



SOUTHWEST COLORADO MENTAL HEALTH CENTER (SWCMHC)

DURANGO COUNSELING CENTER
281 Sawyer Drive, Suite 100
P. O. Box 1328 / Durango, CO 81302
Phone: 970 259-2162 Fax: 970 247-5255

CORTEZ COUNSELING CENTER
215 West Arbecam / Cortez, CO 81321
Phone: 970 565-7946 Fax: 970 565-9005

PAGOSA SPRINGS COUNSELING CENTER
475 Lewis St., Suite #104
P.O. Box 1347 / Pagosa Springs, CO 81147
Phone: 970 264-2104 Fax: 970 264-2108

Crisis Hotlines: Durango/Pagosa Springs 247-5245 (Pagosa Springs 264-2104 during business hours) - Cortez 565-7946

COMMUNITY UPDATE

January 2007

Feature Articles

BREAKING THE STIGMA BARRIER

When we talk about barriers to treatment we usually talk about them in terms of unmet needs, limited resources and funding shortfalls. However, addressing one of the most formidable of barriers to treatment doesn't require more services or more money. That is the stigma barrier.

Stigma is the collection of myths and prejudices that guide the way people with mental health issues are perceived and treated. In truth, people with mental illness are not dangerous, nor are they people to be isolated or avoided. People with a mental illness certainly should not be objects of pity and ridicule. One in five people will have a first hand encounter with a mental health issue in their lifetime. The vast majority of these millions will live meaningful lives, pursue goals and dreams of their own choosing, and contribute to their families and communities. Mental illness is in many ways the same as other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, etc., in that it is genetically and biologically based and can be managed with lifestyle changes and proper treatment.

Diagnosing and treating illnesses in the earliest stages offers the best prognosis for recovery. However, stigma often serves to delay early intervention in treating mental illness. Shame and embarrassment internalized as denial and fear that friendships, family relationships, business alliances or employment will be jeopardized, prevent people from seeking help. Diagnosis and treatment may be delayed until symptoms are severe and a crisis situation is in place. In fact, a recent NIMH study found that the average length of time from first symptoms of a significant mental illness to treatment was just under 10 years!

Anyone can take a step in breaking the stigma barrier with something as simple as treating each person as an individual with their own set of abilities and strengths. "Person first" language is a process toward this end. For example, instead of thinking and speaking of a person as a "schizophrenic", the individual is referred to as a "person with schizophrenia". The difference between a "person" with feelings, abilities, experiences and aspirations is a far cry from being identified only in the context of an illness.

Many efforts have been launched to battle stigma, not the least of which are protections from discrimination in

housing, employment, public access and the like through civil rights legislation and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, the stigma barrier can only be dismantled in individual hearts and minds as lack of understanding, prejudice and fear succumb to knowledge and enlightenment and every individual is accepted as an integral and inseparable part of our communities.

This article was written by Ellis Miller, Director of The Office of Consumer and Family Affairs. Please contact Ellis at emiller@swcmhc.org with any questions or requests for further information or training needs.

ADOLESCENT SKILLS BUILDING PROGRAM A SUCCESS IN SOUTHWEST COLORADO

Southwest Colorado Mental Health center has a close working partnership with the Departments of Human or Social Services in Montezuma/Dolores, La Plata/San Juan and Archuleta Counties. One aspect of that partnership is the Regional Adolescent Dialectic Behavior Skills Program serving teenagers from ages 13 to 17. Though the title of this program is long, its purpose is simple. This program teaches youth important life skills around interpersonal effectiveness, regulating emotions, tolerating stress, and strengthening relationships with parents and family members.

Right now there are a total of 7 Adolescent Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT) groups across our region with 49 adolescents and family members enrolled. The program is a "best practice" model and has been tremendously successful. The success of this program has much to do with its emphasis on practicing skills that increase self-awareness and awareness of one's surroundings, as well as learning new skills that teach participants to be more effective with themselves in their surroundings. The program's success can also be attributed to the involvement of parents. Parents are encouraged to attend DBT groups with their children so that they too can increase their skill base in these areas and reinforce their child's use of these skills. The Regional Adolescent DBT program's growth since its creation in 2003 reflects both its effectiveness and its value to the communities of southwest Colorado.

This article was written by Bil McKeon, MSW, Regional Youth and Family Support Therapist. Please contact Bil (yup, Bil with one "l") at bmckeon@swcmhc.org with any questions or requests for further information or training needs.

Notes from Bern

Crossroads: I think most of you know by now that the Crossroads project is complete. The building, also known as the Mashaw Larson Center, opened with the move of the Detox Program on October 4, 2006, followed by the move of our Emergency Services or Triage Unit. The Acute Treatment Unit (ATU) opened in mid-October. We completed the construction a week ahead of schedule and under budget. Sincere thanks to La Plata County for its support and assistance.

