

WOOD COUNTY

Alcohol, Drug
Addiction
and Mental Health
Services Board

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Allan Baer
Casey Cromwell
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Meeting Schedule Full Board 4th Monday, 6:00 pm

Finance Committee 2nd Monday, Noon

Program Committee 2nd Monday, 5:30 p.m.

Other committees as needed.
Please call
419-352-8475 for meeting
place and other details.

WCADAMHS Board Staff

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Associate Director

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Across the BOARD

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Telehealth Offers New Option to Local Clients

Picture this: a client sits in an office and converses with a counselor who appears on a video screen. With a medical assistant on hand in an adjoining room, the patient reports on how he feels, how his week is going, and how well his medication is working. The psychiatrist or nurse practitioner answers his questions, offers feedback, and, in the case of a nurse practitioner or medical doctor, adjusts or renews his prescription. The session is over in forty-five minutes.

Sound high-tech and impersonal? Actually, telehealth can increase contact between practitioner and client. That's why Behavioral Connections/Harbor Behavioral Health care has introduced this treatment model in Wood and Lucas Counties. Locally and nationally a shortage of mental health professionals makes it difficult for patients to get time with a practitioner. This is especially true in rural or underserved areas. But video technology allows a clinician to treat clients from miles away, giving them greater access. Clients need no longer wait for an overbooked local professional to have an opening. With funding from the Wood County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board, Behavioral Connections/Harbor is implementing this remote care system because it actually brings treatment closer. Zepf Center in Bowling Green now also offers this option.

Though medicine has used telehealth for several years, mental health is just now beginning to implement it. According to Adil Ijaz, application specialist at Harbor, the agency first turned to this treatment mode in 2014 when nurse practitioner Amy Clark moved to Florida. She wanted to keep her caseload—and her clients wanted to keep her! So Harbor provided Amy with a video link at her new home that connected her to clients back in Lucas County. This test case worked so well that Harbor now has nine telehealth providers who are all fully licensed to provide services in Ohio. Some are local but others are as far away as Arizona, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Florida. "The model has taken on a life of its own" and was fully implemented in 2016, Adil reports. Clients not only like it; some ask for it specifically, he notes. Telehealth fits some clients better than others, and no one is required to choose it.

It's always been difficult to find mental health providers—from psychiatrists to counselors—who want to work in the Toledo area, Adil explains. But so many local people need mental health services that "we had to broaden our

horizons." Clients willing to do long-distance therapy now can meet one-to-one with a counselor anywhere in the United States. Since Telehealth connects clients to qualified professionals all over the country, it bypasses the waiting list that can keep those needing help from getting it promptly. One telehealth provider can serve as many as two hundred clients. The technique makes psychiatric evaluations and diagnostic assessment more efficient, too. It meets HIPAA privacy regulations.

What is a telehealth appointment like? At Harbor, the client is greeted by a medical assistant who takes vitals and shows him how to use the video controls. The client then enters a private room and sits before a thirty-inch video monitor. On the other end, the counselor or clinician has a camera that he or she can control to see the entire room and focus on the client's body language and symptoms, if need be.

The medical assistant stays in the adjoining area to respond to any needs that may arise. If the session results in a prescription change, the practitioner can contact a pharmacy directly via a safe and secure electronic prescribing platform.

Is telehealth right for all clients? Not necessarily. Millennials seem more comfortable with a video counseling system than the older generation. On the other hand, some clients actually feel less self-conscious speaking with a professional through a monitor. And the treatment mode is a boon to people who are home-bound by health problems or agoraphobia. It can remove barriers to treatment.

In our high-tech age, it's not surprising that mental health via video is now a reality. Though it may not suit every client, it has expanded the network of mental health providers by connecting clients to professionals all over the country. Telehealth is an innovation that offers them the best and most familiar form of therapy: one-to-one contact with a caring human being.



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Across the Board is a publication of The Wood County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board, which funds eight community agencies.

