



2024-2027

Strategic Plan

WILL COUNTY
COMMUNITY MENTAL
HEALTH BOARD



Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	3
II. Letter from the Executive Director	4
III. The Organization	5
IV. Why a Strategic Plan?	6
V. Mental Health Pillars	7
VI. Organizational Scan	8
VII. Areas of Focus	9
VIII. Focus Area 1	10-11
IX. Focus Area 2	12
X. Focus Area 3	13-15
XI. Focus Area 4	16
XII. Action Plan	17
XIII. Upcoming Schedule	18

Executive Summary

PAGE 3

Our Mission

The Will County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) seeks to provide leadership to ensure support, prevention, 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.

Our Vision

The Will County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) empowers individuals and families to achieve mental wellness and resilience. Through advocacy, planning, and collaboration, the Board works to transform lives and systems, ensuring access to vital resources and support. By providing education and promoting services for mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance use, the Board aims to build a stronger, more informed community. Additionally, the WCCMHB is committed to improving public perception, reducing the stigma of seeking mental health services, and fostering a culture of acceptance and support for all.

Letter from the Executive Director

PAGE 4

As the Executive Director of the Will County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB), I am thrilled to share our Strategic Plan for 2024-2027. This plan marks an important step forward in our ongoing commitment to improving mental health services in Will County, and it reflects the collective vision of our Board and the broader community we serve.

Over the past several months, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of our current initiatives, evaluated the evolving landscape of mental health needs, and considered the future challenges and opportunities in our field. Through this process, we have identified key areas where we can make the greatest impact and develop strategies to ensure that our efforts remain aligned with our mission and responsive to the community's needs.

This strategic plan is built upon three primary focus areas:

1. Mental Health Awareness
2. Developmental Disabilities
3. Substance Abuse

Each of these areas reflects our deep commitment to addressing the complex needs of Will County individuals and creating lasting, positive change.

We invite you to review the attached strategic plan, which outlines each focus area's specific objectives, initiatives, and measurable outcomes. Together, we can achieve our ambitious goals and ensure that our efforts effectively tackle our community's mental health challenges.

Thank you for your continued support. We value your partnership and look forward to collaborating with you as we work to make Will County a healthier, more resilient community for all.

Sincerely,
Teena Mackey
Executive Director
Will County Community Mental Health Board
tmackey@willcounty.gov

The Organization

PAGE 5

Meet the Will County Community Mental Health Board Members



Katrina Jones, President

A psychiatric home health nurse, Katrina is passionate about helping underserved communities access necessary mental health resources.



Elnalyn Costa, Vice President

A mental health advocate and community well-being champion, she also serves on the Will County Board, the Forest Preserve District of WC.



Terri King, Treasurer

A passionate mental health advocate and co-founder of a NAMI Chapter in Will County, Terri actively educates law enforcement on mental illness.



Jessica Parks, Member

A licensed clinical social worker and owner of a private psychotherapy practice, actively involved in community mental health initiatives.



Ashley Searing, Member

Founder of RejuveNate - Plants & Wellness in memory of her brother, promoting mental health awareness and suicide prevention.



Juhie Faheem, Member

A clinical psychotherapist & mental health advocate dedicated to healing, empowerment, and social change.



Teena Mackey, Executive Director

With over 15 years of experience, Teena brings extensive experience in mental health services and public recreation management to her role.



Patricia Meade, Member

A dedicated nursing and patient care advocate with a 35-year career, actively involved in workers' rights advocacy and community activities.

Why A Strategic Plan?

PAGE 6

An organization should have a strategic plan for several key reasons that are critical to its long-term success and sustainability.

Clear Direction

A strategic plan defines and outlines the organization's vision, mission, and goals. It acts as a guiding tool for decision-making and helps the organization understand where it is headed and how to get there.

Focus and Prioritization

With a strategic plan in place, an organization can better focus on its most important priorities. It helps staff distinguish between what's critical for achieving success. This focus can reduce distractions, streamline resources, and drive more efficiency.

Stakeholder Confidence

Stakeholders often require evidence that an organization has a clear plan for the future. A strategic plan demonstrates foresight, discipline, and commitment to achieving goals.

Communication and Collaboration

A strategic plan serves as a communication tool to inform stakeholders, and the board about the organization's goals, priorities, and progress. This transparency can improve collaboration and foster a sense of shared purpose across the organization.

