

Family Crisis Support Service

Progress report

(For period March 2006-February 2007)

Community Healthlink's Family Crisis Support service was introduced in March 2006 to help ease the anxiety, stress and trauma that frequently occur when a child or teen is brought to the hospital emergency with a mental health crisis.

During the past 12 months this service has proven its usefulness and effectiveness time and again. Healthlink has trained three "on-call" crisis support workers (two counselors and one parent-advocate) who are available to meet and comfort families upon, or shortly after, their arrival at HealthAlliance Hospital in Leominster.

Since last March our family crisis support workers have brought aid and comfort to 222 North Central Massachusetts families.

A profile of the encounters reveals the following:

- 124 families were seen between 3:00 and 11:00 p.m.
- 98 families were seen after 11:00 p.m. and before 3:00 p.m.
- 56.5% of the clients were male
- 43.5% were female
- 65.6% were teens (13-17 years of age)
- 11.7% were 10 to 12 years of age
- 22.7% were under the age of 10

The youngest clients (3) were only 4 years of age.

The greatest number of emergencies to occur during a one-week period was 12 (week of November 19). The greatest number of emergencies in a one-month period occurred in February 2007 (32) and May 2006 (31). Family crisis support workers responded to a monthly average of 18.5 emergencies.

Based upon evaluations collected from 26 families, satisfaction with the service provided by Healthlink's crisis support service was very favorable.

- When asked if they were satisfied with the emergency service provided to their child, only one was unsure, while 15 were satisfied and 10 were extremely satisfied.
- When asked if the support experience was helpful to parents in addressing their child's mental health needs, 17 said they were satisfied and 9 were extremely satisfied.
- When asked if the support worker provided them with useful and relevant information, 15 said they were satisfied and 11 were extremely satisfied.
- And when parents were asked if the support worker cared for/attended to the family's needs, 50% were satisfied and 50% were extremely satisfied.

Specific comments from parents included the following:

- “The crisis worker was very helpful in obtaining information from nurses. The overall process (assessment and evaluation) could be quicker, however the support was fantastic!”
- “I was not aware of this service prior to this incident. This proved to be a great benefit to our situation.”
- “We have been to EMH (emergency mental health) many times. With the family crisis support worker, the stay was not as stressful. I felt that someone was there interested in supporting family members and not just the patient. Thank you! Please continue this program.”
- “The crisis worker was extremely helpful with our 14 year-old daughter. He brought his computer in and played games with her to put her in a positive, engaged mood.”