The ATU has received 27-10 certification (allowing for emergency evaluations and commitments), but we have been unable to secure the full complement of nursing staff needed to operate under 27-10 status. This limits such things as use of our safe rooms, but does not otherwise limit our ability to treat those in crisis. The number of folks we have served and the lengths of stay have been remarkably close to expected, and the effectiveness of this program in diverting hospitalizations and helping folks stay in the community has been greater than expected. Congratulations to all involved.

General News:

Medical Services: With the additions of Lorraine Pearson, APN, Evelyn Dekeyser, APN, and Paul Mattox, MD, our medical services have been fully staffed since summer. Dr. Raney (was Loschert), our Medical Director, has implemented a no-show clinic where clients who miss their appointments can get medical services on a first come, first served basis. We are hoping that this will help us reduce our medical no-shows. Dr. Mattox, who is Board Certified in both Adult and Child Psychiatry, is also Board Certified in Forensics, and we have recently entered into an agreement with the 6th Judicial District to provide competency evaluations which should help both the courts and the Jail. In Cortez we have expanded medical services by adding two additional days a month when one of our medical staff is present. Lastly, we are on the verge of establishing a telepsychiatry program to enhance psychiatric services to our Pagosa Springs/Archuleta and Cortez/Montezuma County offices. This will save us a great deal of very expensive travel time.

Vocational Services: We continue to provide vocational services in partnership with La Plata County for those clients with multiple barriers to employment. Our Success groups, with a Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) foundation, continue to be very ... you guessed it—successful.

Substance Abuse: We moved the Detox Program from Mercy's North Campus to the Crossroads facility in early October. The move required us to shut down operation for less than a day—kudos to the Detox staff. An interesting side effect of our move was that those clients for whom we provided monitoring services (UAs and BAs) dropped significantly due to the relocation of our services. As a result, we are in the process of establishing part time breathalyzer monitoring services

at our New Day Counseling location at 1474 North Main, Suite 211. New Day has new office facilities and is now upstairs in a much improved office setting. Outpatient substance abuse services has one position still open. For more information contact Tom Bonde at tbonde@swcmhc.org.

In Cortez there is an exciting effort in the planning stages, with Center representation, to begin providing Detox services as soon as this summer. The community has donated both a location and staffing that could lead to a permanent facility providing both Detox and homeless shelter services.

Emergency Services: We are fully staffed with five full-time emergency staff. Emergency Services are now located in the new Crossroads facility. Several months ago Maura Doherty was promoted to Emergency Services Team Leader and can be contacted at moherty@swcmhc.org.

Outpatient Services: The Center has been funded for an *Early Childhood Specialist* position to provide services to those children and their families who do not have Medicaid or other insurance for mental health services. The position was filled by Sarah Watkin in August 2006. Sarah, as part of our larger Early Childhood Program (including Casie La Munyon in Cortez), provides direct service, outreach coordination and consultation to a variety of stakeholders. This position provides an additional mental health resource to our entire region for children age 0-5. We are working closely with Head Start in Durango and Ignacio, with Archuleta and Montezuma Counties, with CCI, San Juan Basin Health Department, the regional DHS/DSSs and with other Early Childhood Specialists throughout the State. For more information contact Sarah at swatkin@swcmhc.org.

The Center has played an active part in four planning grants. The *Colorado Trust Planning Grant* led by SUCAP identified the need for an increased local emergency mental health response. The grant is funding a full-time Center staff person who will be located in the SUCAP offices. San Juan Basin Health Department led another Colorado Trust Planning Grant, the *Public Health Initiatives Grant*, addressing Methamphetamine use. We participated as a stakeholder, which led to a new part-time treatment and recovery coordinator position through the Health Department. We are part of a *School Based Health Center* planning grant through School District 9-R in La Plata County. This is a critically important initiative which we hope will see its first stage of implementation in September 2007. Lastly, we have been actively participating in *The Nurturing Parent Program* planning grant. Along with La Plata DHS, San Juan Basin Health Department and Child Advocacy, with a broad base of additional community agencies, we are determining whether it makes sense to bring this program to our region. Planning has just begun. The program is specifically targeted to reduce child abuse. For more information contact Pam Wise-Romero at pwise@swcmhc.org.

Two other new outpatient programs are worth noting. We are planning to bring a new evidence based treatment, *Hi-Fidelity Wrap Around*, to the service area of the 6th Judicial District (La Plata, San Juan and Archuleta Counties). This program would help structure community involvement and services around high-need children and adolescents. There will be a community training session on April 19 and the first part of it will be open to the community at large. We plan to use this service in support of mental health treatment to children in foster care as a replacement for our planned Treatment Foster Care program. We could not get Treatment Foster Care off the ground as, despite great efforts, we were unable to recruit treatment foster parents. We hope to get this program running by June 2007. Please contact Pam Wise-Romero at pwise@swcmhc.org for more information. Another program, *EMDR*, is now operating in all sites. This is an intervention that allows us to more quickly resolve emotional trauma resulting from any crisis (e.g., child abuse, domestic assault, auto accidents, etc.).