Enhances Decision-Making

A strategic plan provides a framework for making decisions that are consistent with the organization's overall vision and goals. It allows leaders to assess opportunities, challenges, and risks against a set of defined criteria, ensuring decisions are proactive and aligned with the organization's future direction.

Mental Health Pillars

PAGE 7

Ensuring the well-being of individuals requires a holistic approach that addresses the multiple, interconnected facets of mental health.

Mental Health Pillars

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graph TD; A[Mental Health Pillars] --- B[Substance Use]; A --- C[Mental Health Awareness]; A --- D[Developmental Disabilities];
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Substance Use

The prevalence of substance use, coupled with concerns about housing and food insecurity among those struggling with substance use, highlights the need for comprehensive support services.

Mental Health Awareness

The high rates of reported violence and the substantial number of individuals seeking emergency or outpatient mental health services underscore the urgent need for accessible and effective mental healthcare. The prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms, along with barriers to accessing care and food insecurity among those with mental health diagnoses, further emphasizes the gaps in the system.

Developmental Disabilities

The lack of transportation, concerns about housing stability, and food insecurity among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities highlight the need for targeted support services to address these challenges.

Organizational Scan

PAGE 8

The WCCMHB conducted an organizational scan to assess both the internal and external environment. The scan involved a detailed evaluation of the current Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) facing the Board, providing critical insights to guide future decision-making and strategic planning efforts.

The Will County Community Mental Health Board is a newly established entity committed to leveraging an organizational scan to inform its future funding strategies. Beginning in January 2025, the Board will invite grant applications from local businesses and nonprofit organizations to support the three identified priority areas. A total of \$4 million has been allocated for this grant initiative. WCCMHB will review grant applications and anticipates distributing award agreements in Spring 2025.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
• Collaborates effectively with diverse agencies and service providers • Passionately advocates for improved mental health services • Independent and objective decision-making regarding programming • Deep knowledge and experience in mental health field • A diverse board with the capacity and funding to support community-based initiatives	• Some individuals may resist seeking mental health support • The Board is still formalizing its structure and processes • Funding is subject to external factors like voter approval • Stigma may hinder community engagement and service use • Service delivery is challenging due to Will County's geographic size • Some Board members lack experience in specific areas like substance abuse, which can be a co-occurrence with mental health concerns.	• Assist individuals re-entering society by providing essential resources • Secure additional funding and grants to enhance services and advocacy • Raise community awareness and educate residents about mental health services • Reduce stigma and promote mental health awareness with partners • Increase access to critical services, especially in underserved areas	• External resistance to mental health initiatives may hinder implementation • Economic shifts may lead to funding shortfalls • Stigma may impact service utilization and community support • Reliance on annual levies creates funding instability • Funding availability is limited and contingent on levy outcomes

Turning Insights into Action

The findings from the comprehensive SWOT analysis conducted by the WCCMHB serve as a vital foundation for future growth and strategic initiatives. By thoroughly understanding its strengths, recognizing areas for improvement, identifying potential opportunities, and acknowledging external challenges, the Board is better equipped to navigate the complex landscape of community mental health. This informed perspective will guide the WCCMHB in making data-driven decisions to enhance services, strengthen partnerships, and shape strategies that foster resilience, accessibility, and impactful mental health support, ultimately improving community well-being.

Areas of Focus

PAGE 9

Through dedicated board engagement and strategic planning sessions, we identified key areas critical to fostering a healthier and more supportive community. These areas were chosen to address existing challenges and to drive improvements in mental health and related support systems.

Workforce Development

Ensuring that there is a well-trained, competent workforce is essential to delivering high-quality mental health services. By investing in workforce development, we aim to expand training opportunities, improve job readiness, and promote the retention of skilled professionals in the field.

Accessibility and Transportation

Reliable and affordable transportation is vital for accessing mental health and support services. Our focus is on reducing the transportation barriers that prevent individuals, particularly those in underserved areas, from receiving the care they need.

Crisis Support and Services Gaps

Addressing the gaps in crisis response services is a priority to ensure that individuals experiencing mental health crises receive timely, effective intervention. This area focuses on strengthening crisis response networks and expanding the range of available services to fill current service gaps.

Community Engagement and Awareness

Raising awareness and fostering engagement within the community are essential for reducing stigma and promoting mental health resources. By enhancing education and outreach efforts, we aim to build stronger connections and empower communities to take an active role in mental health advocacy and support.

