

Mental Health & Recovery Board OF PORTAGE COUNTY

Welcome to the May 2020 edition of the Resource e-newsletter.

Relapse Concerns during pandemic - treatment is available!



Stefani Whitmire, Townhall II peer support specialist, displays a Project DAWN kit. Portage County residents are eligible to receive a free kit by appointment.

The isolation and economic distress caused by the coronavirus pandemic are creating a ripple effect of mental health issues. For individuals fighting addiction, the social isolation and additional stressors may lead to relapse.

“Almost all relapses occur when the person is unable to effectively cope with urges or cravings to use,” stated Townhall II Clinical Director Rob Young. “Experiencing stress, especially when it relates to money, work, children being at home, or health-related problems, can often result in very strong urges to use alcohol or drugs.”

Ohio’s Stay at Home orders have contributed to people feeling more isolated and alone. The lack of human contact combined with the fact that there is still a significant opiate problem in Portage County, unfortunately has resulted in people overdosing and in some cases, dying.

“One of the most effective ways for individuals with addiction to cope with stress is to reach out to their support system for encouragement and/or advice,” said Young.

Maintaining social connections with others who support the person’s recovery efforts is a pillar of recovery. “Fellowship”, as it is referred to in 12-Step programs, helps the person with addiction to obtain emotional support, gain insight on possible relapse issues, and to maintain motivation for continuing to not drink or use drugs.

However, because of social distancing, almost all 12-Step meetings have moved to chatrooms on the internet. “This has made it extremely difficult for many in recovery to keep those human connections where a simple hug, or a pat on the back, can make a huge difference with preventing relapse,” explained Young.

Mental Health & Recovery Board Executive Director John Garrity, PhD expressed his concern. “Early recovery can be often fragile. As relapse is often part of the recovery process, we are concerned about the additional stressors people are experiencing now,” he commented. “It’s very important people continue with their treatment and support.”

Townhall II has remained open and serving clients during the pandemic. Clients currently have the option to participate in counseling groups and/or individual counseling sessions through telehealth. “Our clients have adapted to telehealth quite well, and many are discovering they prefer it,” stated Young.

For people struggling with an opioid use disorder, Townhall II has an Opioid Recovery Clinic which provides medication-assisted treatment to help individuals decrease their cravings to use heroin and other substances through medications along with counseling. Any community member concerned about opioid overdose can make an appointment to receive a free Project DAWN Kit, which contains the overdose reversal drug Naloxone and resources.

Townhall II’s Helpline is available 24/7 and is an extremely valuable resource if you need any type of information, or if you are feeling depressed, overwhelmed, or are thinking about suicide. That number is 330-678-HELP (4357).

These are unquestionably difficult and trying times for everyone. For those with addiction, it is important to not isolate and to reach out to others who can provide you with support and motivation. For more information and appointments call Townhall II at 330-678-3006.

How does telehealth work in the behavioral healthcare setting?

Behavioral health care is essential. As the COVID pandemic swept through the county, mental health & addiction treatment service providers needed to modify the delivery of their services to adhere with Ohio's Stay at Home Order.

To help with this, the Ohio Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Medicaid implemented emergency rules to expand access to behavioral health services using telehealth. By providing care remotely, clients can continue to receive care with phone calls or through interactive videoconferencing while following social distancing guidelines.

"Telehealth is creating new opportunities on how our services can be delivered," said John Garrity, PhD, executive director at the Mental Health & Recovery Board which funds mental health & addiction treatment and prevention services.

Fortunately, technology has become very user friendly and mobile allowing people to receive care from within their own home.

Portage's largest mental health provider, Coleman Professional Services has provided over 1,100 services via videoconferencing since this began in mid-March.

"We quickly set-up our staff with Microsoft Teams and webcam equipment," reported Bill Russell, Coleman's Chief Officer for Behavioral Health in Portage County. "Our clients have found it to be a meaningful alternative to direct face to face contact and are surprised that it's more comfortable than they initially thought."

Another benefit Russell observed is that it allows staff members who have health risk factors to continue providing their services from remote work locations.

"If video conferencing software or equipment aren't available to someone needing services, *all* of our outpatient services are still available face to face in the office," said Russell. "While we strongly encourage all those who are able to take advantage of telehealth options, we even more strongly encourage those in need of help to come and get it however you are able – we are here, open, and accepting new clients."

Townhall II, a substance use disorder treatment provider, is finding success integrating telehealth into their treatment services. "Many clients have shared that they are grateful for the opportunity to continue with treatment via telehealth because it removes barriers like transportation, childcare, and obviously follows the recommendation to remain at home," said Clinical Director Rob Young.

