

## **CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (CBH)**

*The Center for Behavioral Health (CBH) continues to provide quality outpatient mental health treatment that includes comprehensive intake assessments, weekly psychotherapy, psychiatric evaluations and medication management services. CBH works towards the mission of providing high quality behavioral health services to low-income clients, many of whom are on Medicaid or have limited financial means to pay.*

### **Personnel**

The program operates under the direction of the full-time Program Director, part-time Medical Director/Psychiatrist, part-time Advanced Nurse Practitioner (APN), administrative support, one full-time therapist and six part-time therapists. Throughout the year, CBH also works with graduate social work and counseling interns who provide clinical services under the supervision of the Director and other staff. This fiscal year, the program housed six interns in the fields of social work, art therapy, and clinical mental health counseling.

### **Service Provision**

CBH provided services to 161 individuals during FY2023 with a total of 8,515 contacts. CBH reached 122% of the targeted number of contacts overall. CBH continues to maintain a small group of clients who see a panel therapist in the community, however, this accounts for only 2% of contacts and continues to be phased out.

On June 30, 2023, the census of CBH was 117 with an average monthly census of 108. The clients range in age from 18 to 77. Clients identify as the following for gender: 64% female, 32% male, and 4% transgender. The self-reported ethnicities of the consumers enrolled with CBH are as follows: 16% Hispanic/Latino and 84% non-Hispanic/Latino. More specifically, the self-reported races of clients enrolled with CBH are as follows: 60% White/Caucasian, 30% African-American, 7% Asian, and 3% identifying as multi-racial.

CBH consumers are insured through Medicaid (58%), Medicare (26%), uninsured and enrolled in NJMHAPP (12%), and other (4%).

### **Highlights**

- CBH continues to offer services both via telehealth and in-person. This fiscal year, more clients were seen on-site than at any time since the COVID-19 pandemic era restrictions began.
  - All new clients are assessed for their clinical appropriateness for telehealth to ensure that all clinical considerations are met before offering telehealth.
  - Any client that wants services in-person is provided services in-person though many clients continue to prefer the flexibility of hybrid.
- This fiscal year, 32% of all services at CBH were provided in-person with the remaining 68% provided via telehealth.

- More recently, there has been a shift to more clients being seen in-person. January 2023-June 2023, 39% of all services were provided in-person.
- Different modalities of therapy are offered to clients including art therapy, evidence-based techniques like CBT and DBT, interpersonal psychotherapy, somatic processing, and elements of EMDR.
  - Spanish speaking clinician added to staff to enhance ability to provide culturally informed services.
  - Full time therapist is an LPC/LPAT and provides art therapy, a technique that is not often available in community mental health.
- CBH provided educational presentations and resources to community partners.
  - CBH facilitated mindfulness training at the Family Resource Center in East Orange and Montclair State University.
  - CBH participated in resource fairs at Bloomfield College and with the Township of Bloomfield.
- Staff from CBH collaborated with members of Caldwell University in October 2022 to conduct another successful National Depression Screening Day where 90 students and faculty were screened for anxiety, depression, traumatic stress reactions, and suicidal thoughts.
- Continued to grow the group therapy program as CBH now offers in-person and virtual groups.
  - A licensed clinician facilitates the “Comfort Zone” group, a weekly lunchtime community drop-in support group for those diagnosed with a mood disorder.
- Continued focus on maximizing our efficiency with our therapists maintaining an average 93% productivity rate weekly.
  - Psychiatry maintains a 95% productivity rate weekly.
- CBH remains a learning environment by hosting Master’s level interns in field and internship placements.
  - During academic year 2022-23, CBH worked with students from NYU, Fordham, Rutgers, Howard, Walden, and Caldwell Universities.

### **Performance Indicators**

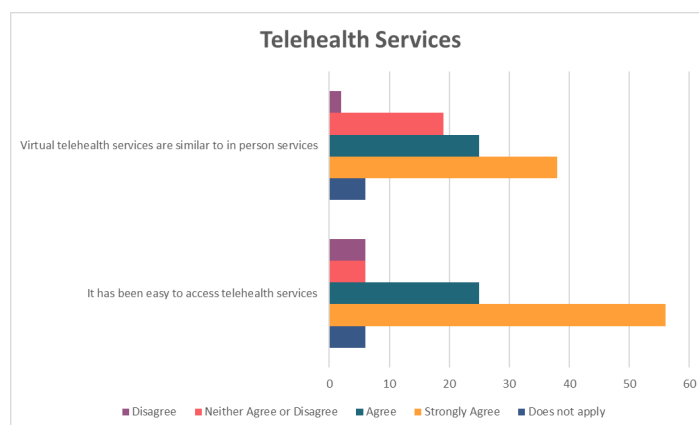
The performance indicators, which measure efficiency in CBH, are the “wait for an intake appointment” and the “wait for assignment to a therapist.” This fiscal year, the average wait for an intake appointment was 3.9 business days and the average wait for assignment to a therapist was zero days, as the client was assigned to a therapist at intake. Both measures are below industry benchmarks.

