

# WDH Healthcare Facilities Project

## Questions and Answers

February 2020

### General

#### **How did this project come about?**

In 2012, the Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) commissioned a master facilities plan for the five state healthcare facilities. In 2014, the governor and the Wyoming Legislature appointed a task force to review the plan and make recommendations. The task force examined statutory obligations, conducted site evaluations and held facility public meetings. The group's recommendations included a new vision for the Wyoming State Hospital (WSH) and the Wyoming Life Resource Center (WLRC).

#### **What is the new vision for WSH and WLRC?**

Under the new statutory vision, WSH will provide acute, short-term psychiatric services for Wyoming residents. Patients generally will be stabilized, treated and returned to their homes for ongoing community-based services.

WLRC will continue serving current WLRC clients, but its future mission will be to provide long-term care for residents who are very hard-to place, have high medical needs, demonstrate exceptionally difficult behaviors or require geriatric-psychiatric care.

The new vision recognizes the needs of residents served by both facilities have changed over time. However, the physical condition of buildings and grounds in both places makes it difficult for WDH to efficiently provide the modernized treatment and care called for by current law and the new vision.

#### **What is the project timeline?**

The level III design phase was completed in 2017, and construction bids were requested in late 2017. Construction began in 2018. For WSH, move in is expected June 2020 with total project completion in fall 2020. Work at WLRC is scheduled for completion in spring 2021.

#### **Which companies will be performing the work?**

Groathouse Construction, Inc. was selected as the general contractor for the Evanston portion of the project; Sletten Construction is working on the Lander campus. Both are Wyoming-based companies.

## **Budget**

### **What is the budget for this project?**

The Wyoming Legislature appropriated \$182 million for the project.

### **Will there be any long-term benefits to the WDH budget from this project?**

The project's primary focus is improving services for clients with the greatest needs while meeting our agency's fundamental duties. While there will likely be reduced maintenance costs and other efficiencies because of design improvements and grounds changes, we can't yet say how much. One of the most significant potential source of savings would be a reduction in Title 25 involuntary hospitalization costs at private hospitals, which reached a high of \$18 million in the 2015-16 biennium. The new facility missions will allow WSH to concentrate on a short-term acute psychiatric role. This will effectively increase bed capacity on the state side and reduce the WSH wait list, which will cut Title 25 costs.

## **Staffing and Costs**

### **Will these facilities compete with the private sector?**

These facilities are meant as a safety net for our hardest-to-care-for residents, which includes people who local public and private sector providers are not able to treat. The aim is to support local providers who may need help to stabilize a client before the client returns to the community.

### **Could we privatize these facilities?**

Privatization was explored by the task force and by prior governmental and independent reviews before the current plan was recommended. Economic, constitutional, statutory and liability issues make privatization challenging for both WSH and WLRC.

### **What will be the impact on staff from this project?**

WLRC and WSH staff will be able to enjoy an updated environment to support their service to clients. The new vision will lead to shifts in duties and retraining of some staff members.

### **Will the project increase ongoing funding for maintenance and staffing?**

No.

## **Wyoming Life Resource Center**

### **Why do we need new buildings at WLRC?**

Unfortunately, WLRC buildings are deteriorating and need constant maintenance and repair. There are too many structures spread across a sprawling campus. Many buildings are partially vacant with limited benefit or use, including large structures mostly used for storage.

New buildings will be designed for active treatment, to meet licensing requirements for both current and future clients and better fulfill the new WLRC mission. A better living environment will result for clients, as well as an improved and more efficient working environment for staff.

### **Why are new types of clients coming to WLRC?**

These days, most Wyoming residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/D) are currently served in their communities. The need for lifetime care services for most individuals with ID/D at a facility such as WLRC is decreasing.

At the same time, we are seeing more hard-to-place clients with extreme behaviors due to dementia, acquired brain injury or dual diagnosis of mental health challenges and intellectual disabilities. Wyoming's government leaders recognize the need to serve these very vulnerable and difficult clients and evaluated several options. The WLRC campus is an ideal setting for clients who need temporary intermediate and skilled services to stabilize behaviors so they can return to live successfully in the community.

### **Will care of existing WLRC clients be harmed by changes to the facility and its mission?**

Protecting and serving the existing population remains a priority. The new facilities will improve the lifestyle of current residents. As always, clients and their families or guardians may also explore community options supported by WDH.

### **How will care of existing WLRC clients be helped by changes?**

Current clients will benefit from modern buildings specifically designed to support their needs. For example, many clients cannot move around on their own and require large pieces of equipment for social and therapy-related activities. The proposed design will accommodate equipment and allow space for therapy services.

### **If we build new structures at WLRC, what will happen to existing buildings?**

Current design proposals call for removal of several structures where new buildings will be constructed. Other buildings will be adapted either for WLRC use or by another state agency. Some structures may be preserved and winterized to save operational costs.

## **Wyoming State Hospital**

### **Why specifically do we need new buildings at WSH?**

Our main goal is a healing environment where safety and security needs of patients and staff are prioritized. The current facility serves clients in multiple buildings scattered throughout a large campus area, which is not efficient. There are also significant structural concerns with many WSH buildings.

### **How will care of existing WSH clients be helped or changed by the project?**

Much of the WSH bed capacity is currently used by people with intermediate and long-term healthcare needs such as skilled nursing, which limits beds available to clients needing short-term treatment and evaluation. Intermediate and long-term care clients will be better served at WLRC.

### **If we build new buildings at WSH, what will happen to the existing buildings?**

The design includes remodeling and adding on to the newest WSH building, which was built less than 20 years ago. Options for the remaining campus structures include repurposing, demolition or preservation.