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## Mental health help via technology

Arthur Hahn Oct 25, 2014

For a year now, Washington County residents with no health care insurance and strained financial resources have been receiving mental health help through an innovative program.

The program, operated through the Washington County/Faith Mission Health & Service Center and the Telehealth Counseling Clinic (TCC), will host a one year anniversary celebration of their partnership Thursday from 3-4:30 p.m. at 100 S. Chappell Hill St.

The service offers access to counseling services for indigent and low-income people. It is operated under the administration of the Department of Educational Psychology and the Department of Health Promotion and Community Health Sciences at Texas A&M University.



The Washington County/Faith Mission Health & Service Center and TCC partnership evolved through TCC's participation in the Texas Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program, which funds innovative projects focused on improving the delivery of health services.

With support from the state, TCC was able to expand its services to communities who have limited access to mental health counseling.

Washington County and Faith Mission have provided facility space, staffing support and “connectivity” to a digital network that supports the telehealth connection while TCC utilizes project funding to support equipment and personnel costs.

Doctoral students in the counseling psychology program, supervised by licensed psychologists, provide counseling to individuals at the Washington Health and Services Center using high-quality videoconference technology.

Counseling services are provided to individuals and couples, adolescents (age 13 and above) and adults in English or Spanish.

Additional services such as outreach, workshops, and individual assessments are available on a case by case basis. In the last year, more than 1,000 counseling sessions were provided to rural residents.

Dr. Carly McCord, TCC’s clinic director, said sessions are conducted using teleconferencing equipment.

“There’s a big screen TV there, there’s a big screen TV here (at A&M),” McCord said. “It’s super-confidential.”

“We see everything from relationship concerns to PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Our students are advanced in their training, so they can pretty much see anything.”

The service is limited to counseling only; no medications are prescribed, she stressed.

All services are free.

“We’re generally serving folks with no insurance or limited financial resources,” said McCord. “We’ve continued to grow every month we’ve been out there, as more people find out about us.”

Appointments are necessary and can be made by calling (979) 436-0700.

The first tele-counseling operation opened in 2009 in Centerville. In the last year, it has expanded into Washington and Grimes counties.

Thursday’s program will include keynote speaker Melissa Rowan, the health care policy director at the Texas Counsel of Community Centers.

The public is encouraged to attend the event, tour the facility, and meet Dr. Timothy R. Elliott, TCC executive director; and McCord, Clinic Director of the TCC, to learn more about the counseling services offered.

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