

CAPITAL AREA HUMAN SERVICES CONNECTS

MENTAL HEALTH | ADDICTION RECOVERY | DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

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Ascension | East Baton Rouge | East Feliciana | Iberville
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July/August 2020

Executive Director's Corner

Jan Laughinghouse, PhD,
LCSW-BACS,
Interim Executive Director

The upheaval and volatility in our daily lives has been spawned by a global pandemic—with no end in sight—and increasing racial tensions. These crises have put a spotlight on injustice, inequity, disparities, and the unmet needs of those in our society who are oppressed and marginalized. Like other vulnerable populations, women and children are often subjected to violence, abuse, and living conditions that are not only detrimental to their well-being, but also produce trauma. The resulting trauma has biological, psychological, and social effects that impact women and children negatively. In this issue, we have highlighted resources that provide support to women and children and help them to navigate the challenges that they face daily.



Jan Laughinghouse,
PhD, LCSW-BACS



WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES AT CAPITAL AREA HUMAN SERVICES

Women and children are our most vulnerable citizens. In 2017, nearly 16 million women in the U.S. and more than ¼ of Louisiana children lived in poverty. And poverty is a risk factor for substance abuse, domestic violence and other problems women face in our society.

Capital Area Human Services (CAHS) offers these programs to help women and children in our community:

Women's Recovery Group

An intensive outpatient program, this group is for women 18 years or older seeking recovery from drugs or alcohol. The treatment program lasts 24 days and uses an evidence-based model called "Seeking Safety" to facilitate discussion of common issues relevant to recovery and healing in an informal setting.

Social Worker and Supervisor in the addiction recovery area at CAHS, Carol Everhart Moise, LCSW, says the evidence-based program is comprised of 24 sessions, each lasting three hours. Participants commit to nine hours per week total. The program primarily addresses substance use disorders and post traumatic stress disorder.

"Most of the women have been through enormous amounts of trauma and also suffer from addictions," Moise said. "During those sessions we work on a lot of topics in recovery thinking and the lifestyle changes that go along with it."

Women in the group learn, for example, how to set healthy boundaries and identify physical and emotional triggers for substance use as well as how to avoid or cope with them. They also learn what healthy relationships look like.

"Some women in the group have been in such a long series of dysfunctional and abusive relationships they don't know what is normal and healthy," she said. "We

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CLINICS NOW OPEN

Capital Area Human Services
Appointments: 225-925-1906
cahsd.org for clinic locations and
details on COVID safety updates

Capital Area Human Services Administrative Offices: 4615 Government Street • Building 2 • Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Phone: (225) 922-2700 | (866) 628-2133 | cahsd.org | realhelpbr.com

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do an exercise early on that identifies what a healthy relationship looks like in their minds. Later in the sessions there's a big shift in that mindset."

Managing emotions is critical to recovery and the Women's Recovery Group helps participants learn how to distance themselves from people in their lives who are verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abusive as well as toxic to their emotional well-being. "Addiction is real," said Moise, "but so is recovery. We always say that in order for change to occur, change is required. People in recovery have to give up negative things in their lives and add positive things. It's a whole lifestyle change."

At the start of each group there is a confidentiality pledge among the participants and Moise added there is no condemnation among the women for having one addiction versus another.

"During sessions we work on a lot of topics in recovery thinking and the lifestyle changes that go along with it."

"Some people may be afraid they'll be judged if they're an IV drug user versus an alcoholic," Moise said. "But nobody's jaw is going to drop over anything that is said in here. It's crucial for the women to participate actively. Listening is important but sharing is pivotal."

For information on the Women's Recovery Program, telephone assistance or general information on outpatient services call (225) 925-1906.

If you are struggling with addiction to heroin or pain pills, visit [Women's Recovery Group](#).

