

## YSS to move forward with construction of youth recovery campus with \$10M commitment from CICS

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Tuesday, August 11, 2021 11:02 AM

CICS has committed \$10 million to help YSS build a youth recovery campus to help young people who are struggling with mental health and addiction issues.

CICS is a state-supported mental health and disability services region that serves people in 11 Central Iowa counties. According to a news release, the \$10 million is the largest contribution CICS has made to a partner organization. Its contribution will help YSS complete the campus, which will sit on more than 50 acres of timber and prairie located between Ames and Des Moines.

Andrew Allen, president and CEO of the Ames-based YSS, said the contribution from YSS will be “transformational” in allowing YSS to push the project forward and to help YSS best help children in need.

It will incorporate services such as crisis stabilization, emergency shelter, and treatment of substance abuse disorder and addiction.

“[This brings] three programs in a campus-like setting in a nature-based environment that will really enhance healing,” Allen said.

He said the setting will help provide a more peaceful environment for children rather than taking them to an institution.

“The vision that we had was that instead of kids in crisis being brought to an institution, which may actually increase stress and anxiety, kids will come to the YSS youth recovery campus and feel a sense of calm,” Allen said. “Not only the facilities, but the environment, is nature-based and healing in and of itself. When you think of the environment we live in today, the business of our lives, the connection we have on devices, this is really going to be a new opportunity to get kids disconnected in a way that allows them to focus on their mental health, allows them to focus on root issues in their life to overcome trauma and to really recover and heal.”

The campus will have space to accommodate 70 children.

“The campus will give us an opportunity to innovate right alongside the Iowa Department of Human Services and the Department of Public Health and ensure that we’re having best of class outcomes,” Allen said. “Our existing facilities will be transformed into transitional programs to continue and build out the continuum of care.”

The CICS board approved the commitment in July.

The contribution aligns with a change in state funding for mental health services that was approved by the Legislature in 2020 that allows for more robust spending for the current fiscal year.

“This decision shows our board and staff’s commitment to invest in the lives of children in this region and throughout the state who have brain health and substance use issues,” said CICS CEO Russell Wood. “I am proud to lead an agency that is willing to be proactive and commit this level of funding towards this much-needed service. With this investment, we can help Iowa’s children heal.”

YSS offers community-based programs in Des Moines, Marshalltown, Boone, Webster City and Mason City that provide supportive care for children transitioning between programs.

Allen said anytime a child is moved from one environment to another, it creates the risk of trauma.

“We’re being very intentional about when kids would come to the campus for a program, when they would leave, and when they leave where would they go,” he said. “Part of the hope with this campus is that we’re



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heading off long-term issues and giving kids a chance to recover early, stay connected to education and family support and community services. We're focused on ensuring that transitions are smooth and support long-term recovery as opposed to detracting from it."

The estimated cost of the project is between \$12 million and \$15 million, and the CICS gift will allow YSS to move forward with its plans, with completion of the campus expected by 2022 or 2023, Allen said.

YSS has already raised \$2 million for the project, he said.

"We're pushing forward, but no doubt we are going to add different enhancements and ensure both the long-term sustainability of the project but also give us the chance to innovate and provide enhanced programs and services to support outcomes," he said.

Allen will share more details about the YSS Youth Recovery Campus on Sept. 23 at dsm Magazine's upcoming **Lifting the Veil: Teens at Risk** event, which will be held from noon to 1 p.m. via Zoom. The event will feature a panel of experts discussing how deeply the pandemic has affected youths, increasing rates of anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicide. The panel will also provide resources for parents or loved ones and discuss why treatment facilities and support for the YSS Youth Recovery Campus and other programs are critical to help meet the needs of youth in Iowa. [Registration is free and now open.](#)

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