TO MEDIA:

CONTACT PERSON: Robin Jennings
Marketing and Communications
Excela Health
724-689-0206 TEL
724-516-4483 CELL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COUNTY GRANT SUPPORTS EXPANSION OF PSYCHIATRIC CRISIS SERVICE THROUGH EXCELA HEALTH

GREENSBURG, PA, August 24, 2012 ... Excela Health has received a \$750,000 grant from Westmoreland County to expand the Behavioral Health Crisis Walk-In Services on the Westmoreland Hospital campus. Remodeling and expansion of the center, located on the ground floor of the Behavioral Health Outpatient building across the street from the hospital will begin Monday, August 27, and is expected to be concluded by early December. When fully operational, the enhanced program will serve approximately 2,500 individuals in psychiatric crisis annually. Outpatient behavioral health services will continue uninterrupted during the construction period

The premise of the Crisis Response Center is three-fold: provide a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of individuals in psychiatric crisis; deliver the assessment/evaluation services in a comforting environment conducive to problem solving and engagement of available community programs and natural supports; utilize the principles of recovery to insure that each person receives the individual attention and services necessary to address their presenting problems in the least restrictive environment.

The program has components reflective of the "Living Room Model" of crisis intervention, in which treatment planning is holistic, delivered in a comfortable, nonthreatening surrounding and afforded the time to ensure the client's stabilization and transition to next level of care. It incorporates elements of several similar centers with the realization that each client's crisis will differ in terms of complexity, severity, service need and available resources.

The nation's first Living Room Crisis Center is located at the University of Arizona at Tucson. Excela Health will be the first in the region to deliver care under this model. "It changes the dynamic between caregiver and client by establishing an environment more conducive to problem resolution - comfortable like a 'living room' yet safe - and 'invites' the 'guest' to accept the hospitality of the center and tell their story at their pace," explained Ray Grabowski, Excela Health's director of Behavioral Health Services.

Nationwide, the evidence shows this approach reduces seclusions and restraints in crisis episodes, reduces inappropriate utilization of Emergency Departments and increases the mid-term and long-term results of the intervention.

Currently, the majority of psychiatric emergencies in Westmoreland County are handled through hospital emergency rooms. "The environment of the emergency room is less than optimal for comprehensive service planning for behavioral health clients, "said Grabowski in his grant application.. "The premise of the response center program is based on the assumption that creating an environment specifically designed to address the needs of the person in psychiatric crisis will decrease the likelihood of inpatient admission, decrease involuntary commitments and improve overall outcome of the crisis event."

Initial planning and design of the center involved the Excela Medical Staff physicians specializing in Emergency Medicine and Psychiatry; representatives from Excela Health's senior leadership; the inpatient and outpatient Behavioral Health staff and representatives from Westmoreland County Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Approximately 75 mental health consumers attend monthly community support meetings. The option of having an alternative to going to the emergency room for a behavioral health crisis has been well received and supported by this group, added Grabowski.

In partnership with Westmoreland County Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, several advisory committees have been established to guide the clinical program planning and development stage, which is currently under way. These have included the behavioral health organizations that play a

critical role in the County's service delivery continuum, Consumer and Peer advocacy organizations as well as representatives from The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and Value Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania.

The Crisis Response Center is part of Excela's full continuum of behavioral health services including: Acute Inpatient (adult/child/adolescent), Outpatient, Partial Hospital, Clozaril Clinic, School-Based Behavioral Health, Mobile Medication Management and Home Psychiatric Nursing Care. In addition, Excela operates Peer Support Services, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Mobile Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Clubhouse and Drop-In Center programs through its community non-profit subsidiary, CareGivers of Western Pennsylvania. Combined, the Excela Behavioral Health programs serve over 5,000 individuals per year.

To learn more about Excela Health's behavioral health services, visit www.excelahealth.org or contact the Excela Health Call Center, 10877077101234.