

Escalation Of Mental Heal Dilemma In Riverbend Region Fuels Psychological Services Proliferation At OSF Saint Anthony's

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ALTON - A recent CNN/Kaiser Family Foundation research survey found that 90% of Americans feel the United States is in a mental health crisis. Unfortunately, it's safe to say that the nation's newest public health threat has enveloped the Riverbend region as well.

Case in point, the Psychological Services Department at OSF Saint Anthony's Health Services has realized two (2) consecutive years of therapy and counseling resource expansion by 1,400% since December 2021. In addition, patient utilization of mental health and wellness services at OSF Saint Anthony's increased by at least 37% between 2022-2023.

“OSF Saint Anthony's is committed to meeting and serving the mental health needs of the entire Riverbend region,” says Staci Knox, LCSW, Manager, Psychological Services, OSF Saint Anthony's. “Mental health is one of the top community health priorities identified in our current community health needs assessment (CHNA). Just as well, mental health and wellness will continue to be a community health priority in Madison County and across the United States indefinitely.”

The Psychological Services Department's 1,400% expansion is located within its Connections Group therapy program. “In the last two (2) years, we've added 13 new weekly group therapy sessions to meet our patients' needs,” Knox says. “Connection's Group is a safe environment where an individual can become the best version of themselves through support and education facilitated by a licensed mental health provider. In this group setting, individuals can find the strength to renew their spirit, recover from grief, reduce stress, or work on building skills and strategies for better overall well-being.”

Going back to December 2021, the Psychological Services Department offered only one (1) weekly group therapy session; fast-forward to January 2024, the Connections Group program now offers 14 – nine (9) weekly adult group series and 5 weekly youth series. The current weekly adult group series (18 years old and above) includes:

- **Open Adult Group:** goals include problem solving and conflict resolution, coping skills for anxiety, depression, bullying etc., social skills and communication skills building and interaction, cognitive skill building including challenging negative thoughts, learning to reframe, identifying emotions, and learning to express in a healthy manner.
- **Anger Management Group:** for individuals seeking to decrease the frequency and intensity of their anger to build healthier coping skills and more positive relationships.
- **Caregivers Group:** for individuals who are caring for someone with significant developmental, mental health or physical impairments.
- **Women's Family Violence Group:** for women who are experiencing verbal or physical abuse from a significant other or family member or are recovering from the trauma of past domestic violence.

- **Grandparents Group**: there are extra challenges for people who are navigating dual roles of being a grandparent and in a parental role; participants will learn more about how to manage and support their families and themselves.
- **Grief Group**: for individuals who have experienced a loss in their life.
- **Neurology Group**: for individuals who are stroke survivors, have seizure disorders, migraines or are recovering from concussions.

The department's Connection's Youth therapy program includes five (5) weekly group therapy sessions and is available for children ages 7-17 years old. Individual therapy sessions are also available. Youth group therapy goals include:

- Learn coping skills for anxiety, depression etc.
- Practice social and communication skills
- Build problem solving and conflict resolution skills
- Develop cognitive skills; challenge and reframe negative thoughts, and identify and express emotions

“Our team of licensed therapists and counselors understands how emotional and behavioral concerns can impact an individual's overall wellbeing,” Knox states. “We know people can benefit from therapeutic care offered in a private and confidential setting, either in-person or virtually.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in the United States:

- More than 1 in 5 US adults live with a mental illness.
- Over 1 in 5 youth (ages 13-18) either currently or at some point during their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness.
- About 1 in 25 U.S. adults lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.

Overall, the Psychological Services Department at OSF Saint Anthony's provides individual, family, and group therapy in a caring and compassionate environment. The department's providers treat children (beginning at age 6), teens, adults and seniors facing a variety of issues, including:

- Abuse
- ADHD
- Adjustment disorders
- Anger
- Anxiety, panic and PTSD
- Caregiver stress

- Chronic pain
- Depression
- Emotional and behavioral issues
- Family issues
- Grief and loss
- Health issues
- Marriage issues
- Parenting issues
- Stress
- Substance abuse
- Women's issues
- Psychological testing with a doctor's referral

Individuals needing more information or wanting to schedule an appointment with the Psychological Services Department can call (618) 474-6240.

OSF Saint Anthony's CHNA report can be found by visiting <https://www.osfhealthcare.org/about/community-health/>.