"Clients have also reported that because they have maintained contact with their counselor, they feel less overwhelmed and more hopeful that they will be able to cope with life's stressors without resorting to using alcohol or drugs," Young said.



Children's Advantage therapist Kelli Swigart engages a child during a counseling session

Telehealth has shown to be an important component in services delivery and Townhall II will continue to look for ways to integrate telehealth into our treatment options.

However, telehealth does create some challenges in working with children.

"Teens for the most part enjoy using telehealth as they are so used to communicating via technology anyways," said Mary McCracken, Director of School Based Services/CPST/Risk Management at Children's Advantage. "But for young children, sustaining their attention can be a challenge."

"Our therapists, psychiatry staff, and case managers have found creative methods of keeping them engaged while working on skill development, therapy, and psychiatric needs," McCracken said. "We also want to work with parents and other caregivers as they are key leaders in helping develop strong mental health skills in their children."

Serving clients remotely has been quite a change for the home-based family therapy team at Family & Community Services. Before the Stay at Home order, a team of therapists and case managers would work with families and caregivers in their homes.

“The adjustment to telehealth was awkward at first, but now most of our families are responding well,” said Cara Michalak, behavioral therapist. “During a session, we may first start out speaking to each family member separately over the phone, and then end with a group conference call.”

Michalak noted that they are missing being able to observe clients home lives with their own eyes, but since the transition to telehealth they have been able to serve more families now since they aren't driving to people's homes. This frees them up to spend more of their time in counseling sessions.

All of the agencies are accepting new patients. To schedule an appointment call: Coleman Professional Services at 330-296-3555, Children's Advantage at 330-296-5552, Family & Community Services at 330-297-7027, and Townhall II at 330-678-3006.

May is Mental Health: Tools for a Healthy Lifestyle

Learn & share the practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency and be supportive of friends, family, and co-workers who are struggling with life's challenges or their mental health.

Mental Health America is highlighting #Tools2Thrive -

- Owning Your Feelings
- Finding the Positive
- Eliminating Toxic Influences
- Creating Healthy Routines
- Supporting Others
- Connecting with Others

**TAKE A CHECKUP
FROM THE NECK UP**



FREE. PRIVATE. ANONYMOUS.
www.mental-health-recovery.org

Learn more at www.mental-health-recovery.org/single-post/2020/05/11/Tools-for-Mental-Health

Spring Cleaning - include your medicine cabinet!

Spending lots of time at home? Now is a great time to clean out your medicine cabinet.

Expired & unused medicine can be disposed of easily. Drop off at any Portage County police station box.



Complete the 2020 Census!

It only takes ten minutes to complete your Census questionnaire, and it impacts our community for the next ten years. Census results are used to direct the distribution of billions of dollars in federal funds to local communities for schools, roads and other public services. That is why it is so important that we get everyone counted. You can fill it out online at www.my2020census.gov or by phone at 844-330-2020.

Honoring CIT Officers

Each year the Board along with the Portage County Police Chiefs Association award CIT Officers of the Year. These are exemplary officers who practice the communication and de-escalation techniques they learned during their CIT training in dealing with individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis or are struggling with addiction. The 2018 officers were honored in January; the 2019 officers received their award in November.



2018 Officers of the Year: Ofc Chris Hartlaub, NEOMED Police (2nd row, 2nd from left); Ofc Ryan Wolf, Streetsboro Police (1st row, 2nd from left); Ofc Bill Atha, Kent State University Police (2nd row, 4th from left) pictured with their Chiefs, Sheriff Doak, and Board Chair Bill Nome.



2019 Officers of the Year: Ofc Diane Dudziak, Kent State University Police Department; Ptlm Scott Krieger, Ravenna Police ; and Ofc Dominic Poe, Kent Police.

Suicide Prevention Coalition

The Suicide Prevention Coalition hosted a speaker from the Stark County Board who shared the CDC report and lessons learned after their experience with the suicide cluster that occurred in their county.

A Zero Suicide committee was formed to work with Coleman Professional Services to explore new suicide prevention strategies.

The Coalition created a gun safety brochure to promote suicide awareness and gun locks.

You can help protect your family & friends.

If someone is in crisis, remove the gun for now
Without a gun, less than 5% of suicide attempts result in death. But with a gun, 85% of attempts are fatal. In a moment of crisis, access to a gun is the difference between life and death.



Mental Health & Recovery Board OF PORTAGE COUNTY

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

DIRECTOR'S DESK

In a continued effort to build on our recovery-oriented system of care, 2019 was a significant year as we expanded services to improve the health & wellness of our community.

Through the State Opioid Response Grant, the Board was able to fund a fully staffed Medication Assisted-Treatment Clinic at Townhall II. The Opioid Recovery Clinic operates 5 days a week with a medical staff and peer support.

