TIMES UNION

MidHudson Regional to Expand Psych Unit After Critical State Probe

Mid-Hudson Regional will expand its psychiatric unit to 60 beds, a year after a state probe found patients were put at risk.

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MidHudson Regional Hospital. The Poughkeepsie facility's parent company, Westchester Medical Center Health Network, is expanding mental health care at the hospital following a critical report from the state attorney general's office. Phillip Pantuso/Times Union

POUGHKEEPSIE — MidHudson Regional Hospital will expand its inpatient behavioral health unit by adding beds to treat patients with psychiatric conditions, one year after a state investigation found the hospital system had put those patients at risk.

The hospital, a member of the Westchester Medical Center Health Network, announced last week that it had expanded a unit that had 40 beds before the pandemic. The newly renovated space will include 60 beds for people with mental health conditions. Hospital officials said this week they are "finalizing regulatory approvals" before accepting patients.

The expansion follows a 2025 investigation by the state attorney general's office, which found the health network routinely discharged vulnerable mental health patients without adequate

evaluation and improperly kept inpatient psychiatric beds closed for years despite a growing need for those services.

As part of a settlement with the attorney general's office, WMCHealth committed to following through with expanding access to inpatient psychiatric care and overhauling how it treats patients in acute mental health crises. The network had announced plans to expand in June 2022, the same month the attorney general's office held its first mental health hearing about the closures, which led to the investigation.

WMCHealth is the largest hospital system in the Hudson Valley, operating nine hospitals from Westchester County to the Catskills.

In April 2020, the system shut down a 60-bed behavioral health unit at its HealthAlliance Hospital in Kingston following a state order mandating hospitals increase available capacity for COVID-19 patients. Some mental health services were transferred to MidHudson Regional.

The Kingston unit's closure forced anyone requiring inpatient psych care to travel about 20 miles to Poughkeepsie, crossing the Hudson River. It also overtaxed frontline health care providers at the hospital, contributing to lapses in care that proved fatal in at least one instance.

HealthAlliance Hospital reopened its inpatient behavioral health unit in December 2024, restoring 20 beds in Kingston. With those beds back online, the health network began renovating MidHudson Regional to expand capacity as part of a public-private initiative with Dutchess County.

The expansion was supported by $3 million in county funding intended to strengthen local psychiatric care and meet the growing need for mental health services in the community. Then-Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro allocated the funds in 2022.

The renovated unit will offer emergency mental health services, addiction programs and an outpatient clinic. Hospital officials said the space was designed to reduce environmental stress, with more natural light, additional group therapy rooms and upgraded security features "consistent with behavioral health best practices."

"When someone is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, timely access to inpatient care in a therapeutic, safe environment can be lifesaving," Dr. Stephen J. Ferrando, chair of psychiatry at WMCHealth, said in a statement. "The renovated Spellman Unit was designed to support healing and recovery — improving comfort and privacy for patients while also giving our teams the space and tools to deliver evidence-informed care."

Local leaders said the expansion will allow more residents to receive care closer to home.

"As the need for mental health care surges in our communities, we're seeing those services reduced, especially in underserved rural areas," said state Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson, who represents the Newburgh and Poughkeepsie areas. "I applaud WMCHealth and Dutchess County for prioritizing this project to expand mental health care with more inpatient beds and services, so that everyone can get the compassionate care they need."