

Toward Health and Wholeness

2020-2021 Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

Oaklawn's mission statement describes "joining with individuals, families and our community on the journey toward health and wholeness." For the past 58 years, Oaklawn has provided innovative mental health and addiction services to our community. We believe one of the reasons we have been able to provide that care is because of our flexibility and awareness of new trends and policies that will impact our work.

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic

It's an exciting time to be in the mental health field. Across the country, mental health centers are raising the bar to meet the needs of their communities and provide the highest quality care. They're called Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, or CCBHCs, and they're the new gold standard in mental health and addiction treatment.

Oaklawn has undertaken this change, too. In February 2021 we embarked on a two-year process of becoming a CCBHC. There are three key changes that will allow us to provide more comprehensive, timely care.

The first is expanding access to services. The average wait time, nationally, for psychiatric services is 48 days and can be far longer in areas facing a shortage of providers. Oaklawn will be launching open access in May 2022. Therapy walk-in hours will be provided Monday through Friday, with evening hour availability. And, a new model for prescribers, Just In Time Scheduling, will be implemented to reduce no-shows and increase our ability to see clients as they need to be seen.

The second change will be crisis intervention services. The existing mental health system relies on law enforcement and hospitals, but CCBHCs take greater ownership of crisis calls – typically through a multi-faceted approach including a 24-hour phone line, a crisis response team and innovative partnerships with first responders. Oaklawn is now piloting a 24-7 crisis line available to anyone in the community to call and speak with a staff member who can assess and triage need. Oaklawn has assembled a multidisciplinary team including therapists, recovery coaches and others who now travel into the community to serve those in crisis.

Our third major change will be how we serve our most ill clients, a hallmark of why community mental health centers were created and Oaklawn's mission. It can be challenging to strike the right balance of services for clients facing serious mental illness. They may require more support than traditional case management but may not need services as intensive as inpatient or residential. Now, a new group of case managers will meet with each client at least three times per week, establish detailed recovery plans, provide medication management, work toward stable housing and identify services and supports in the community that can help clients achieve greater independence. Psychiatrists will be consulted weekly for each client, with emergency appointments available for those who may experience crises. The team will also work collaboratively with Oaklawn's crisis response team, anticipating overlap between the highest-acuity clients and those who may experience mental health crises in the community.

New Housing Projects

Oaklawn currently provides housing opportunities to over 500 individuals and it continues to expand each year in our two county service area. When clients do not have a safe or stable place to live, it limits our ability provide mental health services, and inhibits our clients from stabilizing their mental health. Despite the pandemic we were able to open three housing projects to serve our clients, two in Elkhart County and one in St. Joseph County. Two follow the Housing First model, which houses clients regardless of whether they engage in treatment. Our third project follows a more traditional model of engaging in treatment, making progress and then receiving housing.



Elkhart, IN



South Bend, IN



Goshen, IN

Oaklawn's Got Talent

Oaklawn launched a new community event to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month and to raise funds for Oaklawn's work. In November 2021, 30 acts tried out for the event, and the top four were selected to perform at the main event on May 20, 2022. The audience will vote to select the winner, and the Oaklawn's Got Talent winner will win \$4,000.

Counsel from the church

Oaklawn continues its long-time relationship as an active member of Mennonite Health Services, valuing their counsel, expertise and relationships with other Anabaptist organizations sharing similar values and goals. We value the counsel we receive from our corporate and foundation boards, that support and guide our important work.

Submitted by:
Laurie Neumann Nafziger, President/CEO March 2022