

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Minot Human Service Center opens access to behavioral health assessments; no appointments needed

BISMARCK, N.D. – For people reaching out for help because of addiction or a mental health need, having to wait for care can delay recovery.

Last month, the North Dakota Department of Human Services' North Central Human Service Center (NCHSC) in Minot became the latest regional center to increase access to needed behavioral health services by offering assessments without appointments.

The center holds Open Access behavioral health assessments Mondays through Thursdays, between 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., Central Time. During Open Access times, residents of the seven-county region can walk into the center at 1015 S. Broadway in Minot and receive an assessment that morning.

In January, 155 people went to the center during Open Access hours. About 41 percent sought mental health services and 37 percent sought addiction-related services. Six percent came in for psychiatric medication management services, and center staff connected almost ten percent to emergency behavioral health services. The remaining six percent were connected to services for people diagnosed with both mental health and addiction needs.

Center director Laurie Gotvaslee said staff provided behavioral health assessment services to 84 individuals, and referred 19 people to private behavioral health service providers in the community because those individuals had the ability to access other community resources. The remaining individuals received other services and supports.

"The reaction from people has been very positive because they know they will be seen," Gotvaslee said.

She said the center has the ability to assess about 12 people during designated Open Access hours. Each assessment takes about an hour, and individuals who have the highest need, such as a pregnant woman seeking an addiction evaluation, receive priority.

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Prior to implementing Open Access, new clients with non-emergency behavioral health needs waited four to six weeks for assessments at the Minot regional human service center.

Commenting on the change in the behavioral health clinic's operations, the department's Chief Clinics Officer, clinical psychologist Rosalie Etherington said, "Our goal is prompt access to behavioral health assessments and follow-up services. We started addressing access issues last year when all eight regional human service centers began providing walk-in addiction assessments on designated weekdays. This expands Open Access to mental health assessments."

Etherington and Gotvaslee said Open Access can help prevent crises, reduce missed appointments, and allow staff to connect with new clients more quickly when clients are motivated and actively seeking help.

Etherington said the department's goal is to provide Open Access for mental health assessments statewide by June 30, 2017.

Northwest Human Service Center in Williston launched Open Access assessments last fall.

People seeking services at NCHSC in Minot can call the center at 701-857-8500, TTY 701-857-8666, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or they can go to the center in the Town and Country Shopping Center for assessments during Open Access hours.

Fees for some services are adjusted for income, ability to pay, and the number of household members. Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance are accepted.

NCHSC employs about 140 people and serves residents of Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville, and Ward counties. Services include community-based behavioral health services, program management for people with developmental disabilities, aging services, and other services.

Center information is online at

www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/regionalhsc/northcentral/index.html.

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