

# Mental Health Innovation Foundation

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New Project Milestone:  
**At Topping Out Ceremony,  
Mental Health Innovation Foundation Raises Beam  
on Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children's Nebraska**  
*World-class center on track to open in early 2026,  
Will offer a continuum of mental, physical care for children and teens*

[New: Video and Photo File](#)

OMAHA, NE – The Mental Health Innovation Foundation (MHIF), led by community leader and philanthropist Ken Stinson, reaches a new milestone on the construction project of the Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children's Nebraska with a topping out ceremony and beam rising on Thursday, and MHIF offers a construction project update.

As the mental health needs of Omaha area youth increase, the vision of the Center is to create a beacon of hope for children and families providing a collaborative world-class model of comprehensive behavioral and mental health services, co-located with medical health needs. The need for more mental health services for area youth is clear and sobering. Even before the onset of COVID-19, 1 in 5 children was experiencing a mental illness, and the pandemic has led to increased mental health challenges and suicide risk among children. Nationwide, mental health-related emergency room visits rose 24% among children ages 5 to 11 and 31% among those 12 to 17 years old. Suicide is now the second-leading cause of death for youths, and, unfortunately, Nebraska exceeds national trends for number of suicide deaths in adolescents ages 15 to 19.

Key project updates include the addition of more inpatient rooms, a \$4 million increase to the budget, and following a national search, Children's hired Renee Rafferty as senior vice president of Behavioral Health. When it opens, Rafferty will oversee the Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children's Nebraska, and she has been a critical partner to the MHIF design and build team. In addition, the name of the Center has been updated to include Nebraska to align with Children's new name: Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children's Nebraska.

When the new comprehensive mental health facility opens in early 2026, the Center will be a 107,250-square-foot, four-story building with 40 inpatient beds, up from 38 beds, on a seven-acre lot on the Children's Nebraska campus. The project budget is \$114 million, funded by donors who recognize the need for expanding children and adolescent mental health services in the Omaha area, along with the State of Nebraska through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the City of Omaha, and Children's.

“We have reached another important milestone in building the Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children’s Nebraska,” Stinson said. “This Center will serve the mental health and wellness needs of our children extraordinarily well, and I am happy to share we are a little ahead of schedule.”

The Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children’s Nebraska will offer a seamless continuum of care for children, teens, and families, offering services to address a wide range of mental health challenges. The world-class features of the Center include:

- 40 single occupancy hospital inpatient beds that will more than double the capacity in our community.
- 10,000-square-foot assessment center that will be a screening and crisis stabilization center for children and families who are facing a broad range of mental health challenges. It will be one of a small number of similar centers in the U.S. and will be the first of its kind in our region.
- A dramatic increase in the current capacity for outpatient partial hospitalization treatment in our community. Partial hospitalization services are a hybrid between inpatient care and periodic outpatient care. Patients in partial hospitalization would come to the Center five days a week for around eight hours a day to receive both therapy and educational support. This new facility will have a capacity to serve up to 40 patients at a time.
- An experiential kitchen for patients and families dealing with eating disorders.
- Over 14,000 square feet of space for general outpatient therapy and pediatric care.

“Today’s beam raising brings me joy because I know each day brings us closer to the most important milestone on this journey – the day the doors open and we begin serving the youth of our community in this state-of-the-art facility,” said Chanda Chacón, Children’s President & Chief Executive Officer. “The urgency for this facility is real. Once complete, this Center will provide area families with the behavioral health services they need, close to home, co-located on a campus that can also offer a full range of pediatric medical services.”

MHIF selected Kiewit Building Group Inc. as the design-builder of the Center, with HDR as its design partner.

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### **About Mental Health Innovation Foundation (MHIF)**

The Mental Health Innovation Foundation (MHIF), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit led by community leader and philanthropist Ken Stinson, works to collaboratively address growing mental health challenges in children and teens in the Omaha, Nebraska, area. MHIF is committed to managing the planning, designing, fundraising, and construction of the Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children’s Nebraska.

### **About Children’s Nebraska (Children’s)**

Children’s Nebraska is the only full-service, pediatric health care center in Nebraska, providing expertise in more than 50 pediatric specialty services to children across a five-state region and beyond. Children’s is home to Nebraska’s only Level IV regional Newborn Intensive Care Unit and the state’s only Level II Pediatric Trauma Center. Children’s is recognized as a 2023-24 Best Children’s Hospital by U.S. News & World Report, ranked among the best in the specialty of Pulmonology. Visit us online at [ChildrensNebraska.org](http://ChildrensNebraska.org).