

## Fact Sheet

**P**roject Access Northwest’s Behavioral Health Program forges relationships with all stakeholders in health care in the state of Washington to serve vulnerable people with limited to no access to counseling services. We partner with hospitals, clinicians, clinics, community members and funders to ensure that everyone has access to appropriate behavioral, dental, and specialty medical care. We also provide community-based care coordination to include things like housing instability, food insecurity, lack of transportation and more to improve the health of Medicare enrollees.

Our well-established care coordination model, which currently refers people to more than 50 medical specialties, has been expanded to include behavioral health from a pro bono counseling lens within its current framework. Licensed clinicians, interns, and peer counselors can set the number of people, and visits, they’d like to see based on the need of each individual.

### WHO does the program serve?

Our services are available to adults ages 18 years or older living at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level — with concerns ranging from depression, anxiety, self-esteem, relationships, grief, to trauma and other life transitions.

### HOW does the program work?

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

#### People enrolled receive:

- A short, confidential phone screening conducted by a care coordinator
- A referral to an in-person or virtual appointment with a screened, “best-fit” volunteer licensed clinician, intern, or peer counselor
- List of vetted community resources while awaiting matching with provider
- No-cost counseling or peer support for a time frame agreed upon between provider and the person they are seeing

#### Pledged Behavioral Health Providers receive:

- Well Screened Client Referrals: All people referred are thoroughly screened during the provider-matching

### 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

process. Only those able to engage in insight-oriented counseling will be matched with volunteer providers, based on a variety of factors such as age, interest areas/specialties, availability, therapy style.

- **Psychiatric Case Consultation:** A volunteer board-psychiatrist offers case consultation on medication management services
- **Access to Free Continuing Education Credits:** Project Access Northwest, in partnership with the Washington Mental Health Counselors Association, offers free continuing education credits for participating providers
- **Access to Free Licensure Supervision Hours:** Associate-level providers have access to free supervision hours needed to obtain independent licensure in the state of Washington. These hours are offered by our Director of Behavioral Health Integration and licensed mental health counselor (LMHC). Please reach out to our program directly for more information.
- **Access to participate in the Project Access Northwest, "Ask A Therapist" blog:** As a pledged provider you are able to support destigmatizing and normalizing behavioral health concerns. As a subject-matter expert you have the ability to write about key behavioral health topics to support educating the community.

## 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 people 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?

- Limited access to providers
- Costs are prohibitive
- Stigma attached to getting care
- People chasing physical symptoms that are better addressed in the behavioral health space
- People 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.

**LEARN MORE ONLINE:**  
[projectaccessnw.org/ProBonoCounseling](https://projectaccessnw.org/ProBonoCounseling)