Goal: Address the shortage of mental health professionals resulting in limited availability of services and extended wait times for psychiatric, medication management, and counseling services.

Objective 1

- Partner with local high schools, junior colleges, and universities to improve the behavioral health workforce in Will County including initiatives that:
 - Incentivize high school seniors to select a behavioral health field of study
 - Assist students who have earned an associate degree or are in their second year at a four-year college in successfully transitioning to and completing their bachelor's degree
 - Support the second-year master's degree in social work or nurse practitioner students in their ability to complete their degree program in the behavioral field
 - Scholarship to supplement the stipends required for fieldwork or clinical supervision services required.

Performance Measure 1

- Partner with a minimum of one local high school and one local junior college/university in the first year of funding with a practical incentive program.

Workforce Development Cont...

PAGE 11

Goal: Address the shortage of mental health professionals resulting in limited availability of services and extended wait times for psychiatric, medication management and counseling services.

Objective 2

- Collaborate with area providers to financially motivate professionals to remain employed in funded agencies.

Performance Measure 2

- Create and fund one financial incentive to work toward a plan for retention of the local workforce, for example, partial payment of tuition expenses at years of service benchmarks.

Accessibility and Transportation

PAGE 12

Goal: The Will County Community Behavioral Health Needs Assessment identifies lack of transportation as a barrier to obtaining needed support and assistance for individuals,

Objective 1

- Partner with providers in the community to implement a bilingual awareness program that targets individuals and families who require transportation services for support in the three funded areas to ensure that they know how and where to access transportation services to meet their needs.

Performance Measure 1

- Monitor use of existing transportation services to demonstrate increased awareness of the transportation services and increased use. For example, the Will County Access transportation services anticipate 10,000 rides in this fiscal year. We look forward to a 15% increase in usage because of an awareness effort sponsored by the community mental health board in collaboration with the area providers; PACE, Joliet Township, Will County.

Crisis Supports and Services Gaps

PAGE 13

Goal: To reduce the prevalence of mental health crises among youth ages 0-18 in Will County by increasing access to preventative, early intervention, and support services.

Objective 1

- Encourage the prevention and early intervention of programs and services focusing on mental health, addiction, and developmental disabilities through education, raising awareness and clinical intervention for teens and adolescents by funding evidence-based programs that promote healthy development, support for teens and young people and including clinical and peer support programs and services.

Performance Measure 1

1. Partner with local schools and community mental health organizations to implement at least one clinical and one peer support program for families of youth ages 0-18 resulting in services to a minimum of 5% of young people in the junior high age group in Will County.
2. Partner with local schools and community mental health organizations to implement at least one Mental Health Awareness program for families of youth ages 0-18 resulting in services to a minimum of 5% of the nearly 70,000 young people in the junior high age group in Will County.
3. Collaborate with community providers with the resources to implement a minimum of one program that enhances social experience and improves social skills for individuals diagnosed with developmental disabilities.

Crisis Supports and Services Gaps Cont...

PAGE 14

Goal: To reduce the prevalence of mental health crises among youth ages 0–18 in Will County by increasing access to preventative, early intervention, and support services.

Objective 2

- Families often carry the responsibility of obtaining services, coordinating care, and working hard to meet the needs of family members who live with mental health, substance use, and/or developmental disability. 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 ones.

Performance Measure 2

1. Family training and support for families whose loved ones are living with mental health challenges, addiction, and/or developmental disabilities including a minimum of 2 case managers whose role is specifically in support for families trying to navigate services for their loved ones.
2. Peer support group for family members of loved ones who are living with mental health challenges, addiction, and/or developmental disabilities.

Crisis Supports and Services Gaps Cont...

PAGE 15

Goal: To enhance WCCMHB's leadership to strengthen partnerships and support stakeholders in addressing service gaps and removing barriers to integrated care.

Objective 3

- Prisons and jails incarcerate a disproportionate amount of people who have current or past mental health problems, and facilities are not meeting the demand for treatment. Police are also often used to respond to mental health crises, despite their involvement frequently resulting in violence or incarceration. The percentage of individuals living with a mental health condition in locally run jails is around 40%.

Performance Measure 3

1. Collaborate with the Will County jail social worker to capitalize on their newly formed transition team to fund information packets for individuals reentering the community. Provide information about available services and a link to supports for mental health and substance use available in the community to 100% of people who require transition services.
2. Advocate for the requirement that every person discharged from the Will County jail has a State of Illinois ID card.

