



County to facilitate mental health services

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Gordon County is looking to help facilitate mental health services for residents of the underserved community.

The county in March issued a request for proposals for its 3,000-square-foot Mental Health Center at 320 N. River St. in Calhoun.

Now, county officials are working to determine which of three interested agencies will offer mental health services in the building adjacent to the Gordon County Health Department that has been vacant for some time.

Constructed with state assistance about 16 years ago, the county has provided the facility rent and maintenance free to mental health providers who treat Gordon County residents. But the providers have not stayed in the building.

“It’s not really worked out,” County Administrator John King said. “They’ve left for different reasons. I think many of them were insurance and funding related.”

King said the lack of mental health services available in the county has been a big problem for the community.

“A lot of the inmates that are at our jail are suffering from mental health illnesses, we believe, and we really don’t have a local source for people to receive counseling and those types of services,” he said.

While the county foots the bill for operating the facility, the new provider likely would receive payments from insurance companies and Medicaid.

“I think probably some of the problems are those people or patients who may not have either, and that’s always been a problem in the past,” King said.

Costs to the county would include building repairs, maintenance and insurance and would be “nominal,” King said, adding the structure would be “spruced up” with some spot painting and carpet cleaning.

“What’s critical right now is that we get the right provider in here that’s really going to be able to deliver services,” King said, adding the services provided could include both psychological and psychiatric. “That’s where we’ve left the Request For Proposal fairly open ended because in the past, we’ve haven’t had a tremendous amount of interest in the building. We’ve had some difficulty keeping that building filled, even though we provide it rent free.”

County officials hope a provider can offer a range of services including assessments, case management, counseling, medication administration and maintenance, and rehabilitation, according to the RFP.

King said one of Gordon County’s biggest needs is drug addiction counseling.

“Our jail stays full and we believe that many of the inmates there at the county jail suffer from addictions and many of their crimes or many of the problems that they have are related to those addictions,” he added.

Three companies — Fellowship Health Resources, Helping Hands Community Development Center and Highland Rivers Health — have submitted proposals, according to www.gordoncounty.org.

A panel including county officials and external stakeholders — such as representatives of the district attorney’s office, Superior Court, social service agencies and the hospital — have reviewed the proposals and requested the firms make presentations, which were scheduled for this week.

The review panel would then make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for a final decision.