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Cascadia begins to pay back \$2.3 million government loan

By Margaret Haberman,

More than a year after its financial crash threatened to upend mental health care services in Multnomah County, Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare made its first payment on the \$2.3 million government bailout that allowed the agency to stay afloat.

Cascadia, the county's largest provider of mental health care services, came near to collapse in April 2008 under the weight of poor business practices. The nonprofit company last week paid \$90,000 toward the loan, said Althea Milechman, a Multnomah County spokeswoman.

Forty percent of that amount will go to the state Department of Human Services and the rest to the county. Payments are scheduled in increasing increments through February 2021.

At the time of the crash, Cascadia provided about 80 percent of the county's adult mental health services, including housing, treatment and crisis services for mental illness and drug and alcohol addiction.

In the aftermath, Cascadia has transferred several clinics in Multnomah and Washington counties to other providers.

"We don't want to put all of our eggs in one basket," said Mindy Harris, Multnomah County chief financial officer.

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