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Tallahassee Democrat

'A watershed moment': FSU, TMH, Apalachee Center to open a new behavioral health center

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Published 5:07 a.m. ET April 16, 2024 | Updated 5:07 a.m. ET April 16, 2024

Mental health care is being advanced in the Tallahassee region with the opening of an innovative facility that will house the Florida State University College of Medicine's new Psychiatry Residency Program.

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare and the Apalachee Center have a partnership with FSU through the residency program initiative, and the new center will also bring the two health care organizations' outpatient behavioral health services together under one roof.

"This is a watershed moment for behavioral health services in Tallahassee and the Big Bend," Apalachee Center President and CEO Jay Reeve said in a release.

To celebrate what is being called the "Live Oak Behavioral Health Center," an invite-only ribbon cutting ceremony will take place at 9 a.m. Tuesday at 2600 Centennial Place. The center will occupy the second story of the office building located at the site, which is part of the Regional Center office plaza off Centerville Road.

Following the ribbon cutting event will be an open house at 10 a.m., which the public is welcome to attend.

"There is a recognized shortage of psychiatrists in the state and a more critical shortage in this area of the state," FSU College of Medicine Interim Dean Alma Littles said in a prepared statement. "I look forward to the College of Medicine's contributions to expand access to mental and behavioral health care for patients in the Panhandle and beyond as we train the next generation of psychiatrists."

FSU's residency program will begin July 1 with a small group of four residents who will go through four years of training in psychiatry. Four medical school graduates will be added to the program each year until it reaches its capacity of 16 residents.

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Despite psychiatry being one of the fastest growing residency programs in the nation, nearly 60% of graduating medical students end up leaving Florida for residency training because of a shortage of residency slots in the state, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

But through the program, psychiatry residents will train in providing inpatient, residential and outpatient services.

Related news: 'A significant step': FSU, TMH, Apalachee Center to launch psychiatry residency program

At the same time, a 2022 poll conducted by TMH shows that mental health care and medical care accessibility were tied as the most important issues that affect the Tallahassee community.

As TMH and the Apalachee Center will bring their services together, it means their patients will receive outpatient psychiatry, psychological and psychotherapy services in one central location to help them manage mental health and substance abuse disorders.

“If we want to have a healthy community, that includes emotional and psychological care, which are an important part of the healthcare continuum,” TMH’s President and CEO Mark O’Bryant said in a release. “When we began exploring a partnership with Apalachee Center, we quickly realized that our services are complementary.”

The new center’s team members will range from psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners to licensed therapists and licensed clinical social workers.

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