Facts and Figures

Service Statistics & Facts: The volume of service provided by the Center to our communities has steadily risen over the years. The number of hours of service in Fiscal Year 2006 (July '05 – June '06) rose 9.6% from the previous fiscal year to 37,709 hours. At the same time, we served 2,906 unduplicated consumers in Fiscal Year 2006, which represents a 7.6% increase over the previous year.

It is worth noting that the largest increase of service came in the area of Crisis Services. In Fiscal Year 2006 we served 970 unduplicated clients in Emergency Services across our 5-county region, an increase of 10.7%. In so doing we provided 3,262.5 hours of crisis services, representing an increase of 14.2% over the previous year. While our new ATU and continuum of emergency service resources will certainly serve us well, these statistics tell us that we need to be putting a significant emphasis on identifying persons/families with mental health issues earlier in their development. The Durango High School, School Based Health Center and our involvement in the solution to the La Plata County primary care crisis will be critical in this regard.

Additional information is available at our website, www.swcmhc.org, or in our 2006 Annual Report. The Annual Report is available in hard copy by e-mailing a request to Karen Spungen at kspungen@swcmhc.org, or electronically via our web site under *About Us*.

Fiscal Facts and Figures: Here is an important reminder regarding financial access to services. In recognition of certain classes of financial hardship, the Center has three fee reduction programs beyond our sliding scale. Very low income clients may be eligible for a Temporary Fee Reduction (below sliding scale) on the basis of a temporary financial hardship. Very low income clients may also be eligible for an indefinite Fee Reduction if they have a serious and persistent mental

illness, are not on Medicaid and are not capable of employment. Lastly, we have an Emergency Fee Waiver for clients at imminent risk of harm to themselves or others, or who are gravely disabled. This waiver applies to assessment services and a limited number of follow-up visits. For more details please contact Marie Roessler at mroessler@swcmhc.org.

Comings and Goings

Goings: Goings: In June, **Kerry Duran** and **Christine Patterson**, both Crisis Therapists, moved out of the area. **Nancy Folsom**, Vocational Counselor, left in July to join the Southern Ute Tribe. **Matt Cornelius**, Substance Abuse Counselor, left to fulfill his graduate school requirements; **Craig Stern**, Recovery Specialist, took a position in Farmington; **John Vick**, Case Manager in Pagosa, joined DHS; and **Christl Gigenbach**, Therapist, is pursuing her acupuncture business. **Lisa Hays**, RN, and **Karen Wallace**, VP Residential Services, left in January.

Comings: **Tom Cooke**, M.Ed., joined us as a Child/Adolescent Therapist, which is a shared position with DHS. **Brian Miller**, BS, and **Robin Ruddy**, BA, joined our case management staff; **Evelyn Dekeyser**, APN, and **Paul Mattox**, MD, joined our medical staff. **Rachel Pfothenaur**, MA, joined our therapy staff in Cortez; **Diann Daniels**, MA, **Caryn Nigliazzo**, MA and **Lance Martin**, MS, joined our crisis therapy team at Crossroads; **Dena Lee**, BA, joined our vocational staff; and **Carolyn Murphy** is our new recovery specialist. **Devera Larson**, LCSW, is our new triage therapist, and **Laura McGourty**, LPC, is our Child/Family Therapist. New to our nursing team at Crossroads are **Marian Riggert**, RN, **Kristen Kozak**, RN, **Ann Rohren**, RN, **Judith Williams**, RN, **Charlotte Deters**, RN, and **Anne Sutherland**, RN. Also, please welcome **Mark Mueller**, LCSW, joining us on February 1 as the Vice President of Residential Services. You will note that most of these "comings" are part of the 13+ *new* positions created by the Crossroads facility and ATU program.

Open Positions: We have several candidates for our Case Manager/Vocational Specialist position in Pagosa Springs. At the Columbine Center in Durango we are looking for a Therapist to cover the Ignacio area, and an Accounts Receivable Manager. New Day is looking for a Substance Abuse Counselor, and at the ATU at Crossroads we need a full-time nurse to cover evenings. With about 150 employees, we have the fewest positions vacant we have ever had.

If you are interested in any of these positions, please see our website (www.swcmhc.org) or contact Pat Roy at proy@swcmhc.org.

Coming Attractions

In future newsletters look for updates on the Center's involvement and possible role in addressing our primary care crisis. Please let me know (bheath@swcmhc.org) if you have any other topics you would like addressed.