NEDHSA, Conway work to increase psychiatric inpatient capacity*

Northeast Delta Human Services Authority announced recently additional work with University Health Conway to further impact the treatment of people who experience a mental health crisis.

"Because there are not enough psychiatric inpatient beds to treat all of the people who need help in our region, people with mental health issues are sometimes held in jail, sometimes commit crimes and drive up emergency room traffic and cost," said Dr. Monteic A. Sizer, NE Delta HSA executive director.

"Additionally, rural hospitals are sometimes not equipped to manage behavioral health patients. They incur significant financial costs because of this problem," he said.

"After listening to our health care partners and local coroners and sheriffs in rural northeast Louisiana Parish, we understand the need for increased, coordinated care for emergency commitment services. We will work with our partner, University Health Conway, to improve emergency coordination and answer this need.

"These efforts will help improve the lives of people who are in crisis and direct them to sustainable and appropriate levels of care. And with a more coordinated system of care, we also hope to impact a cost savings to rural hospitals, law enforcement entities and encourage more inpatient capacity.

"We listened, we heard and now we're catalyzing action to fix a problem. That's the goal of our work at Northeast Delta HSA and that's what we're entrusted to do," he said.

"We appreciate the efforts made by Dr. Sizer and NE Delta HSA to take positive action to identify solutions to these challenges," said Larry Donner, University Health Conway Hospital Administrator. "Working closely with the regional health care community and the law enforcement agencies will speed up the process. University Health Conway is committed to meeting the needs of this patient population. We are making process improvements in our hospital and have University Health System's support to work with NE Delta HSA and all of our law enforcement agencies," he said. "We agree with Dr. Sizer that by working together, we can accomplish this task."

Together, NE Delta HSA and University Health Conway will be calling on members of law enforcement, coroners' offices and regional health care executives to put this work into action.

"The work that is most needed in our region is not always the easiest," Sizer said.

"We are confident that our partners all over northeast Louisiana will continue to answer our call to action and help us work to improve the lives and the health outcomes of our citizens."