

Community Focus



*Helping philanthropists meet
community needs.*

La Crosse Community Foundation serves as a convener/catalyst in identifying problems and opportunities and shaping effective responses to them and is a community resource providing services to donors, nonprofit agencies, and the community at large. Foundation staff are at the table of meetings concerning issues important to the La Crosse Community. Community Focus is an insert to share the needs, programs, and updates on these important community topics. Copies of this insert are available on the Foundation website's Newsletters page at laxcommfoundation.com.

Update

The typical wait for a new adult patient to see a psychiatrist is four months; that is a person who has insurance. With many employers reducing benefits, private insurance companies excluding mental health coverage, some people having no health insurance, lack of funding for preventive efforts, and the stigma still felt, the state of mental health care seems dire.

Statistically, one in every five families is affected by mental illness; in La Crosse County, that would be 22,000 people. Often stigma and expense stop people from receiving treatment that is effective 80% of the time (compared to heart disease where treatment is 40-50% effective).

These gaps and issues are being addressed by:

The **Mental Health Coalition of the Greater La Crosse Area (MHC)** formed in 2004, with an initial grant from the La Crosse Community Foundation to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness, increase the access to care, and encourage insurance parity. Today the MHC is working on access to mental health care as well as Crisis Intervention Training for law enforcement.

This year, the Mental Health Access Task Force was started including representatives from Gundersen/Lutheran, Franciscan Skemp, La Crosse Community Foundation, La Crosse County, the Health and Human Services Board, Viterbo, UW- La Crosse, St. Clare Health Mission, Family and Children's Center, and Coulee Council on Addictions. The goals of this

Task Force are to let people know that they are not alone in dealing with mental health issues, network with others that they may join or work with, and find different ways to work at the issues of mental health access.

La Crosse County recently received a waiver from the State of Wisconsin to hire a physician assistant to prescribe and monitor medications. The physician assistant is helping with the high volume of county cases many of which require monitoring of medication to ensure it is effective and not detrimental to the patient.

The Clinical Services Division at the county is exploring an alternate approved treatment facility to evaluate and stabilize individuals in a non-hospital setting. This plan would also include a residential intoxication monitoring program. This plan could address the overlap that a variety of committees are addressing in the mental health and substance abuse areas as well as potentially reduce stigma for people being assessed, and reduce expenses. The County could potentially issue requests for interest this fall.

Franciscan Skemp is changing the focus of Scarseth House from alcohol to Dual Diagnosis. According to Bob Hillary, Director of Behavior Health Services, "Patients with addictions tend to be dually diagnosed with other mental health issues as well." Franciscan Skemp has a large Outpatient Behavioral Health Section which includes a growing adolescent day treatment program that works with the public school system. Family Practice Clinics also have Behavioral Health physicians integrated as "half

of the people with mental health problems are not in mental health treatment. Many times it is easier to talk to your own doctor about these issues. This integration leads to better accessibility for patients and current psychiatric knowledge for general practitioners."

Gundersen Lutheran has appointed a new Vice President of the Behavioral Health Section, Mary Jo Klos who has previously been the Administrative Director of Behavioral Health and then Vice President of Clinical Operations. Becky Cleveland will be returning from Decorah to become the new Administrative Director. Gundersen Lutheran also has a group of providers looking for creative ways to fund mental health outreach for parents and the community. Mark Taylor of Behavioral Health said that the "ambient baseline level of anxiety is higher than it has been; the culture has changed in the last seven years and is wearing on people. If an individual's anxiety level is rated at a 'four' and the ambient baseline level is a 'five' that person's anxiety is actually a 'nine'." He explains, "it is important for people to realize they are not alone" when it comes to mental health issues. Talk therapy can help and parent education and support are important; medications can be prescribed but should not be relied on as the first line of response.

Other agencies working with mental health issues in the area include: The Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Charities, Independent Living Resources, Stein Counseling, and the Counseling Centers at the universities and technical college.

Statistics



- **1 in 5 U.S. families** is affected by a **serious mental illness**, and that translates into 22,000 La Crosse County residents.
- ◆ **1 in 10** live with depression (2,200 in La Crosse).
- ◆ **1 in 10** live with anxiety, phobia, post-traumatic stress, obsessive-compulsiveness or panic (2,200).
- ◆ **1 in 100** live with bipolar disorder (220).
- ◆ **1 in 100** live with schizophrenia (220).
- **1 in 8 teens** (estimated 2,103 in La Crosse County) are living with depression and up to one-third of them are in early onset of bipolar disorder (National Mental Health Association - NMHA).
- Mental illness is the primary factor in suicide; suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 15-24 in Wisconsin (WI Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2000).
- Nearly a quarter of the U.S. workforce experiences a mental or substance abuse disorder; 70% of people with a mental illness are in the workforce (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Admin. - SAMHSA, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services).
- People with untreated mental illnesses use significantly more general health services; most medical illnesses reported by physicians (50-80%) have a strong emotional or stress-related component. (SAMHSA, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)
- 24% of state prisons and 21% of local jail prisoners have a recent history of a mental illness (U.S. Department of Justice).
- 70% of youth in juvenile justice systems have at least one mental illness with at least 20 percent experiencing significant functional impairment from a serious mental illness (National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice).

*Information on this page provided by the
Mental Health Coalition of Greater La Crosse*

Local Resources

Getting immediate help:

La Crosse County **Mental Health Crisis Program**
608-784-HELP (4357)
Offers 24 hour immediate crisis services for all ages.



Great Rivers 2-1-1
2-1-1 or 866-884-3620
Offers information, referrals and crisis lines services

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of La Crosse County
608-785-5700

Provides information about county services.

For consumers of mental health services:

Recovery Avenue (RAVE) Drop in Center
608-785-9615; 1806 State Street, La Crosse
Monday-Friday 10:30-6:00; Saturday 1-5

Independent Living Resources

Phone: 608-787-1111 or 888-474-5745
TTY: 608-787-1148 or 888-378-2198
www.ilresources.org

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Phone: 608-785-9500 or 800-523-2139
TTY: 608-785-9530
www.dwd.state.wi.us/dvr/locations/la_crosse.htm

Veterans Service Office - 608-785-9719
For advocates and allies:
NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
La Crosse
7:15 pm, 3rd Tuesday, September - May
First Congregational Church, Main and Losey,
La Crosse.
(608) 788-4888 or (608) 784-7532

NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program
608-786-0933 or 608-785-6055 or 608-534-6277

La Crosse Area Suicide Prevention Initiative

www.lacrossesuicideprevention.org

The Mental Health Coalition of the Greater La Crosse Area

www.mentalhealthlacrosse.org is your pathway to more information about local, state and national resources for people living with mental illness.

For families:

NAMI Family-to-Family Support Group
For people living with people who have a mental illness.
7:00 p.m., 2nd and 4th Monday of each month
South Side Neighborhood Center, 1300 South 6th Street, La Crosse
608-786-0933 or 608-785-2902.



Survivors of Suicide

For those who have lost someone to suicide.
7:00 p.m., 3rd Wednesday of each month
Franciscan Spirituality Center, 920 Market Street,
La Crosse
Nancy at 769-5007 or Mary at
marystoy@gmail.com.