

A graphic of a spotlight shining from the top left corner of the page.

LIFEWORKS' SPOTLIGHT

Lifeworks

ADVOCACY • EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY

March 2021

March is Developmental Disability Awareness and National Social Workers Month. This Spotlight focuses on our specialized behavioral health services provided for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

THE SAFE HARBOR IN THE STORM: HARBOR COUNSELING CENTER SERVICES & THE CLINICAL RESPONSE TEAM

By Kathy Montal and
Susan Tufts Kagan

Harbor Counseling Center (HCC), offers long and short-term therapy to adults ages 22 and older. What is unique about HCC's outpatient behavioral health clinic, is that it specializes in serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and has been affiliated with The Arc of South Norfolk and Lifeworks for several years.

HCC offers a wide array of therapy modalities, some of which include cognitive behavior and expressive therapies. HCC also provides vital outreach services and resources to this marginalized population and their caregivers. Before COVID-19 restrictions went into effect, clinicians would visit with individuals at their family home, community residences, or at Lifeworks' Employment Services (LES) Boston and Norwood day habilitation program locations. Clinicians not only work with individuals, they also support parents, guardians or siblings through family therapy sessions.

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HCC Counseling Center clinicians see individuals at various sites throughout Massachusetts, but primarily in Greater Boston. HCC supports other programs and agencies besides Lifeworks, including the Price Center in Needham and Douglas House in Lexington. Dr. Steven Spitz, who is also affiliated with McLean Hospital in Belmont, has served as a psychiatrist for close to 30 years. He treats individuals needing medication management at HCC's office. Over the last year, he has transitioned to telehealth sessions to continue caring for clients during the pandemic. This has been successful with the support and organization of administrative assistant Marie DiCalogero.



Kay Lee Davis-Blanchard, LICSW, serves as the Clinical Director for both Harbor Counseling Center and Lifeworks. Kay Lee says the pandemic has created its share of challenges, particularly prohibiting in-person therapy with clinicians. State mandated restrictions have made it difficult for day programs to allow in person sessions to resume. "Sometime clients don't like to see themselves on video and may not always have access to technology in their home. As a therapist, you depend on the ability to read faces or body language", said Kay Lee. "While telehealth has been challenging, our therapists have done an amazing job learning how to deliver crucial services during the pandemic."

Kay Lee supports her team of clinicians by running a peer supervision group via Zoom each month. This allows clinicians a forum to support each other and exchange ideas. They are able to hear how others are adapting their sessions and provide feedback on creative ways to engage clients during telehealth visits.



This has posed special challenges to clinicians who primarily utilize expressive art or music therapies.

Art therapy is used to improve sensory and motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional awareness, enhance social skills and reduce stress. This type of therapy is great for those who have difficulty expressing themselves through traditional therapy modalities. For instance, when creating a portrait of themselves, clinicians can pick up on what clients choose to draw or omit. They can also visualize where in their life they might be experiencing pain or joy. Participants of HCC with acquired brain injuries, seen at Douglas House in Lexington, as well as many others have benefited tremendously from art therapy.



"We are grateful to Rockland Trust and Blue Hills Bank foundation for their generous grant that has helped supplement art and expressive therapy materials for our clinicians", said Kay Lee.

This past year has been a tough time for many people, whether it has been dealing with feelings of sadness, isolation, depression, missing friends and family, the anxiety of quarantine or the sudden loss of loved ones due to COVID-19 related illnesses.

Since the merger of The Arc of South Norfolk and Lifeworks last October, Kay Lee has seen a need for more behavioral health supports within the agency. HCC clinicians Courtney Fuller and Karen Meginsky also serve as Intensive Family Support Coordinators. They have been working for the agency for more than a decade, specifically with individuals and families experiencing medical and behavioral health situations. As their clinical supervisor, Kay Lee has the responsibility of discussing cases to determine, as mandated reporters, when and if an incident needs to be reported to the Commonwealth's

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Kay Lee Davis-Blanchard
Lifeworks HCC Director

Disabled Persons Protection Commission or the Department of Children and Families. Together with Lifeworks Behavioral Support Specialist, Courtney Hills, they are part of the newly developed Clinical Response Team. "The formation of the Clinical Response Team has been a way for us to support individuals and staff through difficult transitions and losses," said Kay Lee. Throughout the last year of the pandemic and with the merger of our two agencies, it became evident that a more formal, teams-based approach was needed. The usual work-related grief that accompanies this field has been magnified. "We have seen even the most experienced support professionals navigate new challenges and take on responsibilities outside of their norm, all while managing their own daily stressors", said Hills.

These four clinicians will participate in a new training funded by the Rockland Trust and Blue Hills Bank foundations, which will qualify them to be Certified Grief Counseling Specialists (CGCS). This training has already been utilized with our direct support staff. As essential workers, often having to quarantine away from their own families, the Clinical Response Team has provided guidance and support to many within the Lifeworks community through difficult times.

Our clinicians are looking forward to the future when individuals can once again be seen in person. HCC will continue to work with direct support staff to ensure that the proper technology is available for telehealth. We anticipate growth of the clinic in the upcoming years given the success of the Clinical Response Team. For more information about Harbor Counseling Center and services offered call (781) 762-4001, ext. 301 or visit the Lifeworks website at www.lifeworksarc.org.

"The anticipatory grief and the feelings that come alongside these changes in isolation protocols and policies have put new pressures on an already existing challenging field. Being a part of developing the Clinical Response Team has allowed me to see the true resilience and dedication of these professionals, while helping support them as they work the frontlines to care for others."

-Courtney Hills, Lifeworks Behavioral Support Specialist