The Guidance Center
A Year In Review
Fiscal Year 2015 - 2016

“The Guidance Center was established in 1984, as a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit organization with a mission of “developing and providing comprehensive, quality mental health and substance abuse treatment, intellectual disability services, education, prevention, and community outreach services, guided by principles of least restricted care, cost effectiveness, accessibility, and responsiveness to individuals, families, and communities served.”

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The Guidance Center Chosen to Be a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic

The focus of this initiative is to improve access to care, enhance service coordination, and improve service quality in effort to reduce hospitalizations/inpatient facility usage and suicide/attempt. Selected clinics will identify underserved populations, improve outreach efforts, increase substance abuse and mental health screening and early intervention, expand services to address unmet needs, implement evidence-based therapies and practices, and integrate behavioral healthcare and physical health care. CCBHC providers will focus on outcome tracking and accountability through initiation of a formal continuous quality improvement process. CCBHCs will expand availability of non-traditional hours and methods of service delivery to remove access barriers and increase consumer involvement in the development services. CCBHCs will address professional shortages and staff retention issues. CCBHCs will work to foster change in agency culture towards recovery oriented and trauma informed care and implement electronic health records to support improved clinical decision-making. Finally, CCBHCs are required to provide nine core services. The Guidance Center already provides seven, substance abuse treatment and psychiatric rehabilitation will be added to complete the nine.

The state of Pennsylvania was one of 24 states awarded a federal one-year planning grant in October of 2015 to prepare clinics through technical assistance and training to meet the requirements for certification. In February, Pennsylvania solicited applications from clinics to become certified, 74 agencies responded. The Guidance Center was one of the 16 clinics selected and one of only three rural clinics. The state planning grants are the first of a two-phase process. When the planning grant phase ends in October 2016, states will have an opportunity to apply to participate in a two-year demonstration project that will begin in July of 2017. Only eight of the original 24 states will be selected to participate in the demonstration. If Pennsylvania is chosen, certified sites could benefit from enhanced reimbursement rates, the ability to add additional services not currently available in the state, and bonus payments for performance on six quality indicators.

The Guidance Center Selected to Become a Certified Trauma Center

Through the Behavioral Health Alliance of Rural Pennsylvania (BHARP) Outpatient Evidenced-Based Treatment/Reinvestment Plan county administrators within the North Central Pennsylvania managed care region were able to select one mental health and one drug and alcohol treatment provider within each county/joiner to engage in a process to become Certified Trauma Centers. McKean County selected The Guidance Center.

Through this initiative therapists will build competencies in trauma treatment through training and certification in evidenced-based therapies including Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Cognitive Processing Therapy, and Seeking Safety. Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy is designed to treat post-traumatic stress and related emotional and behavioral problems in children and adolescents. This therapy is already offered at The Guidance Center, through the BHARP initiative more therapists will become certified. Cognitive Processing Therapy is used for older adolescent and adult clients with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This therapeutic approach has been found to be especially effective with veterans. This therapy is not currently available at The Guidance Center and will be implemented though this project. Seeking Safety, also a new therapy that will be implemented, is used to treat individuals with a history of trauma and substance abuse. In addition, staff across various disciplines will have the opportunity to participate in BHARP trainings on trauma screening and assessment and trauma awareness.

In addition, a multi-disciplinary team has been established at The Guidance Center to participate in a learning collaborative that includes monthly technical assistance calls for the next 17 months, examining agency practices, and making recommendations for improvements that support a trauma informed environment for clients and staff. The team will engage in outreach to promote a broad awareness of how trauma impacts individuals, family members, professionals and communities in effort to increase individuals’ willingness to seek help. They will work to minimize the risk of re-traumatization by evaluating internal strategies, procedures, and policies that may contribute further to an individual’s sense of loss of control. Examples of practices that contribute to re-traumatization include limiting choice in decisions, inconsistency in service delivery, or practices that command authority or confront. The team will also focus on the emotional well-being of staff by addressing secondary trauma or compassion fatigue.

