

Expand the Certified Community Behavioral Health Center care model

BY BRENT WIRTH, MICHAEL GARRETT AND KERRI WALKER

Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHC) provide comprehensive mental health and substance use services without barriers to some of the hardest to reach populations in the country. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, with support from Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, led the effort to bring the CCBHC model to Michigan as one of eight original demonstration states.

Easterseals MORC, CNS Healthcare and the Guidance Center were among the first demonstration sites and the only ones that are non-profit organizations. Their impact has been dramatic.

A key component of the CCBHC model is that services are provided regardless of severity of condition, insurance coverage or ability to pay, creating access for those who may not otherwise receive care. This “screen in” approach has resulted in more than 25,924 people receiving vital mental health and substance use services among the three organizations last year. Around 17% of these patients have mild or moderate mental health conditions and typically would not qualify for public mental health services.

All CCBHCs are required to provide nine core services to address the complex needs of those with mental health and substance use diagnoses. However, the versatility of the model gives organizations the flexibility to respond to unique community needs, resulting in several groundbreaking initiatives that have had significant impact.

Easterseals MORC launched a nationally recognized school-based program, partnering with 30 schools to provide on-site mental health services to more than 600 students. The Guidance Center is partnering with local police departments to use tablets to connect with police when they are on mental health calls. CNS Healthcare expanded a Crisis Intervention Team that brings together clinicians, law enforcement and emergency dispatchers to assist those experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. The CCBHC model has transformed mental health service delivery. Today, there are 30 CCBHCs in Michigan, serving nearly 120,000 people, but the need remains so overwhelming that continued expansion is needed.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, nearly 1.5 million adults in Michigan have a mental health condition and 421,000 did not receive treatment in the last year. More than four million people in the state are living in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals.

Increasing funding for the CCBHC model and adding

more sites will continue to substantially increase access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment, bolster the public safety net for the hardest to reach, and support the establishment of innovative public-private partnerships to improve care, reduce recidivism and lower overall health care costs.

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