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# Park Ridge's Maine Center 'regrouping' after planned merger falls through



Services at Maine Center in Park Ridge have been suspended after a planned merger with a larger agency fell through. (Jennifer Johnson, Pioneer Press)

By **Jennifer Johnson · Contact Reporter**  
Pioneer Press

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**A** mental health treatment center based in [Park Ridge](#) is in a state of flux after plans to merge with a larger agency were withdrawn.

Elk Grove-based Kenneth Young Center pulled out of the merger with Maine Center just three days before it was to take effect on April 1.

The building, located at 819 Busse Highway, has been closed to clients since April 4, but Maine Center CEO Fran Hook Hume insists the agency has not shut down permanently.

"Maine Center is not closing — we are regrouping," Hume told Pioneer Press. "We're suspending service while we are doing that. When Kenneth Young abruptly canceled the merger three business days before it was to take effect, it obviously unhorsed us because we had made major adjustments prior to that taking effect."

One of these adjustments was a reduction in staff. Hume could not say when the nearly 50-year-old center may reopen.

Both Hume and Mitch Bruski, CEO of Kenneth Young, declined to specify the reasons behind the pull-out, though Bruski said financial reasons played a role.

"Sometimes when you get into the details, it doesn't work," Bruski said.

Monetary challenges, caused by reductions in both state and local funding sources, were the reason Maine Center had sought to merge with Kenneth Young initially, Hume said last month.

"Funding is always dicey for human services in Illinois," she said. "Things are going on in the state of Illinois to figure out how the budget can be balanced and it seems like human services are always a target. That's always a concern."

Just days ago, Gov. Bruce Rauner suspended \$26 million in social service and public health grants as a way to help fill in a \$1.6 billion state budget hole.

Maine Center had a client base of about 2,000 — both adults and children — at the time services were suspended. In addition to psychiatric and counseling services, Maine Center provided substance abuse education for teens, a number of whom enrolled in the program after being charged with drug and alcohol-related crimes under local ordinances.

The center accepted patients with private insurance and without, including those covered under Medicaid. Financial assistance through a sliding scale method of payment was also offered.

For now, clients are being referred to psychiatrists at centers in Arlington Heights, Skokie, Glenview, and Palatine, as well as [Stroger Hospital](#) in Chicago. For counseling services, clients have been referred to Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Josselyn Center in Northfield, Turning Point in Skokie, and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, which provides services at five suburban churches.

Letters dated March 31 were reportedly sent to Maine Center clients, stating that Kenneth Young had withdrawn from the planned merger. A list of referrals was provided.

Michael, a Maine Center client, told Pioneer Press he called "about six places" in search of a new psychiatrist and therapist.

"Anybody who has gotten back to me has said it's between a three and six-month wait," he said. "There were a couple of places that said, 'We can't [take new patients]. Sorry.'"

Kenneth Young Center is also unable to take Maine Center's clients at this time, Bruski acknowledged.

"All of us are so busy already. We're not staffed for new clients," he said.

Michael said he feels badly for clients who may not have the resources or the ability to find mental health care if Maine Center does not reopen.

"It's got to be completely devastating to some of these people," he said. "I was a little heartbroken for them."

When asked if Maine Center may reopen as a smaller agency than it was, Hume said she could not speculate.

"I hesitate to make any bold statements about what I see ahead," she said. "All I can say is we are regrouping. I was very confident we had the best, most solid plan we could have ever hoped for with the merger with Kenneth Young."

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