

FAQs: Judge Guy Herman Center for Mental Health Crisis Care



A new approach to psychiatric crisis care in Travis County

Integral Care offers a new type of mental health crisis care for adults living in Austin and Travis County. Stakeholders in Travis County worked together over many years to identify the types of services our community needs and prioritized this level of care as critical to our continuum of services.

What is the purpose of the Herman Center?

The Herman Center provides short term emergency psychiatric crisis care that includes stabilization, assessment and treatment in a secure, protected residential environment for adults experiencing mental health crises. It offers the right level of care at the right time, while reducing the cost of care and improving health outcomes for patients. Adding this service to the continuum of care ensures that psychiatric crisis treatment is available in the most appropriate and cost-effective setting.

Why is this service needed in Travis County?

Historically, individuals experiencing a mental health crisis have only had the option of inpatient care, the most expensive type of treatment and one that is not readily available. However, the vast majority of crises resolve within 48 hours, indicating that inpatient care is not always necessary. The Herman Center offers assessment and treatment that will reduce the need for more expensive care. This means better outcomes for patients and reduced cost to taxpayers or other payers.

What services are provided at the Herman Center?

The following services are provided. All patients are cared for with the oversight of a psychiatrist.

- Crisis assessment
- Crisis stabilization and extended observation
- Medications
- Therapy – individual and group
- Nursing services
- Case management
- Discharge planning
- Linkage to ongoing care and community resources

Who can be served by the Herman Center?

Adults experiencing a mental health crisis. The Herman Center:

- Serves individuals on emergency detention or who voluntarily seek treatment.
(Please see “Who can refer someone to the Herman Center?” for detailed referral guidelines.)
- Serves individuals who are not actively violent.
- Serves individuals where there is reason to believe the immediate crisis will resolve within 48 hours.

Who cannot be served by the Herman Center?

Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis who require a hospital level of care. This may be due to a serious medical condition or behaviors that require restraint or seclusion.

How does an individual access services at the Herman Center?

Currently, the Herman Center is only accepting referrals from law enforcement and internal Integral Care crisis services. Moving forward, primary referrals will come from law enforcement, healthcare providers such as like local emergency departments and the Seton Psychiatric Emergency Department, and other Integral Care crisis services. Law enforcement and healthcare providers will access the Herman Center by calling Integral Care’s 24/7 Crisis Helpline at 512-472-HELP (4357). Press 1, then 2. Integral Care staff will determine if the Herman Center is the right level of care for the individual. If so, Integral Care will refer the adult to the Herman Center. **The Herman Center is not appropriate for self-referral or walk-in services.**

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How long can individuals stay at the Herman Center?

The goal is to quickly resolve the individual's immediate crisis by prompt assessment and initiation of appropriate treatment so the individual can return home or transfer to another Integral Care residential program for ongoing support and recovery. Because mental health crises look different for everyone, an individual's length of stay will vary based on need. Transfer to a higher level of care, such as inpatient psychiatric services, can also be facilitated if clinically necessary.

Who operates the Herman Center?

Integral Care, the Local Mental Health Authority, operates the Herman Center and helps ensure this service is successfully connected and integrated with other key mental health services and stakeholders.

Integral Care helps people build health and well-being so everyone has the foundation to reach their full potential. Integral Care supports adults and children living with mental illness, substance use disorder and intellectual and developmental disabilities in Travis County. Integral Care's services include a 24-hour helpline for anyone who needs immediate support, ongoing counseling to improve mental health, drug and alcohol treatment to help with recovery, and housing to regain health and independence. Integral Care helps provide a strong foundation for well-being. Integral Care is the Local Mental Health Authority for Travis County and has been providing services to the community for 50 years.

How many patients will be served annually?

An estimated 1,000 patients will be served in the first year and almost 1,500 patients in the second year.

How big is the Herman Center?

The crisis center has 16 beds and approximately 12,000 total square feet.

What other crisis care options does Integral Care offer in Travis County?

Depending on the level of care needed, many options exist for crisis care in our community.

- **Integral Care’s 24/7 Crisis Helpline**, 512-472-HELP (4357), provides immediate crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Integral Care’s Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES)** is an urgent care, walk-in clinic for adults and children experiencing a mental health crisis. Individuals can receive follow-up care for up to 90 days.
 - Located at 56 East Ave Austin, TX 78701.
 - Operating hours are Monday through Friday, 8am to 10pm and Saturday, Sunday and Holidays, 10am to 8pm.
- **Integral Care’s Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT)** goes anywhere someone needs help. MCOT can be dispatched by Integral Care’s 24/7 Crisis Helpline. Individuals can receive follow-up care for up to 90 days.

What will be the impact of the Herman Center?

Austin and Travis County have lacked adequate access to emergency psychiatric services, placing a strain on first responder and emergency healthcare services. The Herman Center supports the community by:

- Offering an alternative to inpatient psychiatric facilities and emergency rooms.
- Providing an alternative to incarceration. The lack of adequate mental health services in this community has resulted in individuals with mental health issues being incarcerated too often. The Herman Center helps ensure that individuals whose primary issue is mental illness have an appropriate and safe place to be assessed and treated.

Who is Judge Guy Herman?

The Judge Guy Herman Center for Mental Health Crisis Care offers the opportunity to recognize a true advocate in our community – Judge Guy Herman. For decades, Judge Herman has championed the interests of individuals living with mental health issues in Travis County. As the local Probate Judge, Herman is responsible for determining if and when an individual must be committed involuntarily for psychiatric care. In this role, he has seen firsthand the needs of individuals experiencing mental illness. He has continually advocated for improving access to services and improving our local service delivery system.

Who is funding the development and operations of the Herman Center?

St. David's Foundation is funding the project with a grant totaling almost \$9 million. This funding covered the majority of construction costs and will cover a significant percentage of the operating costs during the first two years. Central Health is making the land available via a low cost (virtually free) long-term lease. The value of this land is estimated at \$1.2 million. Integral Care raised the additional funds from public and private sources.

What is the history of the development of this model?

A workgroup convened by Central Health beginning in 2005, known as the Psychiatric Services Stakeholder Committee (which includes St. David's Foundation, Seton Healthcare Family, Integral Care, Central Health, the Austin Police Department, local judges, and mental health professionals), identified this collaborative community solution to respond to the need for enhanced crisis services.

The crisis center is modeled after Burke, the mental health emergency center in Lufkin, Texas, which opened in 2008 and is a recognized best practice. In 2013, St. David's Foundation hosted a "field trip" to Lufkin for local mental health stakeholders to visit the site and determine if this model would help address needs in Travis County. The consensus was that this model would fill a critical gap in the local mental health safety net. St. David's Foundation began working with key partners (Integral Care and Central Health) to develop this community solution to what has been a long standing problem.

Where is the Herman Center located?

The Herman Center is located at 6600 E. Ben White Blvd., Austin, TX 78741.

What is the relationship between the Herman Center for Mental Health Crisis Care and the Southeast Health and Wellness Center?

They are separate facilities run by different organizations. Integral Care operates the Herman Center for Mental Health Crisis Care. The Southeast Health and Wellness Center is owned by Central Health and operated by CommUnityCare.

For More Information

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