BOARD BYTES

The Wood County ADAMHS Board has joined forces with Working Partners (Canal-Winchester, Ohio) to launch the Working Partners Drug-free Workforce Community Initiative here in Wood County. The project brings together local business, industry, chambers of commerce, and other community groups to address drug abuse in the workplace. Amanda Moser of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Wood County is organizing meetings at which these community stakeholders focus on increasing an employable, drug-free workforce in Wood County. The Initiative’s first meeting was January 13 at Wood County Job and Family Services. Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services provides funding for this effort.

Drug abuse in the workplace not only reduces productivity; it poses a threat to employee safety. At this Initiative’s first meeting, business and community leaders learned about current substance abuse trends in our community, what local resources are available for treating substance abuse, and how to build healthier, more productive workplaces. The session explored systems for educating employees about substance abuse and its prevention. “We are excited to begin the important work of bringing employers and community leaders together to address the drug-related issues facing our community, said Amanda. “Our initial stakeholder meeting was the first step in making our workplaces safer and our workforce and community stronger.”



AGENCY ACTION

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) of Wood County announces upcoming free classes for those whose lives are touched by mental illness. Both classes are taught by trained instructors and are free of charge.

WRAP—Wellness Recovery Action Plan is planned for April 21 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Offered for the first time in a one-day format, this free course will meet at the NAMI Wood County office, 541 West Wooster, in Bowling Green. This unique course helps participants design their own plans for staying well and avoiding relapse. Developed by individuals with personal experience of mental illness, WRAP has been taught all over the United States. Its rationale is that people living with mental illness recover best when they recognize what triggers an episode and have a plan for responding. WRAP students write their own action plan for maintaining well-being and psychological balance. Crisis planning and sketching advanced directives for times of extreme distress are also covered. The United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has designated WRAP a best practice program. For more information, call NAMI Wood County at 419-352-0626 or go online at www.namiwoodcounty.org.

Hearts and Minds is a one-day course that promotes a healthy lifestyle for those living with mental illness. NAMI Wood County will offer the class twice this spring. The first will meet May 19 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM; the second August 18 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Both classes meet at NAMI Wood County, 541 West Wooster Street, Bowling Green. The course covers healthy eating, exercise, and setting healthy goals. NAMI Wood County staff and trained NAMI members with personal experience of mental illness teach the class. Its goal is to help participants take charge of their well-being through healthy lifestyle choices. For more information on Hearts and Minds, call 419-352-0626 or go online at www.namiwoodcounty.org.

Family Service of Northwest Ohio is offering the second module of its Dialectical Skills Training Group starting March 29 at 4:30 at the agency (1084 South Main Street, Suite A.) Designed for women ages eighteen and older, this module covers interpersonal effectiveness. Participants in the training group will explore maintaining relationships, communication, appropriate assertiveness, and how to use interpersonal skills to get what you need in relationships. Clients currently receiving services from another provider are welcome to participate in the group; they need not change providers to do so. Dialectical skills training is an offshoot of dialectical behavioral therapy, which is helpful for individuals having trouble navigating extreme emotions, interpersonal difficulties, and stress. DBT is particularly effective for those with a history of borderline personality disorder, bipolar disorder, posttraumatic stress, or severe anxiety. The therapy aims to help clients manage extreme emotions and better tolerate stress. Family Service teaches four modules of dialectical skills training on a rotating basis. For more information, contact Family Service of Northwest Ohio at 419-352-4624.

The Children’s Resource Center will offer another session of its popular “ACT: Raising Safe Kids” class April 11-May 30. The free course, held at the Center (1045 Klotz Road, Bowling Green) will meet from 5:30-7:30 p.m. every Tuesday. This class teaches parents of young children positive forms of discipline and how to manage tantrums and fights. Parents often fall back on the child-rearing style their parents use, but those who were raised with harsh, physical discipline may be looking for alternatives. “ACT (Adults and Children Together :) Raising Safe Kids” offers more peaceful, yet effective ways to help children manage their feelings. The Center provides child care and a family meal during each session. To register for the class or to learn more, contact Kristen Junga or Pam McKinley at Children’s Resource Center, 419-352-7599.

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