are willing to provide emergency shelter and bill the program for the services provided.

Many participants of the Mental Health Court program are released from the Will County Jail with no access to housing or suddenly lose access to housing because of conflicts with family members or other housing providers. Also, local shelters are often at full capacity, especially during the colder months, and individuals with children cannot bring their children to most shelters.

Mental Health Court staff have already developed partnerships with Cornerstone Services and Trinity Services to connect program participants to permanent supportive housing, but the process to obtain permanent supportive housing can take a significant amount of time and a service gap exists between an individual losing housing and the connection to permanent supportive housing. The population that this program will focus on are Mental Health Court program participants over the age of 18 and their dependents. The individuals in this population are justice-involved and have a high risk of recidivism and high clinical treatment needs.

Will County Sheriff's Office

Awarded \$199,654

Building Resilience for a Healthy Community

The wellness program that the Will County Sheriff's Office intends to implement will be a three prong approach. The three components of the wellness program will include annual mental health screening visits with a licensed clinician, the development of a peer support program, and the implementation of Mindbase, which is a computer and mobile based application that will assist the peer support team as well as provide access to resources for all employees 24/7. The specific population that will receive the services will be all 663 employees of the Will County Sheriff's Office which includes civilian staff, enforcement personnel, correctional officers, and courthouse security personnel.

All of these staff are public servants to the citizens of Will County and improving the wellness of the agency will also improve job performance and the quality of services that are received by the Will County community. Given that public safety personnel are at a 54% higher risk than the general public of dying by suicide (Lawrence & Dockstader, 2024), the goal of the comprehensive wellness program is to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and implement resources that reduce suicide risk.

Will County Sheriff's Office

Awarded \$55,665

Substance Use Prevention

The proposed project will expand the Will County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition's prevention efforts through a two-part initiative focused on workforce development and young adult engagement. The first component supports individuals working in substance use treatment and recovery, mental health, prevention, education, youth and family services and related fields by increasing access to reputable, evidence-based training and conference opportunities. A second component of the project will directly engage young adults (18-24) through a mental health and substance use awareness event hosted at Lewis University. This event is designed to expand the Coalition's prevention reach beyond its traditional focus on youth under age 18 and intentionally engage young adults ages 18-24. This event will address campus-related mental health and substance use concerns and will include a keynote speaker, educational materials, campus and community resources, refreshments, and prevention-focused giveaways.

Will Grundy Medical Clinic

Awarded \$200,000

WGMC is expanding upon its crisis response with its Housing, Healthcare, and Hope (HHH) program established in 2020 to address critical behavioral health and housing stability challenges in Will County. In 2025, grant funding from the Will County Community Mental Health Board facilitated the launch of WGMC's behavioral health and street outreach satellite location at the Joliet Public Library, as well as supported efforts across WGMC's HHH team to provide behavioral health and crisis support.

To enhance HHH services, including street outreach, case management, emergency transitional housing, medical respite, tenant-based rental assistance, and behavioral health support, the proposed project embeds key case management personnel at the Joliet Public Library at regular intervals, supports a licensed therapist to provide therapy to individuals and groups who are homeless and/or in crisis, and supports the Director of Behavioral Health who leads behavioral health service approaches across all HHH team members.

The support of these dedicated professionals strengthen our outreach and intervention efforts, allows for additional satellite locations for behavioral care and case management in the community, and strengthens WGMC's efforts to ensure that individuals receive the comprehensive support needed to achieve housing stability, mental wellness, and overall well-being.

This proposed program provides comprehensive support to individuals facing homelessness, housing insecurity, and unmet mental health or substance use needs through integrated homelessness support, case management, and behavioral health services and care coordination. The focus population is low-income adults who lack access to consistent healthcare, including those with serious mental illness, substance use disorders, and crisis due to housing homelessness.

Wilmington Coalition for a Healthy Community (WCHC)

Awarded \$196,000

The Wilmington Coalition for a Healthy Community is dedicated to making Wilmington a place where our children and youth can grow up happy, healthy, and safe. WCHC was founded in 2006 in response to the damage inflicted on local families by opioid and other drug overdoses. Because substance misuse is a complex problem, the coalition has worked to create strong partnerships with other groups in the community.

WCHC is organized to help the community use proven strategies to keep young people healthy and substance-free, including: Educating about substance use and mental health, offering healthy and positive activities for children, youth and families, helping people get behavioral health services when they need them, advocating for changes that benefits community health.

CAT Crew (Community Action Team) is a prevention leadership group at Wilmington High School that empowers members to make a positive impact on their peers and community. Any student can get involved by contacting a counselor or a current CAT Crew member.



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