

Mobile health clinic expands to mental health care

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BLOOMINGTON — People with chronic mental illness die — on average — 10 to 20 years earlier than other people because they are less likely to get adequate physical health care, said advanced practice nurse Melinda Roth.

"Mental illness is associated with chronic physical illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and pulmonary disease," Roth said last week at the Center for Human Services (CHS), McLean County's mental health agency, where she is psychiatric services program manager.

In response, Roth and representatives of the Community Health Care Clinic and Home Sweet Home Ministries have developed an innovative solution.

Beginning July 25 and continuing on the fourth Monday afternoon of each month, a mobile health clinic will operate at CHS, 108 W. Market St., for CHS patients without a primary care physician.

The clinic will provide primary care exams by a Community Health Care Clinic nurse practitioner followed by an assessment by Home Sweet Home's outreach coordinator to see whether additional community support could assist the patient.

"This is holistic care," Roth said. "It's going to mean a quality of life that they deserve to have."

"It just makes sense," said Matt Burgess, Home Sweet Home (HSH) chief operating officer. "This level of innovation and creativity among longstanding organizations is what it takes to address physical and mental health needs and homelessness in a cost-effective manner."

The mobile health clinic is an expansion of the HSH/Community Health Care Clinic mobile health project.

That project involves taking a 40-foot-long used truck that was restored in 2014 into a mobile clinic and driving it to locations where low-income people who are uninsured or under-insured and without regular medical care gather.

Inside, Community Health Care Clinic staff provide medical exams and Home Sweet Home (HSH) staff make sure the patient is connected to human service agencies that can help, said HSH Outreach Coordinator Brittany Cline.

Since the first clinic in October 2014, there have been 22 mobile clinics at several sites with most of them outside Home Sweet Home, 303 E. Oakland Ave., Bloomington, said Community Health Care Clinic Operations Manager Mike Romagnoli. "We've seen 147 unduplicated patients," he said.

Even as monthly mobile clinics continue outside Home Sweet Home from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. during the third Monday of the month, HSH and the community clinic are looking for additional partners.

Some CHS patients — who also are low-income, uninsured or underinsured — don't access primary care for chronic physical health needs because they have anxiety, Roth said.

Roth met with HSH and community clinic representatives, who concluded that bringing the mobile health truck to CHS would intimidate some patients.

Instead, the mobile clinic will consist of a community clinic nurse using a psychiatric services office at CHS. The office will be equipped with a portable exam table and medical backpack equipped with wound care supplies, thermometers, otoscopes (to check ears), glucose meters, gloves, urinalysis strips, urine pregnancy test kits, rapid strep test kits, antibiotics, medicines for chronic disease and skin creams, Romagnoli said.

The table, backpack and initial supplies are covered by a \$1,300 grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation, said Angie McLaughlin, community clinic executive director.

http://www.pantagraph.com/news/local/mobile-health-clinic-expands-to-mental-health-care/article_01e9cdd5-da1a-5168-913e-e8843c1123f2.html