

Fact Sheet

Project Access Northwest’s Care Coordination Program leverages relationships with all major stakeholders in health care in this region to serve a vulnerable population with limited to no access to specialty care. We partner with hospitals, providers, clinics, community members and funders to ensure that everyone has access to appropriate health care.

Project Access Northwest is adding Behavioral Health as one of our specialty care services. Our well-established care coordination model, which currently refers clients to more than 50 medical specialties, can be expanded to include behavioral health within its current framework.

We are collaborating with Maryland’s Pro Bono Counseling to build out this new specialty and create a network of volunteer providers who will each accept one new client for a minimum of 12 visits. In Maryland, more than 800 providers donate these services at this frequency.

WHO will the Behavioral Health program serve?

Our services are available to people living at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. We plan to serve both adults and children — individuals, couples

and families — with concerns from depression, anxiety, abuse and self-esteem to relationships, divorce, grief, trauma and life transitions.

HOW will the Behavioral Health program work?

Clients who are referred to us will participate in a confidential phone interview with a non-clinical staff member to discuss their concerns and interest in seeking therapy. We will then identify a “best-fit” therapist — considering any client preferences for cultural background, expertise, gender, and therapy style, among other factors — and schedule an appointment when a therapist or counselor is identified.

The client receives:

- A short, confidential phone screening conducted by a care coordinator.
- A referral to a screened, “best-fit” volunteer licensed counselor or other resources
- No-cost counseling for a time frame agreed upon between client and provider

FOR THOSE SEEKING HELP:



STEP 1

Call Project Access Northwest
Monday – Friday, 8 AM – 4 PM
telephonic interpreters are available



STEP 2

Participate in a short, confidential
phone screening conducted by
one of our care coordinators.



STEP 3

Get connected to a volunteer, licensed
counselor or other resources

The Behavioral Health specialist receives:

- Thoroughly screened and well-matched clients: All clients will be thoroughly screened by a licensed social worker during the intake process. Only those who can engage in insight-oriented counseling will be matched to volunteer providers, based on a variety of factors such as age, interest areas/ specialties, availability, therapy style, etc.
- Case Consultation: Our on-staff LCSW-C will provide consultation services to our volunteer providers
- Continuing Education Workshops: Project Access Northwest plans to sponsor continuing education for participating providers

WHY is Behavioral Health important?

Despite the Affordable Care Act, almost 800,000 Washington state residents are uninsured, an increase of 292,700 since mid-March 2020. Uninsured adults are more likely to say their health is fair or poor. Most cannot afford quality health care, leading to increased health disparities and lower quality of life overall. Beyond physical health needs, many clients have behavioral health needs — some of which have been greatly exacerbated during the pandemic. We seek to provide services that treat the whole person, for better outcomes.

- Prior to the pandemic, one in five people had a diagnosable health condition, but only 43% received treatment
- The delay in treatment is 10 years (from the onset of symptoms) per the National Institute of Health (NIH)
- Only 20% of people with an anxiety disorder will get treatment within a year
- Only 30% of people with mood disorders will get treatment within a year

- The Pacific Northwest is a high-needs area for mental health issues
- The Pacific Northwest also has the lowest number of mental health providers
- Between 2019 and 2021, people expressing anxious or depressive thoughts increased from one in 10 to four in 10
- Since the start of the pandemic, there has been an increase in behavioral health claims data of 35%
- There is more than \$300 million in avoidable medical expenses annually due to lack of behavioral health treatment
- Since the start of the pandemic, there is an increase of women with alcohol and substance abuse issues
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in this country

One of the things that we focus on at Project Access Northwest is removing barriers. We know that our clients face increased barriers due to a number of factors outside their control. So, what are the barriers they may face in accessing behavioral health care?

- No access to providers
- Costs are prohibitive
- The stigma attached to getting care
- Clients chasing physical symptoms that really need to be addressed in the behavioral health space
- Clients falling through the cracks

We know that we can help remove these barriers, and we are lucky to work in a region where so many care about the lives of those who are underserved.