

Contact: Pam McKeown  
(405) 522-5102

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**WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT CENTER  
TO OPEN IN TULSA: GRAND OPENING SLATED JAN. 27**

A long-awaited, 52-bed substance abuse treatment facility for women and children will host its grand opening Monday, Jan. 27, 10 a.m., in Tulsa.

Located at 2442 E. Mohawk Blvd., the Tulsa Women and Children's Center will be owned by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, with treatment services provided by Palmer Continuum of Care, a subsidiary of Palmer Drug Abuse Program of Tulsa.

"The need for this center is absolutely overwhelming," said Ben Brown, ODMHSAS deputy commissioner of substance abuse services. "As a state, Oklahoma doesn't have nearly enough treatment facilities for pregnant women and women with dependent children. This center won't solve our problems entirely, but it will have a significant and long-lasting impact. Babies will be born drug- and alcohol-free, and fetal alcohol syndrome, fetal alcohol effects, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and other developmental issues associated with prenatal drug, alcohol and tobacco use will be significantly reduced.

"Lives will literally be saved because of this facility," Brown added. "It will be a haven for women and children in the face of substance abuse and addiction, and all the ravages that come with that."

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Harold Katz, executive director of Palmer Drug Abuse Program of Tulsa, said Palmer has subcontracted with a number of other Tulsa-area organizations to provide specialized, gender-specific services.

“The vast majority of the treatment staff will be women, and the facility will be extremely women-specific and ethnically diversified,” Katz said. “In addition to female-specific treatment developed by Dr. Stephanie Covington, a consultant to the Betty Ford Center, we will have a specialized curriculum for school-aged children, and a highly focused family program. The facility will have an on-site licensed child care center, and our clients will have access to a number of services not available elsewhere.”

Katz said treatment providers expect a “number” of women with histories of domestic violence. Counseling services for these women will be provided by Domestic Violence Intervention Services, Inc., of Tulsa. Additionally, Family & Children's Services, Inc., will provide child therapy services, as well as female-specific counseling services. Resonance will offer vocational assessments and vocational training, and Community Action Project will present a financial literacy program. HOPE, Inc., will facilitate HIV/substance abuse counseling, and the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine will provide on-site psychiatric services and consultation, as well as general medical care and referrals for high-risk children and high-risk pregnancies.

The average length of stay, at least initially, will be three to four months, Katz said.

“There's a huge demand for this facility, and we want to help as many people as possible,” he said. “Upon leaving treatment, our clients will have a significant amount of

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ongoing case management and aftercare. We plan to make sure the women, when they leave, have jobs, a home or apartment in which to live, child care and transportation.”

Katz said the various substance abuse treatment “modalities” planned are of the highest quality available anywhere in the nation.

The women's program will include counseling on such issues as spirituality, relationships and 12-step programs. Parenting skills to eliminate potential child abuse and neglect also will be a featured component. The curriculum for school-age children, developed by Betty Ford Center psychologist Jerry Moe, will employ activities ranging from art to literature designed to “help children understand that their mother's addiction is not a ‘reflection’ of themselves, and that they don't need to take responsibility for her disease,” Katz said. “We also want children to understand what their mother is experiencing during treatment and how that will impact their lives. Breaking the cycle of addiction by helping children learn social skills and coping skills is vital.”

The family program, based on a program called “Strengthening Families,” focuses on the past, present and future in terms of the mother/child relationship, Katz added.

Brown said he is thankful to Tulsa legislators, Tulsa County officials and others who helped make the center possible. “I'm grateful to everybody who helped make this happen – the legislators who started this process nearly a decade ago who, sometimes in the face of resistance, stayed true to the course and gave ODMHSAS the tools to construct this facility; Tulsa County officials who helped make this possible within the confines of an extremely tight budget; and all those who helped make this center a reality. There is no question that this facility will save lives, families and futures.”

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## **Women and Substance Abuse: Measuring the Impact**

- Nearly 38,000 Oklahoma women – about 2.9 percent of adult females in our state – are in need of substance abuse treatment.
- In Oklahoma, women living in poverty are *82 percent* more likely to need substance abuse treatment than women not living in poverty.
- Women addicted to drugs or alcohol put the health and safety of their unborn and dependent children at risk. In Oklahoma, at least 250 babies are born every year with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and another 1,000 are born with Fetal Alcohol Effects. Lifetime institutional and medical costs for one person with FAS are more than \$2 million, meaning that Oklahoma ultimately will spend billions of dollars for health care and other costs associated with caring for those born with FAS and FAE, both of which are 100 percent preventable.
- Substance abuse is associated with 65 percent of child abuse cases. Nationally, substance abuse and addiction contributes to seven of 10 cases of child maltreatment and accounts for some \$10 billion in government spending on child welfare.
- Children with substance-abusing parents are three times more likely to be abused and four times more likely to be neglected than children of parents who are not substance abusers. Abused or neglected children are much more likely to engage in serious and violent delinquency, and are at higher risk for drug use, poor academic performance, teen pregnancy, and emotional and mental health disorders.
- Research suggests that women may become more quickly addicted to certain drugs, such as crack cocaine, even after casual or experimental use. Women also are much more sensitive to the effects of alcohol.
- Women's specific treatment promotes strong family bonds, parental monitoring and involvement, high self-esteem for both mother and child, children's success in academic performance, and involvement in pro-social institutions, including school and religious organizations.

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