Illinois Health and Hospital Association

Across the United States, one in four adults suffers from a diagnosable mental disorder, with many experiencing more than one such disorder. Yet in rural communities like Southern Illinois, patients in crisis have had to travel for hours for care, wait days in an emergency room for an open psychiatric bed or go without care.

The region's growing need for inpatient mental healthcare combined with its limited bed capacity has left over 700 people a year seeking urgently needed care in Springfield, Chicago or even out of state. That will soon change with a $20 million expansion of the SIH Mulberry Center, a project funded in part through federal and state grants.

In May 2025, the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board unanimously approved SIH's Certificate of Need (CON) application to expand and modernize the SIH Mulberry Center. This inpatient mental health facility on the campus of SIH Harrisburg Medical Center will add a 12-bed medical-psychiatric inpatient unit and update existing spaces increasing its acute mental illness bed capacity from 30 to 42.

The SIH Mulberry Center is the only inpatient mental health program of its kind serving the 16 southernmost counties.

The new medical-psychiatric unit will serve patients requiring both medical and psychiatric care, with medical care for conditions like diabetes, heart disease, or other current or chronic illnesses. There, clinicians will provide integrated treatment in a safe, specially designed setting. Patients will no longer face prolonged stays in emergency departments or medical units not equipped for behavioral health.

"This expansion is about meeting a critical and growing need in our region," said SIH President and CEO John Antes. "Here in Southern Illinois, we see firsthand the shortage of available inpatient beds. It's a major step toward delivering the care our communities deserve—compassionate, connected and close to home."

SIH broke ground on the project on June 24, 2025, with health system leaders joined by local, state and federal officials and their representative officials. SIH Vice President and Administrator of SIH Harrisburg Medical Center Rodney Smith has been involved with the project since initial discussions over a decade ago.

"We realized years ago that too many individuals were being sent hours away for mental health care," said Smith. "This expansion will change that reality for our region. Expanding the SIH Mulberry Center means more of our families, friends and neighbors can receive the mental healthcare they need close to home."