



# Bluegrass.org News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Bluegrass Community Mental Health Center Celebrates 50 Years**

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the Community Mental Health Act into law. It would be the last piece of legislation he signed before his assignment. A few short years later, Kentucky was the first state in the nation to have a complete system of community mental health centers serving all areas of the state.

In 1966, Bluegrass, then known as the Central Kentucky Regional Mental Health Board was the first center in Kentucky to receive a federal staffing grant of \$333,297. By 1970, Kentucky has 24 community mental health centers serving all 120 counties.

Since 1966, Bluegrass has continued to serve 17 central Kentucky counties with mental health, substance use and intellectual and developmental disability services. Many innovations and services have developed in the years that followed some of those highlights are medication assisted treatment for substance use, in-school counseling services, mobile crisis services, jail triage program, a 24-hour helpline using a toll-free 800 number, residential treatment facility for substance use, alternative intermediate services for IDD, HUD housing awards for individuals with severe mental illness, use of a website to reach clients, pregnancy and addiction services.

On February 5, 1975, Bluegrass opened the Narcotics Addiction Program. This is the longest medication assisted treatment program for opioid addiction in the state of Kentucky.

In 1993 Bluegrass obtained Joint Commission accreditation status which evaluates the organization's performance in specific areas to ensure care, treatment and services are provided based on quality and in a safe manner. A trauma-informed, recovery/resilience-oriented philosophy and approach to care, treatment and services is embedded in the requirements. Bluegrass has maintained Joint Commission accreditation for the past 23 years.

Bluegrass began operating Eastern State Hospital in 1995 and continued with the management of Eastern State for the next 20 years. In 1966, when community mental health centers were first established in Kentucky Eastern State Hospital had 2,300 residents. Today the maximum number of residents is fewer than 150. Community mental health centers like Bluegrass have drastically changed the lives of individuals with severe mental illness in Kentucky.

In 2006, the Commonwealth of Kentucky reached out to Bluegrass to take on the challenge of managing the operations of Oakwood, a residential facility for individuals with IDD located in Somerset. At that time, the facility was under threat of closure from the Department of Justice which would have left hundreds of Kentuckians with IDD without a place to live. Bluegrass completely overhauled the operations and drastically improved the care of residents at Oakwood and saving the Commonwealth millions since 2006.

Today, Bluegrass serves 20,154 clients with mental health services, 3,586 substance use clients and 1,489 individuals with intellectual and developmental disability.

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