



SOUTHWEST COLORADO MENTAL HEALTH CENTER (SWCMHC)

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COMMUNITY UPDATE January 2006

Notes from Bern

This is the second issue of COMMUNITY UPDATE. The idea for this newsletter came from our customer service survey and from you. Many of you wanted to be updated on a regular basis about what is going on at the mental health center, and especially about new staff, programs, and resources.

Please let me know whether or not this is useful to you, what additional areas you would like to see covered and any other suggestions you might have. If you want prior editions or to unsubscribe, please contact Karen Spungen, Executive Assistant, at kspungen@swcmhc.org.

Facts & Figures

General: Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center is a private and non-profit corporation that serves the five counties of southwest Colorado; Montezuma, Dolores, La Plata, San Juan and Archuleta. We are registered as a Charitable Organization with the State of Colorado, Secretary of State (www.sos.state.co.us) pursuant to Title 6, Article 16, C.R.S. Registration # 20043010653.

Service Statistics & Facts: The following service statistics are for the Center's last Fiscal Year which ran from July 2004 through June of 2005. During that period we provided 2,299 hours of service to 512 Archuleta County residents, 25,878 hours of service to 2,884 La Plata and San Juan residents, 5,351 hours of service to 1,008 Montezuma and Dolores County residents, and 865 hours of service to 265 persons outside of our region. This totals to 34,393 hours of service to 2,706 unduplicated clients (not including residential hours of service). Thus, approximately 6.7% our services are provided to Archuleta residents, 75.2% to La Plata and San Juan residents, 15.6% to Montezuma and Dolores residents and 2.5% to residents outside of our region. For more detail, please request a copy of the Center's *2005 Annual Report*.

Over the past five years Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center has added 11 new programs and 3 new service sites (Pinon Mesa outpatient services outside the town of Dolores, Dove Creek at the Health Center, and New Day substance abuse counseling in Durango), and expanded our hours of operation. Among the new programs we have added is Valle de Merced, the affordable housing developed in partnership with Mercy Housing Southwest. We have also been active in the La Plata County efforts to combat methamphetamine, and in partnership with La Plata County DHS in implementation of a Treatment Foster Care Program.

Fiscal Facts & Figures: The Center's current budget stands at \$5.7 million. We have grown from the smallest of the 17 mental health centers in Colorado to the 14th of 17 mental health centers. Client fees (including Medicaid) make up 61% of our funding with 30% coming from the State of Colorado, 4% from Local Government and 5% from other sources.

Staff: Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center employs approximately 120 staff comprising about 75 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. We continue to hear frustration from our partners about staff turnover. It is certainly frustrating when a staff member you work with leaves. Yet, overall the Center has significantly improved in staff stabilization over the past five years and the perception of a high turnover rate may be an old script, not applicable today.

The number of our employees has increased more than 22% over the past 5 years so some new faces are filling new positions. At the same time our turnover rate (including part time and casual positions) has dropped 25% from 36% to 24% over this period.

At our Annual Meeting, held at Fort Lewis College on November 15, we honored those staff who had been with the Center 5 or more years. We recognized 17 staff who had been with the Center for between 5 and 10 years and 8 staff who had been with the Center more than 10 years for a total 25 staff with 5 years of tenure or more.

Comings and Goings

Goings: Recent departures include **Ruth Hamshar** (Detox Coordinator moving to Colorado Springs for family reasons), **Deborah Baily** (Pagosa Receptionist making a career change), **Ann Wetton** (Program Director in Cortez moving to CARS), **Laurette Devol** (part time child clinician in Durango changing careers), **Jackie Mashunkashey** (Residential Coordinator going back to school) and **Donna Colvin** (Executive Secretary moving to Arizona). We wish each the very best.

Comings: We are very pleased to note two therapists who joined our Durango outpatient staff in the fall; **Ken Murray**, MA and **Sarah Watkin**, MA. **Christine Patterson**, MA and **Maura Doherty**, MA (both full time) have brought our Emergency Services staffing in Durango to full strength. **Jessica Carr** will be taking Deborah Baily's position in Pagosa Springs and **Karen Spungen** will be replacing Donna as Executive Assistant. We are particularly excited that **Lillian Ramey**, LCSW and 2005 Staff Member of the Year, who has come up through the

Center, will be gradually assuming the Program Director position in Cortez.