The Guidance Center to Participate in the SPEP Process

The Guidance Center’s Outpatient Department and Family Based Services will participate in the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) with McKean County Juvenile Probation. The goal of the SPEP process in Pennsylvania is to improve juvenile justice services in order to reduce recidivism. The process is designed to assist juvenile probation departments in better assessing youth needs and connecting them to the most appropriate services. SPEP is also designed to improve the quality of service delivery by assessing providers to see how well their services align with research-proven characteristics of effective programs.

Offices Relocated to Accommodate Service Expansion

During the past year, The Guidance Center’s satellite offices in Coudersport, Kane and Smethport were relocated to provide improved office space for staff and to accommodate service expansion in those communities. In Smethport, the new office space provided an additional room with a two-way mirror to accommodate Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, a specialized therapy for children ages 2-6, which was previously only offered in Bradford. The Kane move allowed for added outpatient therapy hours and the addition of psychiatric services. The Coudersport move was the result of adding outpatient therapy, psychiatric services, and Parents As Teachers services in Potter County during FY 15-16.
Nurturing Parenting Program Initiated for McKean Families with School Age Youth

The Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP), an evidence-based program, was implemented in McKean County during FY 15-16. The program serves families with children ages 6-18 over a period of 12-24 weeks through home visits. Sessions are held with the parent and child both together and separately. The program is designed to help families enhance nurturing skills, self-awareness, empathy, and communication. Sample topics include stress management, self-discipline, understanding choices and consequences, school commitment/truancy, healthy relationships, Internet safety, self-esteem, anger management, expressing feelings, peer pressure, bullying, communication skills, problem-solving, addiction, eating disorders, body image, depression, and cutting.

During FY 15-16 a total of 37 families were served. A second staff person was added to the program in June bringing the total staff to two. Both staff recently participated in training in Why Try, an evidenced-based program within NPP designed to increase school engagement and reduce truancy. Staff are based in the Smethport office.

Project RAPPORT

Project RAPPORT offers pregnancy testing, childbirth and pre-natal education, health and nutrition information, child-development information, and case management services to pregnant women and teens. Additional services for pregnant and parenting teens promote school attendance, self-esteem, healthy choices and future planning. Short-term prevention services are available for youth at-risk. Project RAPPORT served 231 participants during FY 15-16.

Parents As Teachers

Parents As Teachers (PAT) is an evidence-based home delivered program for families with children pre-natal through kindergarten entry designed to empower parents/caregivers as their child’s first and most important teacher. The Guidance Center’s PAT program participated in a 15 month field test for Quality Endorsement by Parents As Teachers National Center and received recognition as an exemplary affiliate for achieving the highest quality rating possible. To earn this rating PAT Programs must meet or exceed 17 essential program requirements and also meet at least 75% of an additional 100 Quality Standards. The Guidance Center met all essential program requirements and 99% of the additional Quality Standards. Programs that earn the endorsement are recognized as blue ribbon affiliates, delivering high quality services to children and families.

In Jefferson County and DuBois, PAT was provided to 209 families with 312 children during FY 15-16. In McKean County services were provided to 271 families with 311 children. One staff was hired to implement PAT in Potter County, 37 families were served with 56 children. A second PAT staff will be added to Potter in FY 16-17.

McKean County Family Centers

Family Centers offer resources such as early literacy workshops, play groups, family fun activities, screening events, and information and referral services. These activities serve an average of 102 families per month. Attendance records show a count of 1,231 families participated in playgroups, 206 families attended Group Connections for Literacy, 154 attended Family Fun Nights, and 116 attended Dad’s Night Out events during FY 15-16. (Attendance includes duplicate family counts who may have attended more than one event). Evidence-based programs provided at the Family Centers include Children In The Middle, The Incredible Years, and Strengthening Families. Approximately 20 families were served by the Incredible Years and a total of 185 parents participated in the Children In The Middle during FY 15-16.

