



Bridging the Gap

Southern Indiana is experiencing an unprecedented challenge with the merging of two national public health crises: drug overdoses and the Covid-19 pandemic. The adverse effects of COVID-19 and our communities' response to mitigate the pandemic has increased isolation, stressors, mental health and substance use disorders. Local mental health agencies are tasked with the challenge to protect the wellness of our communities. Personal Counseling Services (PCS) has been on the front lines of this responsibility since 1959 supporting the behavioral health of our Southern Indiana communities by providing marriage/couples counseling, mental health and music therapy, psychological and psychiatric services, and substance abuse treatment. We remain active in the community, serving on boards, meeting with legislators, listening to clients, primary care physicians and measuring the pulse of the communities we serve. As we partnering with other agencies to help bridge the gap, we are seeing a significant positive impact in reaching those with mental health issues

and those with addictions. Currently, PCS serves seventeen counties in Indiana and four counties in Kentucky. When a person has a mental health illness combined with a substance use disorder, this is called a Co-occurring Disorder (COD). According to New England Journal of Medicine, 29% of all people who have been diagnosed with a mental health illness abuse alcohol or drugs. Likewise, 37 percent of alcohol abusers and 53 percent of drug abusers have at least one serious mental illness.



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Common mental health disorders that are likely to co-occur with addiction include depression, bipolar, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and Attention-Deficit Disorder. Significant gaps exist between the treatment needs of people with CODs and the actual care they receive. This can be contributed to addiction counselors' lack of training in CODs, labor shortages, and many treatment programs not designed to support this unique population. SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) attributes this gap to the failure of agencies to routinely screen and assess clients when providing behavioral health services.

Our Southern Indiana communities are experiencing this service gap first hand. According to Priorities for Progress: Assets and aspirations of Southern Indiana 2021 (Clark and Floyd Counties), 75% of the survey respondents selected adult drug or alcohol use as the social issue of most concern. More than a quarter of the respondents cited outpatient substance abuse treatment as a mental health priority.

PCS is proactively attempting to

bridge that gap between an increasing need for Co-occurring treatment services and available treatment options in our southern Indiana Communities. First, PCS added psychiatric medication management to complement their current mental health therapy services. Dr. Rosalind Williams, a board certified psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (DNP, APRN-PMHNP-BC), has been added to the staff to conduct these services. Dr. Williams has been as a psychiatric nurse practitioner since 2018 in mental health inpatient, outpatient, and medication-assistant-treatment programs. Dr. Williams comes with 20 years of experience in

clients in developing a self-directed drug-free lifestyle that promotes the restoration of relationships, improvement of self-esteem, re-connection with a community, and improving the ability to manage psychiatric and physical concerns. Bill Zenor, the program's Director, is a Licensed Clinical Addictions Counselor who has been practicing addiction counseling for 15 years. Bill's experience in the substance abuse field varies between counseling, regulatory compliance, program development and community outreach. The program's curriculum provides a unique approach by combining the evidenced-based strategies of Interactive Journaling

ysis, songwriting, active-music making etc.) that will be used as a strategy to promote wellness, manage stress, expression of feelings, improve communication, and cope with triggers and cravings for drugs. PCS is taking another step across the co-occurring disorder service gap by combining Dr. Rosalind's medication management services with the Substance Use Disorder Program to create a comprehensive holistic intensive outpatient program. Clients will be screened for mental health and recovery needs at admission while receiving both a substance abuse and mental health assessment. Based upon the individualized treatment plan of the clients,

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psychiatric nursing. An integrated treatment management approach is best practice for giving those, who experience co-occurring disorders, the greatest opportunity for positive recovery outcomes.

Second, PCS has developed a new Substance Use Disorder Program providing services to those who have been diagnosed with Substance Use Disorder. Within this program is an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) that provides 9 hours of group therapy combined with two individual counseling sessions a month for 12 weeks. This program highlights SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness having the goal of assisting

and music therapy with a group process (Open discussion that provides varying perspectives, feedback and support) format. Interactive Journaling is a structured writing process that motivates and guides participants toward positive life change. This intervention uses recovery journals that utilize evidence-based practices of motivational interviewing, trans-theoretical model of behavior change, structured expressive writing and cognitive-behavioral therapy. Use of music therapy in a Substance Use Disorder IOP program is a revolutionary step in providing comprehensive services. Music therapy is the use of music interventions (lyric anal-

they will have access to psychiatric medication management, mental health therapy, and family counseling at one location while attending the IOP program.

In conclusion, PCS is taking bold steps in addressing the growing Co-Occurring Disorder treatment gap in our Southern Indiana communities by developing a holistic wrap-around substance abuse program. •

If you or someone else you know has a mental health concern or substance use problem, please seek services somewhere. COVID has not made anyone's life easier and remember, there is no health without mental health.

Authors



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