



Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services

MINDFUL MATTERS



Jeff with a staff member who is monitoring the front door for clients.

A NOTE FROM JEFF O'NEIL
PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the spring edition of Mindful Matters – the newsletter of Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services. Originally we had planned to have a photo spread of our Champions of Hope Gala, as well as to revisit a client who went from being homeless and battling cancer, to showing off his new apartment. Then came COVID-19.

I want to share with you the challenges that our team has had to face over the last eight weeks or so and the many successes that have come out of it.

We are currently offering tele-health services where appropriate and are continuing with our medication-assisted treatment programs, which includes a new mobile service van. This service allows our nurses to reach isolated clients so that they can receive critical services like medications, injections, and other medical assistance.

But we need to do more. We have been warned by experts that a mental health crisis is looming (inevitable) due to the stress brought on by the pandemic. This will most certainly result in increased cases of depression, substance addiction, post-traumatic stress, and suicide. According to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll, nearly half of Americans say that the COVID-19 crisis is detrimental to their mental health. Meanwhile, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Hotline reports more than a 1,000 percent increase in calls during the month of April. Experts are suggesting that behavioral health organizations will have to take the same measures as hospitals to prepare for an overwhelming increase in behavioral healthcare needs. However, the cuts to Medicaid funding over the next two months could have an impact to not only those needing help but to the agencies that provide mental health and addiction services.

Because of this, we are asking that if you are able, to please consider a gift to assist us in the coming months. We have also launched a new monthly giving program to give you the opportunity to support us year round (on a monthly or bi-monthly basis). With your help we can continue to reach out to those who are presently not being served and face the challenges that we know are ahead of us.

What we have been able to accomplish over the past two months was a combined effort across all divisions. It has not been easy but the belief that our clients must always come first is evident in the diligence and adaptability of our staff who continue to make a difference in people's lives. Their perseverance and commitment make me proud to be a part of Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services.

- Jeff O'Neil President & CEO



Become a Keeper of Hope

Can you help us during this time of crisis? While we greatly appreciate any and all gifts, please consider becoming a Keeper of Hope. As a Keeper of Hope your monthly contribution is an investment in our community and in the lives of people living with mental illness and addiction.

By joining us as a Keeper of Hope you are demonstrating your commitment to the work we do at Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services. Your monthly gift ensures steady, continuous support for the individuals and families we serve.

To sign up to become a Keeper of Hope go to our website: www.gcbhs.com. For questions about monthly giving or becoming a Keeper of Hope please contact Ron Cropper at 513-354-7054.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

We asked staff across our organization, how has the COVID 19 crisis affected your work?



meet
CHRIS

Chris Smith is a Team Leader at Kemper House – a temporary living environment for people transitioning out of hospital settings or other institutional environments.

“We had to re-design procedures to maximize the safety of our residents and staff. New clients have to agree to the procedures which includes a two week quarantine in their rooms. When they arrive we do a coronavirus check and they are given a mask and gloves. We also do their laundry right away.

We try and make them as comfortable as we can. Typically TVs are in the common rooms but the new residents have them in their rooms for the two weeks. They wear a mask to come down to get food or we can bring food to them. They have break times every hour so they can go outside and on nice days are encouraged to stay out and practice social distancing.

The biggest difference is in the connection between the residents and staff. Before, everything was very low key. Now the residents seem much more engaged with our staff. They are being proactive with our safety measures; going the extra mile to sweep up the porch or clean up the parking lot on their own. They are very much aware they are sacrificing for the greater good.”



meet
HANNAH

Hannah Wright is a care manager on our Transition to Independence (TIP) team in Batavia. The team works with young people to achieve independence and continue to maintain their mental health.

“My clients already have a high level of anxiety and depression. So in the beginning we faced the challenge of getting them to understand “why” we had to change from in-person services to tele-health. Initially they were apprehensive about communicating over the phone. In some cases it actually brought on additional anxiety.

But after the first couple of weeks things have begun to settle down. Our conversations have grown in length, which means they are more comfortable to this “new normal.” One of the positives is that it has given us the opportunity to work on their phone skills – something they need when looking for jobs or following up on their medical needs.

They have a great deal of fear about contracting COVID but we help them understand the truths about the virus and what they can do to protect themselves. I want them know that I am here to help them get through this. Now more than ever, I truly believe in the purpose for which I was given this job.”



meet
JENIFER

Jenifer Evans works in our Child and Family Division in the school-based services program. She counsels elementary and high school students in Northern Kentucky schools.

“All of the contact I have with my students and their parents is by phone or through Zoom.

Communicating with my high school students is a little easier but the younger ones don't have the attention span to talk on the phone for longer periods. They are used to our therapy sessions having activities or playing games, so I switch it up and do half hour sessions. That definitely helps.

