

Toward Health and Wholeness

2018-2019 Report to Central District Conference

Oaklawn's mission statement describes "joining with individuals, families and our community on the journey toward health and wholeness." For the past 55 years, Oaklawn has provided innovative mental health and addiction services to our community. We believe one of the reasons we have been able to provide that care is because of our flexibility and awareness of new trends and policies that will impact our work.

New Organizational Leadership

After 35 years of service and dedication to Oaklawn, Gregg Nussbaum, Vice President of Adult Services retired at the beginning of February. This gave us an opportunity to re-evaluate our organizational structure and make a few positive changes that will increase standardization, clinical focus and communication across our service lines and counties; enhance our community presence and pursue service development opportunities. To that end, we created a new position of Chief Clinical Officer (CCO) and Bonita Schrock filled this role. In addition, the new Vice President of Adult Services, John Horsley, the new Vice President of Child & Adolescent Services, Kristin Tawadros, along with two newly created positions, Director of Support Services and Manager of Clinical Outcomes will report to the newly appointed CCO.

ER Partnership that Saves Lives

In the summer of 2018, Oaklawn, along with Beacon Health System, launched a new program that brings Oaklawn Certified Recovery Specialists into the Emergency Room to speak with someone after they have overdosed. The goal of the program is to engage with an individual while they are most interested in getting treatment. They can receive their first dose of prescription medicine to treat addiction before they leave. Then, their recovery specialist goes to work right away scheduling a follow-up with a physician, an assessment with an Oaklawn therapist and helping them arrange for any other immediate and long-term needs like housing or employment. The program has experienced great success with over 80% of individuals engaging treatment.

Drug Court in Elkhart County

We are excited that Elkhart County has started a new drug court program and had their first participants enroll in January of 2019. This not only allows people to access the mental health and addiction services they need but builds a healthier and more whole response to criminal behavior in our community.

New Evidence-Based Practices

As the leader of mental health and addiction services in our community, we are dedicated to bringing new and improved services to our clients. This year, we launched two new evidence-based practices: Motivational Interviewing and Transition to Independence.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing has been an agency-wide effort with case managers being trained across all departments. The program helps our staff and clients learn more about their behaviors and attitudes toward change and overcome those barriers for greater success.

Transition to Independence Program

This evidence-based practice was developed to help young persons with a mental illness, 14-25, as they transition from adolescent to adulthood. The program focuses on strength-building, mental health, vocation and goal- setting. A specific group of case managers were chosen to start this program and help youth as they transition from adolescent to adult services.

Send Silence Packing

In honor of Mental Illness Awareness Week in October, Oaklawn provided the "Send Silence Packing" event at the University of Notre Dame. This event was an incredibly moving art display of 1,000 backpacks, representing the 1,000 students who die each year by suicide. Many of the backpacks have been donated by families of someone who died by suicide, and most include a photo and story. When the backpacks are set out on display, it takes up about a third of a football field.



Counsel from the church

Oaklawn is one of 14 organizations sponsored by Mennonite Health Services, which appoints our CEO and board members, approves any changes to the by-laws and gives helpful direction and support. CEO Laurie Nafziger serves as the MHS board chair. We value the counsel we receive from our corporate and Foundation boards, as well as our Faith and Mental Health Advisory Board.

Submitted by:
Laurie Neumann Nafziger, President/CEO March 2019