Useful phone numbers for women in crisis include:

- Alcoholics Anonymous Baton Rouge: 225-930-0026
- Bayou Recovery Area of Narcotics Anonymous: 225-381-9609
- National Crisis Hotline: 800-273-TALK
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233
- IRIS Domestic Violence Center of Baton Rouge: 225-389-3001
- The Butterfly Society Anti-Domestic Violence Organization: 225-347-7725

Children's Behavioral Health

Getting help early can prevent lifelong difficulties for children and young adults facing challenges; Children's Behavioral Health (CBH) at CAHS provides outpatient behavioral health and addictive disorders services for people ages 6-18 and their families to get them the early intervention that can help.

"We have a group of highly trained and experienced licensed clinicians at CBH who are able to work with families on a wide range of emotional, behavioral and substance use issues," said Program Director Melissa Martin, LCSW-BACS. "We want to help children and families improve functioning at school and at home so that they can reach their goals."

CAHS' trained staff helps families manage the many issues causing or arising from a child's emotional and/or substance abuse problems. The team also serves children with developmental disabilities and/or makes referrals and ensures service coordination with other agencies that serve children.

The key services CBH provides are:

- Information and referral to satellite offices
- Screening and assessment
- Medication evaluations and management
- Psychological testing
- Individual, group and family therapy
- Substance abuse prevention
- Interagency service coordination
- Education/counseling for emotional disorders and substance abuse
- Discharge planning, aftercare services and case management
- Applied behavior analysis (ASCEND)
- Education/counseling for emotional disorders/substance abuse

Martin said CBH works as a treatment team providing counseling and psychiatry with a full-time child psychiatrist on staff. "We can also provide same day or next day screening or assessments on new clients," she said. Services are provided face-to-face and through the use of teletherapy appointments.

ASCEND: Intensive Program for Autism

The ASCEND program is an intensive applied behavior analysis (ABA) program serving children with autism ages 2-7. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the most empirically supported treatment for autism spectrum disorder. The ASCEND program uses techniques of ABA to teach communication, adaptive, social, play, and academic skills to ready clients for their transition to school. The program also offers individualized parent training to clients' parents to assist them in learning ABA techniques that can be used in the home setting to increase their child's skills and decrease challenging behaviors. In addition, ASCEND, in partnership with LSU's Communication Sciences & Disorders department, also provides clients with daily individual and group speech sessions. ASCEND will also be offering occupational therapy to clients later this year through a collaboration with the McMains Children's Developmental Center.

School Based Services for Children

A wide range of challenges can limit a child's success at school and school based therapists may be able to help. Problems may include anger management, hyperactivity, depression, resolving conflicts and frustration with learning.

CAHS' School Based Therapy Program has a proven track record of service to 44 public school systems in the capital region involving a team of professionals including master's level counselors, social workers and physicians working as a team with the student and their family.

“During this uncertain and stressful time, it is even more important to provide support and structure to children with behavioral health issues”

This therapy has been shown to reduce absences, suspensions and expulsions as well as improving students' grades. And parents, teachers and students alike have indicated great satisfaction with the school based therapy programs CAHS offers, with surveys saying 91% of teachers indicated an improvement in the student's behavior; 97% of students indicated they were very satisfied with services received and 100% of parents said they would recommend the school based therapy services to a family member or friend.



The Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing school closings required school based services to move off campus and transition to teletherapy. As school returns in August, School Based therapists will transition to schools, as COVID-19 safety measures permit.

“During this uncertain and stressful time, it is even more important to provide support and structure to children with behavioral health issues,” said Bethany Sclafani, LCSW-BACS, program director of the CAHS School Based Therapy Program.

“Since the closing of schools months ago, our dedicated CAHS school-based therapists have been working hard to ensure that this would not prevent their clients from getting the services they need,” she said. “Flexibly adapting to telehealth therapy and continually reaching out to families, they have remained a trusted support to their clients during a very difficult time. I am so very proud of our entire team for showing true dedication to continuing our mission of providing caring and responsive services during this unprecedented time.”

Roberta Carruth, LCSW-BACS, a school-based therapist at Ryan Elementary said teletherapy has been a way to connect with clients at a time of unexpected change and isolation.