Community Engagement & Awareness

PAGE 16

Goal: To enhance WCCMHB's leadership to strengthen partnerships and support stakeholders in addressing service gaps and removing barriers to integrated care.

Objective 1

- Acknowledge the role of the Community Mental Health Board in the following areas:
 - Funding programs and services
 - Creating educational and awareness opportunities
 - Establishing a leadership role to unite stakeholders in developing a systemic approach for identifying gaps in services and creating a plan to eliminate barriers to integrated care
- This effort focuses on supporting individuals living with mental health conditions, substance use conditions, and/or diagnoses of intellectual or developmental disabilities, along with their families.

Performance Measure 1

- Conduct a bi-annual partner meeting with 100% attendance from funded partners with the intent of collaboration to work toward filling the gaps in services in the 3 pillar areas.

Action Plan

This action plan outlines strategic initiatives to enhance mental health services in Will County through the key focus areas of the WCCMHB. As a newly established Board, ongoing efforts will be made to fund these critical initiatives. The Board is currently preparing to release a Notice of Funding Announcement (NOFA), which will detail the parameters for the WCCMHB grant. This grant will be allocated for a specified amount, and the Board seeks to fund applications that align with the key activities within each focus area. The selected lead agency will be responsible for fulfilling the key activities and meeting the criteria outlined in the grant agreement between the WCCMHB and the grantee organization. To ensure that funds are being used appropriately and in compliance with the grant requirements, the Board will regularly monitor progress through reporting and updates from all applicants.

Focus Area	Key Activities	Lead Agency
Workforce Development	• Build relationships with local high schools, Joliet Junior College, universities, and providers to encourage financial incentives for students pursuing advanced Behavioral Health degrees. • Collaborate with area providers to develop a bonus program.	Pending Grant Applications
Accessibility and Transportation	• Collaborate with key transportation providers in Will County i.e. Will County, PACE, Joliet Township, and other townships in Will County, to design and implement a promotion campaign creating awareness around existing transportation opportunities in Will County including a bilingual publication.	Pending Grant Applications
Crisis Support and Services Gaps	• Encourage local schools and providers to seek funding for clinical, peer support, and mental health programs for youth and families; develop social skills programs for individuals with IDD's; support case management for families of those with mental health or addiction issues; collaborate with the Will County jail to create service information packets; and advocate for discharged individuals to have State of Illinois I.D. cards.	Pending Grant Applications
Community Engagement and Awareness	• Conduct a bi-annual partner meeting with the intent of reducing stigma and improving the efficiency of services county-wide, including an effort toward filling the gaps in services for individuals living with mental health, meeting the challenges of a substance use disorder and/or the need for expanded programs for intellectual/developmental disabilities.	WCCMHB to require and host the meetings.

Upcoming Schedule

PAGE 18

The WCCMHB has finalized its action plan, outlining key activities to enhance behavioral health services in the county. With grant funds readily available, the WCCMHB is now prepared to move forward with the grant application process. Interested stakeholders and partnerships are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the action plan and the WCCMHB's key focus areas. The grant application process will involve submitting proposals that clearly align with the outlined strategic initiatives. The WCCMHB will then review proposals and award grants to those that best demonstrate the potential to effectively address the community's behavioral health needs. Details regarding eligibility criteria, application deadlines, and the review process will be released shortly.

Proposed Date for
Notice of Funding
Announcement

12/02/2024

WCCMHB Grant
Application Period
Closes

2/14/2025

WCCMHB Grant
Application Opens

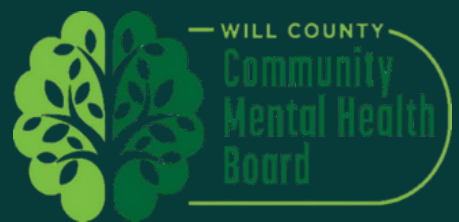
1/2/2025

Projected Award
Announcement

3/24/2025

The Will County Community Mental Health Board is dedicated to supporting programs that enhance mental health services within the community. To streamline this effort, we are pleased to share the timeline for the upcoming grant funding cycle. This schedule outlines key dates, from the initial notice of funding to the final award announcements, ensuring that applicants are well-informed and prepared throughout the process. Applicants are encouraged to mark these dates and prepare their proposals accordingly to ensure full participation in the grant process.

**Contact us
for further
inquiries**



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