

Unity Family Services

Newsletter

Summer 2019

Raising the bar in mental health services™

Issue 6

What's New at Unity!

Unity Family Services has been providing community-based mental-health services since 2000. We currently operate two free-standing in-home family based mental health programs with one in Leechburg and another location in Indiana. The in-home family-based services are state licensed and cover Armstrong, Indiana, Westmoreland and Butler counties.

Unity also provides certified peer support services in Armstrong and Indiana counties with each county having its own free-standing state license to operate.

Unity has always maintained a small clinical private practice working with all ages of children,

adolescents, couples, adults and geriatrics. All insurances are accepted including all Medicaid and Medicare members.

What you may not know is that Unity operates an independent Recovery Program located in downtown Kittanning on Market Street. Unity Home Partners has a designated building for its ¾ Recovery House. This is a Pennsylvania state approved West Parr approved Recovery Housing Program with a 16-bed capacity.



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Peer Support on the Move

Several peers, from the Peer Support Program were nominated this year for the Leadership in Recovery Award. The 19th Annual Adult Recovery Forum, put together by Beacon Health Options, recognizes individuals in recovery from several surrounding counties each year for their efforts and successes in recovery.

This year, our own Matthew Toy was the recipient of the award for Armstrong. Matt has worked with several CPSs from Unity, to get to

where he is now in his recovery. Basically homeless, unemployed, battling with addiction, depression and anxiety, Matt made a conscious decision to reach out for help. He has worked with several supports in his community to improve the quality of his life. He has now been employed for 10 months and lives in stable housing.

Matt is also celebrating one year clean; a significant milestone for him. He continues to work hard to

keep what he's earned and is setting goals that will keep on helping him to grow in his recovery and expand his options for a hopeful and bright future.



2019 NAFC National Conference

The 2019 National Association of Forensic Counselors Annual Conference will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada on October 14 through the 16th. Unity Family Services owner and CEO Michelle Gould LCSW, CSOTS, CPS, CPSS will be presenting at this national conference alongside Unity Family Services Clinical Director Megan Aleandri MED, LPC, LBS, NCC, CPSS.

They developed a training entitled "Trauma Informed Peer Support Services: Empowering Consumers Towards Meaningful Change" which is designed to help participants to better understand the use of Peer Support services with both mental health and drug and alcohol consumers. Significant research has shown the efficacy of peer models in reducing symptoms and relapse rates as well as improving overall quality



of life. The workshop also seeks to support participants in understanding the benefits of providing trauma informed care and how Peer Support can be implemented to complement a trauma informed model to promote positive outcomes for consumers.

Michelle Gould and Megan Aleandri are eager to provide information on a national scale to increase awareness of the unique benefits of peer support services for mental health and drug and alcohol consumers.

Therapy Animals

In the field of mental health, therapy animals provide a variety of services to their human companions. Nowadays it is not uncommon to go into the community to see a four-footed friend giving a helping paw to their human master. As we gain and expand our knowledge in this field, cats are gaining popularity as service animals.

Therapy or emotional support felines are multi-functional and provide a wide range of benefits to their masters. Studies have found that cat's purr has healing properties. Cat purrs may range from 50Hz to 150Hz. The purr itself can function to slow heart rates, decrease stress, decrease depression, decrease anxiety, lower blood pressure and interrupt panic induced episodes. Other studies have found that therapy cats have the potential to combat cardiovascular heart disease, chronic pain and in some cases, cancer. The science behind the purr is that the frequency

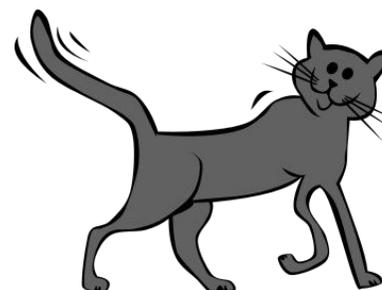
distracts and calms those who hear it. Additional studies have found that cats, in fact use their purrs to heal themselves! The theory is that the when cats purr at a high frequency, they expedite the healing process.

Cats also make great companions as they will often learn to greet their owners when they arrive home after a hard day's work. They will often console their human friends and offer snuggles to show companionship. A variety of studies have found that cats are able to understand empathy and will actively seek out their companions to console them.

A cat's warm soft fur coat offers sensory satisfaction in several people. Scientists have found that children suffering from autism have benefitted from own a cat as they soothe their sense of touch when they are feeling upset. Because a cat is a relatively sturdy animal, they are well-equipped to brave all the elements.

Having a therapy or emotional support cat is a very rewarding experience. However, one should remember that owning any animal requires work and a great deal of responsibility. Training your cat will take time, effort, dedication and never-ending motivation. However, a great deal of people believe that they reap what they sow and are rewarded with a friend that can help them on their journey through coping with mental health illnesses.

