

The Telegraph

\$10 million federal grant supports mental health

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NASHUA — The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services will receive a \$10 million federal grant to support ProHealth NH, a program which endeavors to improve the health and wellness of young people suffering from severe mental illnesses and emotional disturbances.

The Greater Nashua Mental Health Center is one of three community mental health centers participating.

“Folks that have serious mental illness die, on average, 25 years earlier than the general population, and that’s typically because one, they identify their symptoms, usually, far to late in the process,” Greater Nashua Mental Health Center President and CEO Craig Amoth said. *“Then what happens is when the mental illness kicks in, there’s a tendency to ignore fiscal health care needs.”*

Those needs would then include obesity, diabetes and things of that nature.

“So, when you combine the two things together, if not identified and treated early, we end up with some pretty tragic results,” Amoth said.

The program is geared to those between the ages of 16 and 35. According to a release from the state DHHS, the project includes workforce training and consultation, whole health education, individual and family support, referrals and data collection and evaluation with the goal of integrating services to improve and prevent future health conditions.

ProHealth NH expects 1,100 residents to enroll in the program. With this targeted age group being the population where onset of mental illness is often seen, such as psychosis or bipolar, the idea is to find a way to identify those people early on in order to mitigate early illness and treat the individual.

“Physical health and mental health are too often treated in isolation,” DHHS Commissioner Jeffrey Meyers said. *“This grant will enable the department and its community partners to expand on this work and improve mental and physical health outcomes for young people with mental health issues.”*

Amoth said officials are partnering with Lamprey Health Center. They were not funded in the initial round, but were funded in the second round. The two entities partnered last year to set up an integrated health program, but that one focused primarily on adults, whereas this grant allows them to now focus on the younger part of the population with earlier identification and treatment.

“It’s going to allow us to bring on additional staff and allow us to expand both the services for the primary care,” Amoth said. *“So, we’ll be offering additional hours to be able to extend that and take an additional number of patients and clients, and also allow us to bring on additional support in terms of therapists and health mentors.”*

He said it will also allow them to purchase things to aid health mentors that work with young adults on healthy lifestyles and those types of things. He said the start date for the program is Sept. 30, and that they now have 90 days to get things going.

“We don’t see any barrier to meeting that 90-day startup time,” Amoth said.

“This grant will enable us to build upon the important work we began last year within the mental health system,” Gov. Chris Sununu added via news release. “Aligning physical health and mental health services makes perfect sense, and working with our largest mental health and community health partners to create a system of care will bring critical services to a greater number of young people, whose futures depend on them.”

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