CBH continues to use the DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale) to obtain a clinical measure of a consumer’s functioning in those three areas. The inventory is completed at the initial intake appointment and repeated six months into treatment. Thus far, 90% of individuals surveyed showed an improvement in negative symptomatology when the inventory was distributed six months after admission.

The results of this year’s client satisfaction survey indicate a continued high level of satisfaction among the clients of CBH. This past year, electronic surveys were distributed to all clients via text, mail, and/or in-person, depending on client preference. Out of the 106 surveys sent out, there was a 15% response rate. As seen from the results below, there is a strong sense of satisfaction with services (100%) though there is a low response rate.



From the results of the survey, the respondents seem to prefer in-person services.



Overall, the department received high satisfaction remarks as 100% of those surveyed either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they are satisfied with the program and would recommend the program to others.



Some of the comments received by clients from the survey:

*“I was stuck on autopilot for years, but not anymore. I’m so grateful for the help I’ve received.”*

*“It has improved my interpersonal relationships and allowed me to recognize and set personal boundaries, begin working again and reconnect with my creativity.”*

*“Access to medication for my mental needs and the ability to identify my problems and talk through them has helped me.”*

*“I’m myself again.”*

*“CBH has given me a sense of security and peace by virtue of being able to talk to a professional regularly, gaining a deeper understanding of my challenges and ways of overcoming them.”*

**Fiscal Year 2024**

This next fiscal year looks bright for CBH as the department looks to expand service offerings.

CBH will be working with Bloomfield College to supplement Bloomfield College’s on-site mental health services. Studies show that there is an increased need for more mental health services for college students as the cohort (as a whole) is showing significant mental need. CBH will be providing on-site therapy, medication management, and psychiatric evaluation services to Bloomfield College students. Bloomfield College will be paying CBH directly so that no costs are passed onto the student or billed to insurance ensuring complete confidentiality for those seeking services and decreasing barriers to seeking services.

At the agency, there will be an increase in short-term community group therapy services. There are plans for a young adult therapy group (18-26) focusing on processing one’s adult identity and “adulthood” for six-weeks in the fall. There are future plans for a senior therapy group which will provide an environment for those 65+ to gain support for the challenges that come with aging.

CBH now has the ability to have year-round interns which allows for an expanded census throughout the year. More clients can now have access to care at CBH. Many providers and

agencies have continued to provide telehealth services exclusively while CBH has evolved into a hybrid model and is encouraging services onsite in an in person environment. More clients are asking for in-person services and/or the flexibility to have both, which CBH has continued to provide seamlessly.

With the continued guidance from payers to provide parity payment for telehealth, CBH is poised to continue to provide high quality mental health services to the low-income population. With the expansion of services and increase in census, CBH continues to meet the mission of the department and agency.

## **The Riskin Children's Center (RCC)**

*The Riskin Children's Center (RCC) is a comprehensive outpatient mental health service for youth ages 6 to 18. The Center was created in September of 2011 after a generous gift from Dr. Sylvia Riskin. RCC provides individual therapy, family therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, and consultations. At RCC, the mission is to provide high quality mental health services to children, adolescents, and their families, many of whom are insured by Medicaid or have limited financial means to pay for private practice care.*

### **Personnel**

RCC operates under the direction of the full-time Program Director, administrative support, part-time Medical Director/Psychiatrist, and two part-time LSW clinicians who provide services under the supervision of the Director. Throughout the year, RCC works with graduate social work and counseling interns who provide clinical services to youth, all under the supervision of the Director and other staff.

### **Service Provision**

This fiscal year, RCC provided psychotherapy services to 38 individuals, 21 of whom also received psychiatric services. RCC provided 814 units of service and served 11 new consumers. The Center works with families who have Medicaid or are uninsured. For those who are uninsured, RCC offers services on a sliding-scale fee basis. RCC consumers are insured through Medicaid (96%) and self-pay (4%).

On June 30, 2022, the census of RCC was 33. The clients range in age from 8 to 18. Clients identify as the following for gender: 56% female, 38% male, and 6% transgender. The self-reported ethnicities of the clients enrolled with RCC are as follows: 46% Hispanic/Latino and 54% non-Hispanic/Latino. More specifically, the self-reported races of the consumers enrolled with RCC are as follows: 48% White/Caucasian, 30% African-American, 18% identifying as multi-racial, and 4% Asian.