Source: <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/serviceanimals/cats.php>



Family Based Program Expansion

Unity Family Services, Inc. is excited to announce that our Family Based Program will soon be expanding into Beaver county. Over the past 15 years, Unity Family Services Inc. has been providing Family Based Services to children and families in Westmoreland, Indiana, Armstrong, and Butler Counties. As an organization, our goal has always been to provide high quality care especially in population areas with otherwise limited treatment options. We recently received a letter of support from Beaver County and have purchased office space in the heart of downtown Beaver. Unity Family Services, Inc. is currently in the process of adding this location to our existing Family Based License, which will allow us to begin seeing clients from this location. Currently, our Family Based Program maintains 11 full family-based teams across two offices located in Leechburg and Indiana, PA. We are excited to be able to expand into Beaver County to further our mission of providing outstanding advocacy, mental health care, and support to the adults, children, and families that we serve in Western Pennsylvania.

Goals and Objectives for Unity Family Service's Family Based Program

The primary goal of Unity Family Services' in-home family-based program is to enable and empower parents/caretakers to care for their children and adolescents (under the age of 21) with behavioral and emotional issues at home and reduce or eliminate the need for out-of-home placements, or hospitalizations. Unity Family Services believes in the family as a source of strength to children and adolescents. We want to empower the parents who care for their children struggling with mental illness through clinically proven therapies, psycho-education, crisis management, and behavioral and mental health supports. Unity Family Services Family Based program aims to offer children and families the following:

- Strengthen and maintain the family, both traditional and non-traditional
- Improve client coping skills, both child and family coping skills
- Educate, model and role-play for family members on how to better

care for their child/adolescent. Provide new and different alternatives that may not have been employed in the past.

- Serve as an advocate and activist when needed in the schools and in the community
- Establish the connections to other less intensive services that will provide ongoing support after our intensive individualized therapeutic program has serviced them.

Unity Family Services seeks to serve the families who are unwilling or unable to participate in traditional outpatient services. We seek to address the underlying issues and not just the symptoms of problems. We will adjust therapeutic services when indicated and will use an eclectic array of interventions to address the individual needs of the family. This takes seasoned skilled professionals with experience in psychiatric diagnosis and clinical therapies. Unity Family Services will employ only skilled professionals with experience in psychiatric diagnosis and clinical therapies.

Recognizing Depression in Teens

Many teenagers can experience an overwhelming amount of pressure and stress at school and home. Teenagers are often active on social media which can lead to increase of pressure to be "perfect" or feel the need to be accepted by peers. At any given time, individuals can be reached through social media accounts which does not allow for teenagers to disconnect from the social media atmosphere.

Since many of the stressors during teenage years have changed since the influence of social media, it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of depression in teenagers. Teenagers may express suicidal ideations, fatigue/tired, substance use, change in appetite or sleeping patterns, low self-esteem or body image, sadness, withdrawing from others and poor performance in a school setting.

It is important for adults to be aware of the presenting symptoms to be able to seek appropriate treatment such as counseling, becoming involved in extracurricular activities, becoming involved in the community as well as creating new friendships.



Trauma Informed Care

Unity Family Services seeks to follow a Trauma Informed Care model for all of our agency's treatment programs. At any level of care, a trauma informed approach is key to preventing re-traumatization and promoting positive change. This should be applied to each service level and at an organizational level.

What does it mean to be trauma informed?

According to SAMSHA, there are six key principles to Trauma Informed Care:

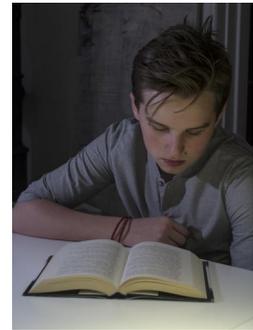
- 1) Safety – It is important for care settings to feel both physically and psychologically safe for individuals.
- 2) Trustworthiness – It is vital to be transparent in our relationships with our consumers. We need to build and maintain trust by being our genuine selves.

3) Peer Support – Mutual self-help can engender hope through the sharing of experiences.

4) Collaboration – It is beneficial to level the power between the provider and the consumer. The provider and consumer both bring their own unique expertise to the table.

5) Empowerment – Helping someone find their voice is one of the most important interventions for trauma survivors. Empowering them to make choices fosters resiliency.

6) Cultural Competency – It is important to monitor and assess for cultural, historical, gender, or other factors which may impact your work with a consumer.



Family-Based Program

Peer Support Services

Outpatient Services

Serving Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Indiana, and Westmoreland Counties

1001 S Leechburg Hill Road
Leechburg, PA 15656

118 Market Street
Kittanning, PA 16201

470 North 4th Street
Indiana, PA 15701

Phone: 724-845-2978
Toll Free: 1-866-771-4488

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