“Through teletherapy, we have helped clients establish healthy routines and adjust to spending so much time with family members, when tensions can arise,” she said.

The sessions have helped ease the stress of the “new normal” and allowed therapists to support students when

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their family members are ill as well as helping with the issues they were already dealing with that are now manifesting at home.

“We help with new issues that have arisen, in part due to the changes the pandemic has brought. For example, a client experienced cyber-bullying by a classmate after classes went online. Through teletherapy, she has begun to work through the experience, identify ways to cope and engage in self-care,” Carruth said.

Sherry Verdel, LPC, a school-based therapist at East Iberville School/MSA-East Academy has enjoyed having telehealth sessions with her clients, which has given her the opportunity to continue their meetings during the stay at home period, and which she found more effective than talking to clients by phone. The telehealth sessions, she said, help her and the client to be more present with each other, and it helps her better understand the client’s backdrop for the session, including background sounds and seeing the client’s environment, knowing who is in the room with them, and gauging eye contact, focus, and engagement in the session.

“Body language is an important part of our sessions,” she said, “and when using the telehealth platform, I can better understand when a client is distracted, bored or off track. This helps me adjust my approach and better determine when to introduce a new activity.”

Through the telehealth platform, Verdel has used online bibliotherapy stories and educational materials through shared screens to increase client engagement and interest. This platform also helped increase her engagement with parents, even surpassing what she said she had previously been able to accomplish in the school setting through phone calls to families.

“Sometimes parents participate in the sessions with the child, sometimes they talk to me before the child logs on, and sometimes I am able to see the parent disciplining the child in session, which allows for better insight into family interactive patterns,” she said. It also offers Verdel the opportunity to address the parents’ concerns in the moment they are expressed to the child, rather than in retrospect in an office meeting at a later date.

While the telehealth platform may have the disadvantage of decreased privacy for her clients (Verdel said she has experienced clients whispering information they wanted to be sure no one in the home would hear) this also gave her insight into the family’s interactive patterns.

Overall, she finds the telehealth platform very useful and hopes to be able to continue using it when school resumes as a way to continue to meet with parents. She also hopes that for parents who have difficulty coming to school, it will increase their rate of being able to participate.

This program is accepting referrals for virtual services from any public school in the seven parishes at this time. This year there have been 19 School Based Therapists in EBR and 37 School Based Therapists in the 44 schools throughout the seven parishes.

2019-20 SCHOOL BASED THERAPY LOCATIONS

OFFICE: 225-922-0478 • FAX: 225-922-2658

ASCENSION PARISH

Central Primary
Donaldsonville High
East Ascension High
Gonzales Primary
Gonzales Middle
Pecan Grove Primary

BAKER SCHOOL SYSTEM

Baker Heights Elementary
Bakerfield Elementary

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH

Belaire High
Broadmoor Elementary
Capitol Elementary
Capitol Middle
Claiborne Elementary
Greenbrier Elementary
Highland Elementary
Howell Park Elementary
LaBelle Aire Elementary
Magnolia Woods Elementary
McKinley High
Melrose Elementary
Merrydale Elementary
Park Forest Elementary
Park Forest Middle
Ryan Elementary
Sharon Hills Elementary
Thrive Academy
University Terrace Elementary
Woodlawn Middle
Woodlawn High

EAST FELICIANA PARISH

Jackson Elementary

IBERVILLE PARISH

Crescent Elementary
Dorseyville Elementary
East Iberville Elementary & High
Iberville Elementary
MSA-East Academy
Plaquemine High
White Castle High

POINTE COUPEE PARISH

Valverde Elementary

WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH

Caneview K-8
Cohn Elementary
Port Allen High
Port Allen Middle

WEST FELICIANA PARISH

West Feliciana Middle
West Feliciana High

This information is produced by Capital Area Human Services to enhance and expand communication on mental health, addiction recovery, and developmental disabilities.

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