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TWO LEADING IOWA HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS SET TO MERGE

Unification is unprecedented for Iowa human service programs

June 17, 2021 (Des Moines, Iowa) — [Youth Homes of Mid-America](#) (YHMA) and [Youth Emergency Services & Shelter](#) (YESS) have received board approvals to merge the organizations. The merger, set to close on July 30, will bring together two of the leading human service providers in Iowa.

“The need for children’s mental health services is increasing, and the demand for residential care continues to evolve,” said Doug Pearson, YHMA board president. “This changing dynamic requires agility in operations and new solutions that best serve children and families in need. Our combined organizations bring this opportunity to life.”

Unification of the organizations is beneficial for Iowa families, the state of Iowa, the Iowa Department of Human Services, Juvenile Court Services and the many stakeholders each organization independently serves. The size, scale and potential impact of this merger are unprecedented for Iowa human service programs.

“This merger will enable us to best serve Iowa’s youth and families by providing a more significant and stronger voice for children’s issues,” said Travis Sheets, YESS board president. “We are bringing together two longstanding organizations with stellar reputations to ensure the continued strength of the collective services we provide.”

With the introduction of the YHMA/YESS merger, the combined teams are beginning the process of naming the newly formed organization. A formal announcement and unveiling will happen in the coming months.

“This is just the beginning,” said Pearson. “We are all getting to work and using the foundation from each organization to build something stronger. The impact of this merger will create a brighter future for Iowa’s youth and families for generations to come.”

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What is Youth Homes of Mid-America?

Founded in April of 1943, Youth Homes is a successful private, nationally accredited nonprofit children’s and family social service agency.

YHMA clients are Iowa children who are referred from Juvenile Court Services, Department of Human Services, Integrated Health Homes, medical providers, school personnel, families

seeking services or other social services providers. These children have a wide range of severe emotional, behavioral and educational difficulties. Many have reached their adolescent years without any of the coping skills necessary to become fully engaged young adults. Because many clients' difficulties lie within the family, YHMA works closely with family members in an effort to assist those in need of counseling or parenting programs.

Currently, YHMA offers nine programs that fall under either residential treatment, transitional and independent living or counseling programs, all with the end goal of providing troubled youth and their families a path to independence.

Why merge?

This merger is in direct response to the state and other stakeholders' continued request for more creativity, more cooperation, and more collaboration in serving youth and families at risk in our communities. Both organizations bring a solid reputation of strong operations and financial stability. Both operate with the support of a strong foundation. Both organizations are well-known for service excellence in Iowa.

A merger of the two organizations has been considered several times in the past two decades as they have many natural synergies. Through combined operations, the two organizations will be best positioned to serve the entire continuum, from emergency and respite care, through family counseling and mental health counseling, and into critical shelter and residential treatment required by Iowa human service programs.

Is this merger in response to recent legislative action?

With a new legislative focus, both at the state and federal levels, merging our two entities allows us flexibility and strength to better navigate the changing landscape around children's mental health, keeping families together and cross-system collaboration. This allows us to engage in the work expected by Governor Reynolds and our federal partners as they have committed to increased investment in our kids and families.

How long have talks been underway between the organizations?

The organizations have been in talks for the past six months exploring opportunities for and potential barriers to a partnership that would strengthen both.

Who will benefit from this merger?

First and foremost, the children and families who receive service from these organizations. They will find more tightly coordinated care, ready access to counseling and mental health services, and access to the finest facilities in Iowa.

Is this a good move for Iowa human service programs?

Each year, thousands of children in Iowa find themselves in need of help. Knowing how to serve and protect these children and their families is the job of these critical organizations and the frontline professionals trained to provide support, assistance and education. A combined organization will be better positioned to speak for the needs and expectations of the children we serve, and the employees who make such a positive impact on the lives of these children and their families.

Will there be a new name?

It is likely the new organization will function under a new name, one that represents the heritage, service excellence and operational realities of the newly combined organization. A formal announcement and unveiling will happen in the coming months.

Where will the new organization be housed?

Both organizations are blessed with outstanding physical facilities. YHMA's main Ross Campus provides access to more than 35 acres of open space and houses eight buildings on its main campus. YHMA also serves a transitional living population in a separate 12-bed facility. YESS operates out of a single facility that has recently expanded and now includes the capacity of 92 beds for shelter services and counseling services through Hope Hall. All facilities will continue to be utilized to best serve the needs of Iowans.

Is this a merger of equals?

This is a merger of two healthy and fully operational organizations. Each organization brings unique service aspects that are complementary to the overall vision of a combined organization.

What are the immediate implications of this merger?

In the short term, both organizations will continue to operate as normal with a full continuum of services.

What are the next steps?

Work is already underway to inform staff and to introduce the two organizations to begin cultivating a synergistic working relationship between the senior teams of both organizations.