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OCHN tackles youth mental health with two new 2022 programs

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI (Friday, January 28, 2022) – Oakland County's lead mental health agency, Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN), is approaching the final phase of fulfilling its strategic priority to enhance mental health crisis services for children and families.

Implementation of OCHN's School Mental Health Navigator (SMHN) and Children's Crisis Stabilization Unit (CCSU) programs in 2022 will offer proactive and responsive solutions for families in distress.

"OCHN's clinical team dedicated 2021 to thoughtful and analytical conversations about mental health solutions for children and families in crisis," explains OCHN Executive Director and CEO, Dana Lasenby. "The School Mental Health Navigator and Children's Crisis Stabilization Unit are the results of their diligence and attention to this important public health concern."

The proposal for the SMHN program was submitted to and approved by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners (BOC) for American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding in 2021. This innovative concept deploys "Mental Health Navigators" across the county to work with public, private, and charter schools. The goal is to increase access to culturally diverse, social and emotional mental health services for students."

OCHN was also awarded a two-year, \$5 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) September 2021 to expand children's crisis services at the Resource and Crisis Center for youth under the age of 17 years and younger.

Effective January 31, 2022, emergency department mental health screenings or assessments for youth in this age range are being conducted by New Oakland Family Centers under contract with OCHN.

Support being provided to hospital emergency department staff includes:

- Children Crisis Screening
- Expedient Care Coordination
- Level of Care Determination
- Ongoing and Engaged Communication Until Crisis is Resolved
- Parental Service Support and Navigation.

The goal is to reduce prolonged emergency room visits, ensuring families are connected to a continuum of care in the same manner as physical health emergencies.

OCHN used a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select New Oakland Family Centers as the contracted vendor for the CCSU initiative. Plans and designs are in place for the CCSU, with renovation work slated to start in February 2022.

Approximately 2,300 children currently receive behavioral health assistance through the OCHN network. Examples of these supports include mobile crisis assistance; home-based and school-based supports; juvenile justice programming; and more.

Local organizations partially funded by OCHN to deliver these services, as well as substance use prevention supports, include The Alliance, Common Ground, CNS Healthcare, Easterseals Michigan, HONOR, New Oakland Family Centers, Oakland Family Services, and Training and Treatment Innovations, as well as others.

“I have great respect for the collaborative community presence of OCHN’s service provider network,” adds Lasenby. “It’s essential that families know where, when, and how to access support during an urgent mental health situation. This includes reducing extended stays in emergency departments and connecting children and parents to behavioral health services as soon as possible.”

An additional step taken by OCHN to tackle mental health challenges for youth and families is the establishment of a Hospital Liaison position in 2021. The Hospital Liaison provides emergency department staff with a direct and immediate contact to assist in linking youth and adults to vital mental health care.

Oakland County residents in need of behavioral health support or who want to learn more information are encouraged to contact OCHN’s service access team at 248.464.6363 or visit www.oaklandchn.org.

About OCHN

OCHN leads a provider service network that assists approximately 23,000 Oakland County citizens at more than 300 service sites across the county. People who receive public mental health services through OCHN’s provider network include those who have an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder. The majority of these individuals have Medicaid insurance coverage.

OCHN’s goal is to ensure these individuals are aware of and have access to services and supports that will improve their health and quality of life, as well as ensure their engagement in full community participation. Its mission to “inspire hope, empower people, and strengthen communities” reflects an unyielding belief in a “Valuable System for Valued People.” Programs and supports provided by OCHN’s service network are available at www.oaklandchn.org.



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