Early Intervention

Early Intervention provides individual education activities, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and hearing and vision services to children birth to age three with or at-risk for a developmental delay. Early Intervention was provided to 193 families during FY 15-16.

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters provides professionally supported one-on-one mentoring services delivered by carefully screened adult volunteers to children ages 5-18. BBBS provided ongoing support for 69 matches during FY 15-16. Youth spent an average of 6 hours per month with their mentors during 783 match outings.
Outpatient Mental Health Treatment

Outpatient Mental Health Treatment is provided at five community clinic locations and 12 School Based Outpatient Clinics. Three psychiatrists and three psychiatric nurse practitioners offer specialties in child, adolescent and adult psychiatry. Telemedicine is utilized to access specialized diagnostic and treatment services for children under the age of five from Penn Highlands DuBois. Individual, family and group counseling is offered. Groups include sex offender treatment, forensic re-entry, grief, and eating disorders. A variety of evidence-based treatments are provided including Dialectical Behavior Therapy, The Counting Method, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, Aggression Replacement Training, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, and Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. During FY 15-16 The Guidance Center provided outpatient therapy to 1,667 individuals and psychiatric/medication management services to 3,097 individuals.

Behavioral Health Rehabilitative Service / Wraparound

BHRS/Wraparound Service is provided for children with serious emotional and behavioral support needs. Behavioral Specialist Consultants design and direct implementation of behavior modification plans in a collaboration with the family and treatment team. Mobile Therapists provide family and individual therapy. Therapeutic Staff Support staff monitor behavior, implement behavior modifications and crisis response plans, and provide one-to-one interventions to assist youth in improving behavior, anger management skills, self-esteem, and social skills. During FY 15-16, 94 children received Mobile Therapy, 90 received services from a Behavioral Specialist Consultant, and 85 received Therapeutic Staff Support.

Family Based Services

Family Based Services provide intensive home-based Structural Family Therapy and support for families with children who have serious emotional and behavioral disturbances and who are at risk of out-of-home placement due to family conflict and crisis. A total of 68 families were served by Family Based during FY 15-16.

Crisis

Crisis Services offer 24 hour emergency telephone hotline, walk in counseling, and mobile counseling. During FY 15-16, crisis services were provided to 779 individuals.

Peer Support

Peer Support is provided by non-degreed staff with a mental health condition that have achieved stability in recovery. Services are designed to provide mentoring, social support and practical advice to adults identified with a serious mental health diagnosis. A total of 35 clients were served by Peer Support Services during FY 15-16.

STEPS Drop In Center

STEPS Drop In Center offers recreational, social, craft and support activities for adult mental health consumers in McKean County. STEPS serves an average of 15-20 individuals on a daily basis. Managed by client board, the center held officer elections this year and a new president was elected.

Blended Case Management

Blended Case Management (BCM) provides assistance to seriously mentally ill consumers to help them identify and access available services, community resources, and benefits to meet their needs. A total of 381 clients were served by the program during FY 15-16.

The Guidance Center participates in a wellness research project with the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute to address high rates of premature death among consumers with mental illness. Through this project, clients receiving BCM are assessed on physical health and prioritized based on risk level. High risk individuals receive services from a wellness nurse including primary care coordination, wellness education, and consultation. Smoking cessation groups and an annual health fair is also facilitated by the nurse. Blended Case Managers are trained as health navigators and incorporate physical health, wellness, and recovery goals into all care plans. Currently the wellness nurse is providing services to 40 individuals in the BCM program.

Supports Coordination

Supports Coordination provided assistance to 293 persons with intellectual disabilities during FY 15-16 to assist them in identifying services, community resources, and benefits to meet their needs. During the past year the state has placed increased emphasis on competitive integrated employment rather than sheltered employment for people with disabilities. In response, The Guidance Center is working to help junior and senior high school students and their families gain an increased understanding of their options in transitioning from high school to post secondary training or employment.