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Greater Nashua Mental Health celebrates enhanced access to client care

The community spoke and we listened. We heard that wait times for getting in to see a behavioral health professional were simply too long. When a person makes the difficult decision to seek treatment for a mental health and/or a substance use disorder, time is of the essence. Waiting too long for an appointment is stressful and can cause the situation to worsen. Wait times for a first-time appointment have been as long as six to 12 weeks in the past. When you have this long of a delay, it's not uncommon for many clients to have possibly forgotten, moved on, or worse, have given up on getting help and so may not keep the appointment. This not only creates a bad outcome for the client, but also results in lost productive time for our clinicians as well. With

the current workforce shortage in New Hampshire, it's important that we maximize all of the available resources for both clients and providers.

Greater Nashua Mental Health (GNMH) created an innovative solution to this challenge. This September marks the one-year anniversary of the launching of our Open Access Walk-In Services, where new clients can simply walk in our doors at 440 Amherst St. in Nashua, on Monday through Thursday mornings, from 8-11:30 a.m. and be seen by a Behavioral Health Professional that morning. After receiving an evaluation and visiting with a Benefits Specialist, clients for whom our services are appropriate leave with a future appointment with the provider who best meets their needs, a plan in place for going forward, and

with the peace of mind of knowing that they are on the path to a better life. We have a large array of programs and services for mental health and/or substance use disorders, and now provide integrated primary (physical) health care services as well. Our clients have access to many programs, services and supports, both in the office and out in the community, including the schools.

Since its inception, the number of new clients per day went from two to an average of seven a day, translating to more than a 250% increase. This is a major accomplishment because our clients are receiving timely access to care when it is most critical. In addition, this process has resulted in a meaningful increase in services provided for our staff. GNMH is proud to offer our Open Access

service to new clients and encourages those looking for help to visit us during our Walk-In hours. Our services are available for individuals and families of all ages throughout the life cycle.

We believe that the Open Access Walk-In Services are delivering just what the community asked for and needed, assisting us in fulfilling our mission: empowering people to lead full and productive lives through effective treatment and support.

If you'd like to find out more about Open Access or any of our programs, call 603-889-6147, or visit www.gnmh.org. We also have a 24/7 emergency line at 1-800-762-8191. Partial funding for this program came from the Region 3 Integrated Delivery Network, sponsored by the NH Dept. of Health and Human Services.