Open Positions: In Durango we are still trying to fill the Treatment Foster Care Therapist position along with 2 Case Management positions, and a ½ time child outpatient therapy position. At New Day we have a substance abuse therapist position to fill. After almost three years with no turnover, we have two management positions vacant: Detox Program Director and Residential Program Director. Lastly, in Cortez we have a part time child therapy position vacant.

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

What's Going On

There is a lot happening at the Center. Here are the high lights:

New Fee Options for Mental Health Clients (not applicable for substance abuse): We continue to offer a sliding fee scale for services based on eligibility and submission of proof of income documentation. This can result in an adjustment of up to 80% off of published charges.

For new and or existing clients for whom, the sliding fee scale adjusted charges are still not affordable, I would like to announce that we have two new programs: Fee Reduction and Emergency Fee Waiver. *Fee Reductions* can set the client's fee at less than the sliding fee scale amount and require approval of the Senior Vice President of Outpatient Services (Pam Wise Romero) or the Medical Director (Lori Loschert). These are reserved for clients in either a specific situation in which they need some assistance, or for chronically mentally ill clients who are awaiting resolution of assistance or supporting more than themselves on a limited SSDI income.

Emergency Fee Waiver is a new option for new clients that we first contact through the Mercy Clinic. The Emergency Fee waiver was established for clients with high risk and no financial resources available for treatment. This is a resource to allow for some level of stabilization. The waiver provides 1 psych eval, 3 med mgmt appts and 3 therapy appts, with case management services as needed.

For more information contact Shelly Burke (CFO) at sburke@swcmhc.org or Marie Roessler (Vice President, Financial Services) at mroessler@swcmhc.org.

Crossroads: There has been a lot of exciting news on the Crossroads project over the past six months. Mercy Medical Center completed their donation of one acre of land for the facility. The Board of Directors of Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center, confident that we will complete our construction fund-raising, guaranteed construction funding clearing the way for release of funds and completion of the permitting process. Construction is

now occurring on site, the foundation has been poured and we are scheduled for an October 2006 opening. Special thanks to La Plata County and particularly Wayne Bedor for their assistance in an unusually complicated and challenging grant management process. You have been terrific!!

Funds are still needed to complete the fund raising campaign for Crossroads construction. Please consider giving to this critically needed resource. You may give through our web site at www.swcmhc.org, or mail donations to Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center, earmarked for Crossroads construction, at P.O. Box 1328, Durango, CO 81302.

Center Website: The Center has been constructing a web site for some time. Though there are still many areas needing refinement, our web site can be found at www.swcmhc.org. We would welcome any suggestions to make this site as useful as possible to all. Please let us know, as well, if there are links you would like us to have. Contact Brent Oliver (Vice President, Information Technology), boliver@swcmhc.org, with any suggestions.

Health Service District: In La Plata County there is an effort under way to establish a property based Health Service District to fund increased access to health care services. The District Plan provides financial support in four core areas: access to primary care (particularly for Medicare patients); access to mental health care (including outpatient therapy and emergency services as well as the new Psychiatric Urgent Care unit of the Crossroads); access to preventive health care services (e.g., immunizations, etc.); and an "Ask a Nurse" program.

If all hurdles are passed, the Health Service District is scheduled to go to the electorate for a vote on May 2, 2006 in a special election. From our mental health perspective, the passage of the District is absolutely critical. It would make permanent \$120,000 in temporary La Plata County outpatient funding and add another \$130,000 for outpatient and emergency services. It would also provide \$500,000 in operational funding for the Psychiatric Urgent Care Unit of the Crossroads facility.

We urge your careful consideration of this ballot initiative and ask for your support. If you are interested in helping passage of the Health Service District, please contact either Marsha Porter Norton (porternorton@animas.net) or Missy Rodey (mrodey@frontier.net).

Coming Attractions

In future editions of this newsletter look for updates on the Crossroads project, efforts to integrate mental health and primary health care services, and more improvements in our intake process making it quicker and easier to enroll clients for all services. Please let me know (bheath@swcmhc.org) if you have any topics that you would like covered in subsequent editions of this newsletter.