Another barrier is that some clients don't have access to the internet or have slow connections. So those have to be done by phone.

At first the kids were very excited. It was like an extended spring break for them. After a while boredom set in. My mindset has been to get them through the rest of the school year. Their anxiety has increased as this has gone on – partly because of staying at home and also because of the unknown. I need to be here to help them through that.”

Caring through crisis



In our continuing series on Care Management at Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services, we want to introduce you to Chris Haubner who was recognized as NAMI Case Manager of the Year in 2019.

Chris is on a team that was established a little over two years ago to assist clients who need more individualized attention due to more complex needs. Chris and his colleague Quinton Woods carry a smaller caseload than most care managers because of the amount of time that is required by each client. During a typical week Chris may see or talk to a client three to four or even five times.

Most of Chris' clients do not have access to transportation so he helps them keep their appointments. Today he is picking up Randy, who needs assistance signing up for food at the Freestore Foodbank. Chris helps him maneuver through the process and teaches him how to shop. Chris uses moments like this to engage with his clients, who have severe mental health diagnoses. Helping with everyday tasks are a way for him to work with people in a non-threatening environment. The clients who come to Chris do not trust many people but you find out very quickly that they can trust Chris. This is what makes the relationship and the time spent with the clients so important to their physical and mental well-being.

Chris has one more stop to make on this Thursday in mid-March. He needs to take Maureen to the bank. She has been losing weight to prepare for an upcoming surgery on her knee. Once she has recovered Chris will help her find a new apartment so that she doesn't have to walk up and down stairs to do her laundry.

Fast forward to today. What is Chris' work life like now since the coronavirus became a household word? How are his clients doing? "Everyone is concerned about how they are going to get their checks. They rely on that money for food and other personal effects. Maureen had to postpone her surgery, which means she has to postpone her move. She's pretty upset about that. They don't know how they are getting to the store."

When a face-to-face visit is absolutely necessary Chris wears a mask and maintains the current 6 foot distance that is recommended. So what determines "absolutely necessary"? Chris explains, "My clients need bus passes to get to the store. Someone literally ran out of toilet paper. These are things I usually help them navigate because of their illness."

How else is Chris' work life different? He has been assisting other Care Management teams in locating clients. Some were in-between care managers at the time the crisis hit. He is working on basic needs assessments and contact/support assessments for clients.

"Basically it's 'How can we get in contact with them? Is their address correct? Who can help them if they need it and what is the contact info of that family member or friend?' We also find out how often they want us to reach out to them."



We're doing our best to make sure they don't slip through the cracks. I just won't let that happen."

- Chris Haubner

Chris is also assisting those who have immediate needs. "I had one client who needed to get to the store. The problem was he had no transportation and no one to take him. When I suggested the bus, I found out he hadn't ridden a bus since the 1980's because of extreme anxiety. So I told him I'd stay on the phone with him while he took the bus to the closest food pantry. It worked out so well that when the time came for him to ride the bus home; he told me he didn't need me. Then he asked me to send him some recipes because he's never cooked chicken before!"

How is Maureen doing? "She fell"; Chris says. "Their Payee checks are being mailed and some aren't showing up. Not having that physical contact is hard. They count on me to be there and guide them through things. Right now I can't and that's hard. But we're doing our best to make sure they don't slip through the cracks. I just won't let that happen."

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meet
KIM

“On a *normal* day our clients are often struggling. A pandemic doesn't mean their issues suddenly go away. Folks are still homeless... they still need to get their medications... sobriety is tenuous... isolation and fear make everything feel worse. To meet these issues head on, we had to get creative with our “face to face” contact, as well as finding PPE for staff – all while working with limited financial resources. Everyone here at GCBHS had to re-imagine their roles and do what it takes to make sure our clients get what they need.

As our Administrative Coordinator, I too have taken on a very different role. For the last seven weeks and counting, I have been in the Madison parking lot eight hours a day, in all sorts of weather, greeting everyone who walks up to our front doors. I make sure clients aren't afraid of getting their

temperatures taken by a nurse in full PPE and explain that they have to wear the mask we give them while on the third floor, when all they want is access to their medication.

I listen to their frustration when I explain why they can't come into the building to see a care manager who is normally here but is now working from home. I offer them a phone to call their payee because their phone no longer works and they can't get another right now. I make sure they know that this isn't forever and that we miss them as much as they miss us.

Caring and compassion is an important part of the job description if you work at GCBHS and right now we are all doing whatever is necessary to help our clients.”



GCBHS re-accreditation awarded from CARF

CARF International has awarded re-accreditation to Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services (GCBHS) for its programs in Mental Health, Child & Family Services, Addiction Services, and Employment. Accreditation by CARF means an organization is aspiring to standards above and beyond what is required by federal, state and local authorities. For more information on our CARF accreditation, please visit the news tab on our website: www.gcbhs.com