Additional funding also allowed us to add peer recovery supporters into our system. Peer supporters are working in a variety of settings with our agencies in Portage County including the Opioid Recovery Clinic, the Portage County jail, HOPE Court (drug court), recovery housing and resident treatment facilities, and with police and fire departments.

Helping children succeed has always been a priority for our Board. We were happy to introduce PAX (Peace, Productivity, Health, and Happiness) Good Behavior Game into the Crestwood School District. PAX is an evidence-based tool that is effective in preventing disruptive activity and promoting necessary skills for students to self-regulate their emotions, control their behavior, and improve their relationships with teachers and other students. The Board also funded new community outreach services to provide mental health and substance use programming and support groups to at-risk and underserved youth and for homeless children.

Mental health and addiction issues affect everyone in our community. The 2019 Portage County Community Health Assessment was released at the end of the year and emphasized the prominent need for mental health and addiction services. The 2020-2022 Community Health Improvement Plan process will give us the opportunity to further address these needs systematically in partnership with many county organizations and community partners.

Recovery from mental illness and addiction is a life-long process of change through which individuals learn to improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. We should never give up on anyone who struggles with a mental illness or addiction.

A handwritten signature in blue ink.

John Garrity, PhD, Executive Director



The new Opioid Recovery Clinic added to Townhall II's comprehensive treatment options for patients fighting opioid addiction. The clinic offers medication-assisted treatment, counseling, and peer support all at their Kent location. The non-profit agency promotes health, wellness, and recovery of individuals and communities through prevention, education, advocacy, intervention, and treatment.

HELPING PORTAGE CHILDREN & ADULTS

586 children and teens received treatment for trauma, emotional problems, mental illness and substance use disorders.

2302 adults received treatment for trauma, emotional problems, mental illness and substance use disorders.

26,100 contacts with people through the 24-HR crisis calls, information and referral calls, incidents of walk-in counseling, crisis outreach and screening for hospitalization.

272 admissions through the Coleman Crisis Stabilization Unit.

5410 youth and adults participated in prevention education programs.

705 students identified at risk and screened in all Portage County School Districts through a program funded by the Board. 33% were identified as having mental health issues requiring therapy and/or psychiatry services.

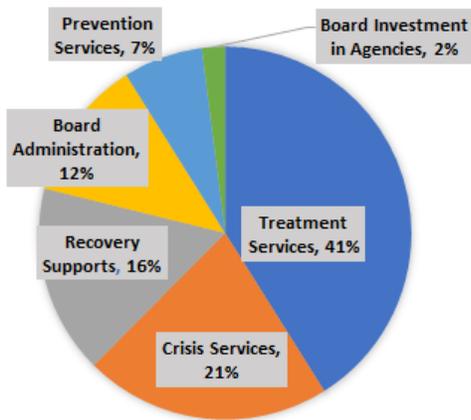
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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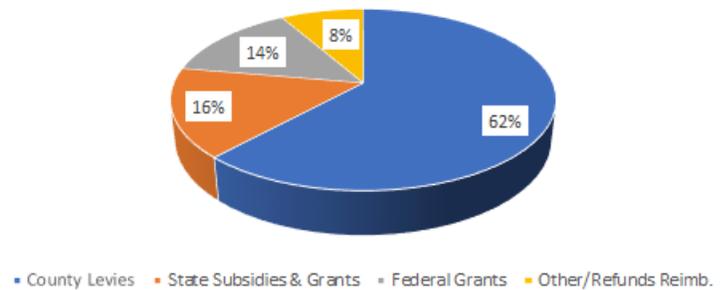
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Emily Schmidlin
Jennifer Schumm
Jamie Sitko
Scott Swan

TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR FY 2019 = \$7,563,185



REVENUE SOURCES FOR FY2019
TOTAL REVENUE = \$8,130,806



NETWORK OF AGENCIES:

Children's Advantage • Coleman Professional Services
Family & Community Services • Townhall II

www.mental-health-recovery.org • 330.673.1756 • 155 E. Main St. PO Box 743, Kent, OH 44240

PORTAGE COUNTY RECOVERY OUTREACH



Peer recovery supporters began partnering with Portage County first responders in 2019 to offer help to people who are struggling with addiction. The Board hosted an event for the city, village, and township leaders to learn more about the Recovery Outreach program. Dan Meloy, founder of QRT National, shared his experience engaging communities in saving lives after overdoses.



The Portage Substance Abuse Community Coalition's annual conference featured topics such as addiction in adolescenc, emedication-assisted treatment, suicide assessment tools, wellness, and living in recovery. Attendees at the spring family conference learned about behavioral health, medication-assisted treatment, peer support, and harm reduction. The Family Conference was nominated for a Celebrate Portage Award.