

# Press Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Bridge House Is Now the *Only* Licensed Acute Treatment Unit for Acute Psychiatric Care in Metro Denver

**The new unit provides a lower-cost solution to the critical shortage of psychiatric beds in Colorado.**

**ENGLEWOOD (Dec. 8, 2009)** — Denver metro residents now have more options for the treatment of acute psychiatric episodes, with the new licensure of Bridge House as an Acute Treatment Unit (ATU).

Bridge House Acute Treatment Unit is a secure, locked facility operated by Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network (ADMHN). With its new license, Bridge House can now admit individuals who are required to undergo a 72-hour mental health hold<sup>1</sup> — an involuntary evaluation to determine if they need further treatment and/or an involuntary stay at a psychiatric treatment facility. Previously, only psychiatric hospitals could provide this service to area residents — often at considerably greater expense, and with very limited availability.

Located in Littleton, Bridge House has 16 beds for adults in need of acute psychiatric care and crisis stabilization. Individuals treated here typically are experiencing either a severe mental health crisis for the first time, or a flare-up of an existing mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression. Bridge House provides a structured, clinically focused treatment program with case management, psychiatric evaluation, medical management, licensed therapist interventions and daily psychiatric nursing care. Therapeutic interventions are provided around the clock, as are admissions and discharges. Psychiatrists are available 24 hours a day for consultation, and conduct thorough psychiatric evaluations and daily rounds. Bridge House adheres to stringent documentation standards and places a strong emphasis on coordinated care.

While patients at Bridge House receive all needed services, treatment can be more cost-effective than other options: a typical stay in Bridge House is about 60 percent of the cost of a typical hospital stay. As such, Bridge House is an attractive option for insurers and consumers alike.

**Bridge House is helping to relieve the critical shortage of acute psychiatric beds in Colorado.**

In recent years, the Denver metro area has seen a severe reduction in the number of psychiatric beds available for people who are experiencing a psychiatric crisis. Psychiatric units in local hospitals have closed and 59 beds at the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Fort Logan were recently eliminated due to state budget cuts. **The situation has reached a critical stage: Colorado has the lowest psychiatric bed count in the nation:** just 11.8 psychiatric beds for every 100,000 people, compared to the national average of 30.<sup>2</sup>

The new Bridge House ATU — the only ATU in the Denver metro area and one of only four ATUs in the state — is helping to relieve this critical shortage.

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Nationwide, ATUs are becoming a preferred choice for providing psychiatric care for those in crisis. They are typically found in community settings and offer a pleasant atmosphere for both clients and visitors. Bridge House is located next to the Carson Nature Center, and clients and visitors enjoy views of the Colorado Rockies. “We know that environment plays an important role in the recovery process,” says Scott Thoemke, Executive Director and CEO of ADMHN. “Bridge House provides a comfortable, relaxing atmosphere that enhances the recovery process.”

The new licensure is the culmination of a nine-month long effort by Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network. Last year, we realized the community was in critical need of more options for acute psychiatric treatment, as well as more cost-effective options. We began the rigorous process of securing the ATU licensure, which included a significant commitment of staff time and resources to meet state requirements for the facility (at a cost of nearly \$80,000); the creation of comprehensive policies and procedures; and the provision of extensive staff training. Bridge House staff increased from 13 to 22 people.

In addition to its new status as an Acute Treatment Unit, Bridge House continues to offer a 23-hour observation service to determine if admission to the ATU or a higher level of care is required, as well as longer-term stays.

1. A mental health hold can be administered only by certain professionals: physicians, licensed psychologists, advanced practice nurses, licensed therapists, and law enforcement.

2. Source: American College of Emergency Physicians.

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### **Available for Interview**

ADMHN Executive Director and CEO Scott Thoemke is available to discuss the implications of Bridge House’s new status, its importance to the community, the critical shortage of psychiatric beds in Colorado and the Denver metro area, and why ATUs are rapidly becoming a preferred choice in providing psychiatric care for those in crisis.

### **About Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network**

ADMHN is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation providing professional, comprehensive behavioral health care and substance abuse treatment primarily, but not exclusively, serving the communities of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. We offer programs for adults, seniors, families, couples and children. These services include counseling, psychiatry, crisis services, case management, substance abuse treatment, victim services, an adult acute treatment unit, adult supported and residential housing, services to the criminal justice system, vocational and social rehabilitation, a day treatment therapeutic school and school-based services. Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network has an on-site pharmacy. We offer community education, wellness programs and a Speakers Bureau.

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