**Health and Human Services Collaborative**

Behavioral Health Work Group

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Behavioral Health Issues in the Eastern Panhandle

**The Story in the Statistics**

The health status of West Virginians continues to face enormous challenges, and their behavioral health faces even greater challenges than their physical health. While the Eastern Panhandle by some measures is “better off” than many other areas of the state, the behavioral health challenges locally are nonetheless daunting.

The Opioid Use Disorder epidemic has become a prominent issue recently, and with that, the efforts to build and sustain necessary resources in our communities continue to face considerable barriers. In order to implement the comprehensive continuum of care that addresses the recovery need of those suffering from substance use disorders, we must overcome cultural, political and work force challenges.

Other behavioral health issues are less visible, but are also of great concern. The mental health of children and the elderly are perhaps “stealth issues” to the public at large, but have become issues that participants in the Behavioral Health Work Group (BHWG) are focusing on. The BHWG will be facilitating public events in 2017 to bring together the public and area stakeholders to raise awareness and develop strategies to improve the behavioral health of our community.

**Moving Forward**

There are nonetheless some good things happening! Here are just a few:

* Project Aware: Berkeley County Schools have received a five-year grant to pilot behavioral health services within the school system. Currently Project Aware is providing individual and/or group therapy activities in 27 of 31 Berkeley County schools. The 2015-2016 school year brought with it 242 referrals for therapy under Project Aware, and 310 referrals to date for the 2016-2017 school year.
* “Handle with Care” program has been implemented for Morgan, Jefferson and Berkeley Counties.
* The Berkeley County Council has hired a Community Recovery Services Coordinator to assist in bringing necessary services to Berkeley County. Berkeley County Recovery Services (BCRS) has developed a hand off system for individuals reentering the community upon their return from detox, treatment, or jail. BCRS is working with Project Aware to provide prevention education within Berkeley County schools, established a Recovery Resource Center and successfully negotiated the approval for establishing a detox/recovery facility within the City of Martinsburg.
* Mental Health First Aid – Project Aware and the RESA 8 are now providing Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid training. From 2015 up to November 2016, 333 people have received the training, with 63% of these being community members at large and 37% Berkeley County School Employees. Project Aware provided training to 45 members of the Martinsburg Police Department and 19 members of the Berkeley County Sheriff’s Department.
* Assertive Community Treatment – East Ridge Health Systems now has an ACT Team to provide intensive wrap-around services for persons with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI).
* DHHR is piloting “Safe at Home” program to improve community-based services so that children can receive services within their community. In 2016, “Safe at Home” had 54 referrals for Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan Counties.
* There are now four Oxford House sober living homes in Jefferson and Berkeley counties. Three are for men and one for women.

**The Statistics (A limited snapshot)**

* In 2015, West Virginia ranked 50th among states in residents reporting frequent mental distress. 225,200 West Virginians (136,000 females and 89,000 males) reported that their mental health was “not good” more than 14 days during the previous month.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* In 2015, West Virginia ranked 47th in the Determinants of Health\*. [[2]](#footnote-2)
* West Virginia has the highest drug overdose mortality rate in the United States, with 32.2 drug deaths per 100,000 between 2012 and 2014. The rate of drug overdose deaths in West Virginia is 32.8% higher than the next highest state.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* From 2010-2014, 44% of all driving deaths in Berkeley County, 31% in Jefferson County, 17% in Morgan County, and 33% in West Virginia were due to alcohol-impaired drivers.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* In 2013, 22% of West Virginia adults age 18 and older, at some point in their life will have experienced a depressive disorder.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* In 2015, the average number of days that West Virginia adults indicated their activities were limited because of mental health difficulties was 4.6 days. [[6]](#footnote-6)

**Local Information**

* The two largest behavioral health providers in the Eastern Panhandle, East Ridge Health Systems and Behavioral Health Services of Shenandoah Community Health (SCH) frequently report waiting periods to initiate care due to high demand for services. East Ridge has a two week wait for the physician, and three to six week wait for adult treatment. There is no waiting period for school-age children needing treatment for behavioral health issues at EastRidge. With four psychiatrists and thirteen psychotherapists, Behavioral Health Services of SCH has a wait time of 2-4 weeks for adults, longer for children and immediate access for pregnant women with substance abuse issues. The demand for mental health services for children and for Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Opioid Use Disorders (OUD) particularly exceeds Community Resources.
* Jefferson Medical Center and Berkeley Medical Center both report that their Emergency Departments routinely see between 4-7 adolescents per week due to mental health concerns, which include intentional suicide attempts. Intentional overdose with prescription or over the counter (OTC) medications (such as Tylenol) seems to be the primary method of attempted suicide for this population. These adolescents frequently report bullying to be the primary reason for their suicide attempt. Fortunately, suicide attempts with drugs of abuse seem to be relatively rare.

\*a health factor that affects the outcome of something



**The Eastern Panhandle Health and Human Services Collaborative is facilitated by the Family Resource Network of the Panhandle. For more information, contact Christin Rice at (304) 262-5360 or** **director@frnotp.org****.**

**Data were collected by Bridges to Healthy Transitions, WVU School of Nursing, Eastern Division. D**

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1. <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2016-annual-report/measure/mental_distress/state/WV> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/WV/Determinants> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2016-annual-report/measure/Drugdeaths/state/WV> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/west-virginia/2016/compare/snapshot?counties=54_003%2B54_037%2B54_065> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc/pubs/brfss/2013/BRFSS2013.pdf> Pages 159 - 160 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/WV/MentalHealth/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)