

Contact: Jeff Dismukes
(405) 522-3907
ODMHSAS Public Information

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**CENTRAL OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER
RECEIVES NATIONAL ACCREDITATION**

Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center in Norman, a facility operated by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, has received a three-year accreditation from the national Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

A three-year accreditation is the highest level of accreditation a service provider can be awarded and shows substantial fulfillment of CARF standards, which promote the quality, value and optimal outcomes of services.

COCMHC was opened in 1968 as the nation's first community mental health center. It was funded through a federal grant program that has resulted in similar facilities throughout the country. Built on the premise that people suffering from mental illnesses would be better served in the community as opposed to an institution, the center has played a pivotal role in restoring the lives of countless area residents.

Terri White, COCMHC interim executive director, said the recent award is an indication of the agency's dedication and commitment to improving the lives of the consumers they serve.

“The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services has worked hard to implement a ‘recovery model’ that focuses on community-based treatment as opposed to long-term inpatient or residential services,” White said. “We know consumers of mental health services often have better outcomes in familiar surroundings. By providing quality outpatient services, someone with mental illness can return to the community, hold down jobs, and participate in life more effectively.”

White said CARF emphasizes three core values: All people should have the right to be treated with dignity and respect; all people should have access to needed services that achieve optimum outcomes; and all people should be empowered to exercise informed choice. COCMHC achieved these standards in several program areas dedicated to mental health, including the Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) for adults; case management/services coordination for adults; case management/services coordination for children and adolescents; outpatient treatment for adults; and outpatient treatment for children and adolescents.

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