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Coping with the Pandemic

By Gene Schadler, L.C.S.W., Superintendent

This past fourteen months has been a challenging year for people as we all, at some level, have been impacted with loss and shifting communal experiences. COVID-19 impacted the world with shutdowns, ongoing changing procedures, and maintaining safe environments. All psychiatric hospitals deal with the physical, emotional, and social challenges as we treat individuals experiencing serious mental illness. Adding the layer of COVID-19 onto these challenges was overwhelming but highlighted the importance of a team approach that involved all employees. The ESH team this past year was flexible with changing protocols, ongoing masking/hand hygiene, and shifting programming to serve our patient population. This work is ongoing as we continue to shift into phases of reaching normalcy. Just as our staff had the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in the community, our patients received education and the opportunity to get vaccinated at Evansville State Hospital in February and March 2021 with close to 80 patients receiving the COVID-19

vaccine. Special thanks to St. Vincent's for their collaboration with our patient vaccination process.

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Hearing our patients and staff verbalize the relief experienced by having the vaccine illustrates the fear that has gripped our communities. Healthcare workers nationwide have verbalized their concerns related to fear of the unknown, getting sick or bringing the virus home. The importance of communication, feeling heard and having some experience of control with our environment is important for all of us when dealing with stressful/traumatic situations.



This illustrates what our population have been coping with for hundreds of years as they cope with mental illness i.e. dealing with stress and fears, feeling isolated from society, the need to feel heard and need of control over their lives. As we continue coping with the pandemic our system embraces being trauma informed which helps us meet people where they are as we support their efforts towards recovery.

A special thanks to Alan L. Inkenbrandt, FSSA Graphic Artist, for help with the updated newsletter look!



Evansville State Hospital is a public behavioral health facility operated by the state of Indiana and one of six state psychiatric hospitals within the Family and Social Services Administration Division of Mental Health and Addiction.



Trauma Informed Care

90% of individuals using public mental health & addiction services have a history of trauma

Trauma is defined as a deeply distressing or disturbing experience. These experiences may include accidents, disasters, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, harassment, bullying, frightening medical treatment, or being a witness or victim of violence or criminal activity.

Knowing that our patients have trauma history results in care being given with sensitivity as individuals are more than likely to have anxiety, agitation, irritability, rage, flashbacks, numb emotions, reduced interest, depression, insomnia, compulsive behaviors, and/or substance abuse. Non-violent communication skills are taught and utilized daily to help defuse potential adverse behaviors.

Hospital policies and guidelines are written to provide the best personalized care and treatment given a patient's trauma history. An example of this starts with the screening process upon admission to identify past trauma

experiences. Patients are involved in the development of their treatment plans through their input into preferences of treatment choices including what tools and methods to use to help control behavior if necessary. Family input is also requested to assist the treatment team in the identification of specific treatment methods. Patients are empowered to heal and progress in their treatment goals.

Integrated hospital and departmental committees are focused on safety from all aspects of care (physical environment, psychology, medical, etc.). An example of safety awareness would be the hospital's upgrade of furniture and door hardware to prevent accidental or intentional harm. Providing a safe environment involves high reliability standards with staff always being aware of potential dangers.

Peer Support Benefits

"Essential to recovery is having at least one hope inspiring relationship; a person that will stand by and believe in you, even when you can't believe in yourself." Dr. William Anthony, Founder of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

Two full-time peer specialist positions at ESH are dedicated to the concept of support where patients can talk with someone with similar experiences. Research has shown that peer support has been beneficial in improving psychotic symptoms, social functioning, and self-esteem as well as decreasing hospital stays.

understanding, and validation. The peer connection provides a trustworthy equal and has been found to be less intimidating than a professional relationship. It is important to note that peer specialists do not take the place of licensed therapists but complement the roles of these therapists and other treatment team members. Their role involves helping to guide patients towards personal goals, empowering them to regain control of their lives boosting their confidence.

Early Warning Signs, When Things Are Breaking Down, Crisis Plan. Peer specialists help individuals work



on developing a support network identifying at least five supportive individuals in their life who they can reach out to such as family members, friends, therapists, clinicians, and care providers. Building a strong support system might also come from involvement in civic, church, and special interest groups, local support groups, community events, and volunteerism. Mutually supportive relationships are stressed with peer support topics that cover communication skills, healthy boundaries, and advocacy.

Support by others can have a significant impact on an individual's overall well-being.

Talking and sharing with others who have the same illness or experiences can be very powerful. This connection can provide hope, insight, and growth. Peer specialists provide a level of acceptance,

Peer specialists at ESH are involved in individual and group programming related to the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). Participants in WRAP programs write their personalized plan in five main sections: Daily Maintenance List, Personal Triggers,

Commencement Speech Has Impact Here

“The key to being successful and changing the world, however, is to keep getting back up.”

