

Crisis Solutions Initiative Conference Held

The North Carolina Practice Improvement Collaborative sponsored a daylong conference on January 20, 2015. The conference, titled *The Future of Crisis Response in North Carolina*, was designed to continue the involvement of leaders from across the state in the DHHS Crisis Solutions Initiative. More than 160 participants, representing family members, state agencies, LME-MCOs, provider agencies and universities attended the event.

Leading state and national experts presented information about current and creative evidence-based and emerging best practices in the field of crisis response. They included:

David Covington, based in Arizona, has been on the forefront of the development of crisis services, from both provider and managed care organization roles. He is currently CEO and president of Recovery Innovations and is responsible for long-range planning, crisis services management, and systems design.

Mr. Covington presented twice. In *Not Another Life to Lose*, he laid out the bold ideas promoted by the national Zero Suicide campaign, and emphasized that suicide is preventable, even down to the last moment. In *The Time for Crisis is Now*, Mr. Covington spoke about the development of integrated comprehensive crisis systems that include a single point of entry for callers as well as a full array of services spanning a peer-operated warm line, crisis hot lines, mobile crisis teams, walk-in urgent care sites, and time-limited crisis stabilization and crisis residential services to limit the needs for acute hospitalization. He also addressed the benefits of using state-of-the-art technology, likening crisis response to air traffic control, for timely response to the individuals in crisis and for management of system resources.

Mary Smith, Executive Director of REAL Crisis Intervention, Inc., in Greenville, NC has worked in the field for nearly 40 years. She is responsible for the overall operations of a 24-hour agency that provides direct crisis counseling services via telephone and walk-in. Her presentation included statistics on her agency's crisis response telephone services. REAL Crisis Intervention answers calls for 1-800-SUI-CIDE and is the back-up for SAMHSA's lifeline (800-273-TALK) and the Veteran crisis line. Last year, they received 44,200 calls, with 77% of the calls from SAMHSA's lifeline and the Veterans crisis line. They are anticipating up to 61,000 calls this year. All calls are answered live, and they have a 94% answer rate after three rings, one of the highest in the country. In 2014, 287 of the calls required active intervention as the REAL staff contacted local police or rescue – throughout North Carolina and other states -- to prevent an individual from actual self-harm.

Larry Villano, Chief Operations Officer of Terros and the Clinic Operations Director for the Choices Network of Arizona, has directed an array of crisis services including a state-of-the-art call center, mobile crisis, rapid response, stabilization, and a developmental disabilities crisis team in Maricopa County, AZ. Based on experience, he provided tips for developing an integrated, culturally sensitive crisis response network that offered a continuum of services.

Becky Stoll, Vice President, Crisis and Disaster Management of Centerstone, is responsible for the overall operation of crisis services for 20 rural counties in central Tennessee. She also serves as faculty and board chair for the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and has provided response and training nationally and internationally to professional sports, aviation industry, educational institutions, banking industry, manufacturing industry, emergency responders and civic groups after disasters/traumatic events. She spoke of the Centerstone philosophy in developing crisis services and gave examples of the use of technology in remote call center and service locations. She also addressed the roles grants played in extending and enhancing their services.

Courtney Cantrell, Ph.D., director of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS), welcomed participants to the meeting.

Flo Stein, deputy director of the policy management section of MH/DD/SAS, provided an overview of the day's sessions.

DHHS Secretary Aldona Wos, M.D., highlighted several advancements underway in North Carolina to benefit people in need of mental health services. She noted that in the past year 213 certified instructors in Mental Health First Aid have trained more than 8,000 people to recognize early signs of crisis and help those in need to find services. Wos shared the vision that is being used to meet what she described as "one of the most important health issues that our state – and our country – face for the next decade. The vision includes:

- Eliminating stigma
- Embracing the use of technology to its fullest extent
- Promoting community-based services at the time and place care is needed
- Providing inpatient care as close to home as possible, combined with appropriate transitional services
- Supporting the recovery model for all people with mental illness.

Secretary Wos also mentioned the support of the State in the process of expanding the array of crisis prevention and intervention services.

Crystal Farrow, Project Manager of the Crisis Solutions Initiative, announced the first cohort of LME-MCOs to receive Crisis Solutions Initiative awards.

Each project will receive \$998,458 for the 2014-2015 fiscal year and \$998,458 for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. The funding is a combination of federal block grants and state appropriations.

These projects were selected due to the comprehensive planning and contributions from the LME-MCOs, the providers, and other community stakeholders. Each is expected to make a significant positive impact on reducing the need for individuals in behavioral health crisis to need emergency department and inpatient care.

- **Smoky Mountain Center**, with RHA Behavioral Health, will develop a 24-hour Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center to serve adults and children, and a co-located 16-bed crisis unit for adults. An array of outpatient services and other community supports will also be provided in a comprehensive care center in Asheville.
- **CenterPoint Human Services**, with Monarch, will develop a 24-hour Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center for adults and children, and a co-located 16-bed crisis unit for adults in Winston-Salem.
- **Eastpointe**, with Monarch, will renovate and expand an existing 11-bed facility - adding five beds while increasing safety and security measures for adults, and develop a co-located Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center in Lumberton.
- **Cardinal Innovations Healthcare Solutions**, with Monarch, will develop the state's first 16-bed crisis facility for children and adolescents in Charlotte.

The PowerPoint presentations and videotapes will be available on the NC Practice Improvement Collaborative website at <http://www.ncpic.net/category/meetings/>.

Additional information is available at:

2015 NC Suicide Prevention Plan

<http://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/preventionResources/Suicide.htm>

REAL Crisis Intervention

<http://realcrisis.org/>

Zero Suicide/National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

<http://zerosuicide.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/>