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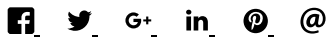
Cullman Area Mental Health Authority merges with Huntsville's WellStone Behavioral Health

Tiffany Owens 11 hrs ago



Chris Van Dyke

File



WellStone Behavioral Health in Huntsville and Cullman Area Mental Health Authority have merged, creating the largest and most comprehensive behavioral healthcare provider in North Alabama.

Operating as WellStone Inc., the organization will be led by a workforce of 400 employees serving more than 13,000 clients across the region, according to a press release. The merger became final Sunday.

"It's about building a stronger organization that meets the needs of our clients exactly when and where they need us the most," said Chris Van Dyke, Cullman Area Mental Health executive director, who will assume the role of Chief Operating Officer of WellStone.

"Behavioral health needs continue to grow, and state and local funding can't keep pace," Van Dyke said. "We embrace the opportunity to join forces as WellStone Inc. so that we can expand our reach within the region. Our team in Cullman will continue to provide services as they are available now but with enhanced operational support."

Behavioral health encompasses a wide range of issues surrounding behavior, mental illness, chronic health problems and substance abuse, and WellStone wants to lead the conversation about behavioral health in its community, said WellStone Chief Executive Officer Jeremy Blair.

"It's critical to remove the stigma that often surrounds mental health services," Blair said. "One in five people will experience a diagnosable behavioral health condition each year. That's why our work remains focused on connecting children, adolescents and adults with the services they need to be at their very best. This merger will enhance quality of services and streamline care for our region. We are creating operational efficiencies, cost savings and opportunities to expand the delivery of mental health and substance abuse services in North Alabama."

WellStone Inc. is a non-profit community organization that provides mental health and substance abuse services supporting the integrated health of the whole person. It operates 12 facilities throughout North Alabama and Cullman and is certified through the Alabama Department of Mental Health. WellStone offers programs for children, adolescents, adults, substance abuse, school-based outreach, community services and more.

For more information, go online to wellstone.com.

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