

Mental Health Matters

Guarding our mental health is just as important as our physical health. Our family history and biology, life experiences, personality, and lifestyle all contribute to the level of our physical and mental health. However, we are less comfortable talking about mental health compared to physical health. For example, if a physical health screen comes back positive, we seek treatment and talk to others about it. Sadly, less than half of all people who experience mental health problems in a given year seek treatment. Most do not get a mental health screen, understand the signs or symptoms, or openly talk to friends and family about it. Many people do not know how to seek help and that treatment is available.

Mental health problems are common and highly treatable. Mental health problems occur when a child or adult has thoughts, feelings, and actions that interfere with his or her ability to attend school or work, have satisfying relationships, and carry out everyday activities. Just like for physical health conditions like diabetes or heart disease, mental health conditions include a range of symptoms and the impact on functioning varies from one person to the next. Look for significant changes in energy levels, sleeping and eating patterns; confused thinking or speech; excessive fear, worry and guilt; trouble in getting along with others; and exposure to traumatic events. Pay attention to warning signs like feeling sad or down; alcohol/drug use; talking or thinking about suicide, any self-harm behavior; withdrawal from family and friends; acts of violence; excessive anger and dramatic mood changes. Physical symptoms like unexplained pain, headaches, and stomach pain may be related to mental health conditions.

Thankfully, a variety of effective and affordable treatment and supportive services are available in our community to address mental health problems. Seek professional help right away if warning signs and any suicidal thoughts or actions are present. Call the National Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 or Text "GO" to 741741. Treatment options include talk therapy, medications, lifestyle changes, support groups and self-help strategies. Don't go it alone! Talk to a trusted person, faith leader, or doctor about your concerns whenever signs are present. Listen closely when loved ones share symptoms and encourage professional help. Most people wait 10 or more years to seek help from when they first experience symptoms. Don't wait! Your mental health matters. Get help today and take an anonymous online screening by visiting www.mhsc.org.

Many public and private counseling and supportive services are available. The role of the Mental Health & Recovery Board is to plan, fund, and monitor a local system of care for mental illness and addiction. Twelve staff members work for the 18-member Mental Health & Recovery Board. The Board contracts with twenty partner agencies across Clark, Greene and Madison County, who provide valuable prevention, treatment services, and supportive services.

Dr. Greta Mayer is the CEO of the Mental Health & Recovery Board. Call 937-322-0648 for more information.