



# Winnebago County Mental Health Advisory Committee

## Committee Members:

### Angie Goral

Winnebago County  
Board Member

### Philip Eaton

President/CEO  
Rosecrance

### Carol Klint, RN, M.S.

Behavior Health  
Advocate

### Richard Kunnert M.S. ED.

President of the Mental  
Health Association of  
the Rock River Valley

### Donny Parham

Former Winnebago  
County Sheriff's  
Department senior  
deputy

### Charles Smith, M.D.

Founder of Group Hope

### Matthey Toohy

Executive Director of  
Access Services of  
Northern Illinois

### Sandra Martell, RN, DNP

Winnebago County  
Health Department  
Administrator  
(Ex-Officio)

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## For Immediate Release

### *Winnebago County behavioral health survey project shifts to next phase*

(December 30, 2015) – The Winnebago County Mental Health Advisory Committee has started analyzing the results of more than 2,000 surveys that offer feedback about behavioral health services in our community.

The committee, tasked with advising Winnebago County leaders on how to address service gaps for needed behavioral health services, is spearheading the survey project, which will provide feedback on a variety of topics. Those topics include how easy/difficult it is to access care and how prevalent behavioral health issues are within the community.

Behavioral health is a broad category that represents mental health and substance abuse treatment, as well as services for people with developmental disabilities. Winnebago County is the only urban area in Illinois that has no broad-based local funding support for behavioral health services. That lack of local dollars has been magnified in recent years as agencies have grappled with state budget cuts and other grant reductions.

Surveys were distributed starting in August to three key groups: providers, referral sources and community members who have direct or indirect experiences with behavioral health services. In total, 2,150 surveys were returned; the majority of those were completed by community members.

Although a full analysis of the results isn't done yet, two data points so far have been especially telling: While a majority of respondents believe there is significant stigma associated with mental illness, a similar majority believes that behavioral health treatments work.

"We would like to thank the thousands of community members and the more than 100 professionals who provided their feedback for the surveys," said Angie Goral, a Winnebago County Board member and the committee's chairman. "This robust response will allow us to create a comprehensive picture of behavioral health services in our community."



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The project has now entered its second phase: The results of the surveys will be validated by other sources, including subject matter experts, people who use or whose family members use behavioral health services, and national benchmarking. Phase II is expected to be completed in February 2016. Next steps include a review of the results and preparation of a final report.

You can connect with the committee via Facebook (visit [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) and search "Winnebago County Mental Health Advisory Committee") and Twitter ([twitter.com/WinnCo\\_MHAC](https://twitter.com/WinnCo_MHAC)).