Admiral William H. McRaven

Robert Jenkins, Transitional Care Specialist, ran across the YouTube video of the 2014 commencement speech by Admiral William H. McRaven to University of Texas graduates. Robert felt the short simple message of “making your bed” each morning could help inspire and build motivation with participants in his Transitions Class at ESH. The wise words of the Admiral involved starting each day by completing one simple task. The message was empowering, of how one accomplishment can give momentum to do other tasks and hopefully build upon a productive day.

After viewing the brief video clip of the commencement speech with his class, Robert elaborated on several main lessons –acknowledging a sense of pride in small achievements, finding strength in numbers as you work with a team to succeed, embracing challenges and opportunities for growth, and having hope for a better tomorrow to motivate you to never give up. He has further included these main lessons in a short PowerPoint presentation which was used in staff trainings in March. Kudos to Robert for spreading Admiral McRaven’s inspiring message to both patients and staff.

Grounds Project

Summer project involves installing new drainage

Thanks to an investment from the Indiana Department of Public Works, the Evansville State Hospital grounds are getting some much-needed improvements. These improvement projects will help to ensure that our grounds remain safe and accessible to patients, staff, emergency vehicles, and community members. It is important to note that this funding source is separate from our hospital budget.

One project, now in its first phase, involves the Lincoln Lake and Main Lake. Due to years of erosion the lake banks have become unstable causing trees along the banks to die and fall into the lakes. A company has been hired by DPW to grade the lake banks to a 3:1 ratio and install riprap rock to ensure their stability over time. Due to their condition, seven trees had to be removed from the east bank of the

Main Lake. We are entertaining completing the west bank of the Main Lake at a later time. The second phase will involve improvements to the East Lake where riprap rock will be installed for safety along those banks. We are also working to make needed improvements to the deteriorating Veterans Memorial as part of this project.

Another project, slated to begin this summer, involves installing new drainpipe from the Northwest corner of the road that runs behind the ballfield to the Main Lake. This road has flooded for decades due to collapsed drainpipes that date back to our original hospital. This



The beginning phases of the Grounds project included installing riprap rock around the main lake.

improvement will see additional ground drains installed and may impact road travel in the area. Emails and community correspondence will be sent out as those road closures become a reality.

Article written by Jeff Wedding, Director of Operations



Mental Health Awareness

May is devoted to focusing on the importance of mental health

Mental health is essential to one’s overall health and wellness. Everyone can agree that the pandemic over the past year has impacted our lives in one way or another. Many have reported experiencing loneliness and isolation. Some are also hindered with financial hardships and much insecurity regarding their livelihood. Boosting one’s mental health and self-care should be on everyone’s radar each day. Here are a few helpful tips to improve your mental health.

- Do something that you enjoy, or you are good at.
- Connect with family and friends even if it is a quick phone call.
- Be creative such as work on a craft or try a new recipe.
- Practice forgiveness
- Keep a journal of things you have accomplished and are grateful for.
- Exercise at least three times a week for 30 minutes—a walk outside enjoying nature can clear your head.



Mental Health America’s 2021 Report (www.mha.com)

- *Over 47 million Americans (19%) experience a mental illness.*
- *57% of adults with a mental illness receive no treatment. More than 26 million individuals experiencing a mental illness are going untreated.*
- *86% of people who did not receive treatment were covered by health insurance indicating that ensuring coverage is not the same as ensuring access to care.*
- *Physical and social environment changes related to the pandemic have led to increased rates of isolation, loneliness, financial hardship, house and food insecurity, and interpersonal violence.*

In Memory

We remember our former employees, volunteers, donors, and friends:

- Sybil Angel*
- Helen Ashby*
- Virginia Below*
- Brenda Bergwitz*
- Marilyn Bosma*
- Elaine Briles*
- Charles Burggrabe*
- Patricia Burggrabe*
- Linda Chandler*
- Sammie Coplea*
- Andrea Davis*
- George Dearing*
- Daniel Dickens*
- Glen Ennulat*
- Bertha Evans*
- Shirley Hadley*
- Joyce Harwell*
- Brian Hayes*
- Jeanne Heatherly*
- Virginia Heller*
- Oscar Jones*
- Stella Laffoon*
- Janet Sue Long*
- Catherine Moyer*
- Ray Pritchett*
- Marcella Steinkuhl*
- Georgia Stover*
- Cherrel Underwood*
- Linda Wagner*
- John Wilcox, Jr.*
- Chuck Woods*

New Employees

- Katrina Evans, Nursing Service*
- Candace Green, Nursing Service*
- Jeremy Fairrow, Housekeeping*
- Kristopher McCormick, Physical Plant*
- Shayne Gonzalez, Continuum of Care*

Goodbye

- Jessica Brown, Nursing Service*
- Krista Fleming, Nursing Service*
- Ashley Mabrey, Housekeeping*

Hospital Needs

- Sally Beauty gift cards*
- Medium sized duffel bags*
- Cloth ear loop masks*
- Stationery sets*
- Contact Theresa at 812-469-6800, ext. 4972 if you can help!*