

# Longtime Center For Human Services Director To Retire

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Published June 14, 2021 at 5:04 PM CDT

LISTEN • 16:17



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McLean County Center for Human Services Director Tom Barr will retire next year after four decades of service with the agency.

Five years into implementation of the county mental health action plan, the head of the McLean County Center for Human Services in Bloomington said community leaders are trying to identify the next priorities.

Tom Barr said the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council has so far improved coordination and collaboration, begun crisis services, and tried to reduce unneeded hospitalizations.

Barr has a prediction on the next priority the coordinating council will choose to address.

"One of them will be youth services. Clearly, we see a need for, and in my agency has been able to expand services in schools to youth. Often times youth go unserved. The family may not bring them in for services, or they may go unidentified," he said.

Other areas in the mental health action plan include residential mental health services and psychiatric services.

Barr said the community has stepped up in a big way to fund and grow mental health services by allocating sales tax money for the purpose as the state reduced its commitment to those services. The community has used those dollars to improve coordination of services, reduce unneeded hospitalizations, and boost crisis services, he said.

But Barr said the unmet need is more than twice as much as is currently being spent on human services in McLean County. He said that means agencies like his have to prioritize and make tough choices.

"We've made that determination based on those individuals who have the greatest needs and the fewest resources. Those are the people that we have prioritized in our psychiatric program when we have not had enough resources to be able to provide psychiatric care," said Barr.

## **Retirement plans**

After more than four decades with the Center for Human Services, Barr is retiring at the end of March next year. He started in an entry-level job right out of grad school and said he never planned to spend his entire career at one agency. Barr said he announced his retirement well ahead of time to allow the organization to do effective succession planning and perhaps arrange overlap for a smoother transition.

When he started, the center was a small storefront building with 20 staff; he was an outpatient therapist. The center now has 70 workers and serves more than 3,500 different people each year. When the center is successful at its work, the community doesn't know they are there because there are no tragedies, said Barr.

He said society also has changed during his time at the center. He said mental health issues are now considered "health" related and there is less stigma associated with them, though still misconceptions that need to be removed. He said outcomes are much better thanks to improvements in therapy, medications, and services.

One of Barr's final projects is a center expansion by way of the rehab a downtown building that was donated by the Segneri family.