### **Highlights**

The highlights for the past fiscal year include:

- RCC continues to offer services both via telehealth and in-person. This fiscal year, more clients were seen on-site than at any time since the pandemic era restrictions began.
  - All new clients are assessed for their clinical appropriateness for telehealth to ensure that all clinical considerations are met before there is a decision made about the method of service delivery.
  - Any client that wants services in person is provided services in-person though many clients continue to prefer the flexibility of telehealth.
- This fiscal year, 57% of all services at RCC were provided in-person with the remaining 43% provided via telehealth.

- Clients are choosing hybrid more and more for therapy as this fiscal year, 57% of therapy appointments were on-site with the remainder via telehealth.
- Clients are preferring to attend psychiatric evaluations and medication management appointments in-person with 72% of these sessions performed in-person.
- Group therapy program expanded:
  - In late winter 2023, RCC worked with Essex County Children’s Inter-Agency Coordinating Council to do a community needs assessment on group topics for a potential group.
  - RCC launched the first iteration of a group therapy cohort with a time limited structured therapy group for ages 9-12 on June 26 entitled, *Mindful Warriors*.
    - *Mindful Warriors* was focused on anxiety reduction and increasing ability to cope with anxiety.
    - Group was open to all youth in the community who met the age criteria and would benefit from the theme of the group.
    - Medicaid was billed for any client who had this insurance; A low-cost fee for the entire group set up for anyone without insurance.



- The above image is a creation made in the final group of *Mindful Warriors* where participants explored visually how anxiety feels versus how calm feels using a hand breath as an outline. Participants used colors, shapes, designs and words to represent these feelings. Group members then worked together to place these images on one page to create a group “mural.”
- Full-time therapist is an LPC/LPAT and provides art therapy, a technique that is not often available in community mental health and has proven efficacy in work with youth

- RCC has provided psychoeducational presentations on parenting and mindfulness to the East Orange Family Success Center and the East Orange School District.
- Continued focus on maximizing our efficiency with our therapists maintaining an average 95% productivity rate weekly.
- Like CBH, RCC remains a learning environment by hosting both MA and MSW level interns in their field placement/internships.

**Performance Indicators**

The performance indicator, which measures efficiency in RCC, is the “wait for service.” This fiscal year, the “wait for an intake appointment” was 2.6 business days and there was a zero-day wait for assignment to a therapist, as this occurred at intake.

To measure effectiveness with our clinical interventions, RCC uses a variety of validated evidence-based outcome measures. RCC has used the DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale) for youth, 12 and older, in order to obtain a clinical measure of a client’s functioning in those three areas. The inventory is completed at the initial intake appointment and repeated six months into treatment. At this point, there has been an 89% overall improvement in symptoms.

This year’s parent/consumer satisfaction survey showed a 100% overall satisfaction rate. However, there was a very low response rate. We sent out 30 electronic surveys with 3 clients completing the survey, leading to a 10% response rate. See below for a sampling of responses.

I am happy with my therapist	100%
I would recommend my therapist to a friend if they needed help	100%
I feel my therapist treats me with respect	100%
I feel my therapist listens to me	100%
I feel I have made progress towards their treatment goals	100%
I would talk to someone else at RCC in the future if I needed to	67%
I am satisfied with my psychiatric care	100%
Overall, I am satisfied with RCC services.	100%



## **Fiscal Year 2024**

It is evident that the impact of COVID-19 has strongly impacted youth mental health. While there were signs of youth struggling throughout the pandemic, the level of impact was not fully felt until more recently. RCC looks to be a leader in youth mental health in Essex County.

The launch of *Mindful Warriors* is the beginning of RCC's new service offerings. Each quarter, a new time limited group will occur and be open to all in the community. This will provide group therapy to youth to provide the benefit of group therapy to address symptoms and/or be a supplemental service to one's existing treatment. Group therapy is a proven modality for youth as they benefit from the socialization and structure of a group. Plans for a group for 13–15 year olds is already in the planning stages for the fall as well as future groups targeting 7-8 year olds.

Staff in RCC will continue to provide community training on youth mental health as well as providing resources and education. In July 2023, RCC staff and interns facilitated an art therapy directive and discussion at the Mindful Awareness Academy for Children (MAAC) at Montclair State University. In August, RCC staff will be presenting in a Back-to-School webinar on children's mental health in conjunction with the Township of Bloomfield and the Essex County Office of Public Health Management. Throughout the year, RCC staff will continue to participate and lead these types of discussions for our community partners.

Waitlists for youth seeking mental health services remain long and limited. Many service providers continue to only provide telehealth and/or short-term services. The Children's System of Care, the statewide organization that supports youth with emotional and behavioral challenges, has stated there has been an increase in families calling for services but there has not necessarily been the same increase in service providers. RCC's ability to provide high quality mental health services for youth, including psychiatry, is incredibly necessary as this generation continues to deal with the impact of COVID-19 and beyond.