



May is Mental Health Month

Awareness, Prevention and Early Intervention are the Keys to a Mentally Well Community

By: Scott Burgess, CEO

David Lawrence Center

News of a Stage 4 cancer diagnosis can of course be earthshattering.

Our goal is to get everyone screened early and aware of the state of their “mental” health so that any issues may be dealt with before they reach that critical Stage 4. “B4Stage4” is the official theme of this May’s National Mental Health Month, so declared some 66 years ago by our partner Mental Health America (MHA).

We need to address mental illness symptoms early on, much as we do for cancer or other bodily diseases. We would not think of waiting years to seek treatment for a heart condition or diabetes and certainly not cancer. Mental health concerns should be addressed no differently than any physical health concerns. They need to be given the same priority and sense of urgency.

Once a person has reached Stage 4 on the mental illness spectrum, the symptoms are both severe and persistent. They are definitely impairing the person’s life and possibly resulting in hospitalization, the development of other illnesses, substance abuse issues, job loss, homelessness, incarceration and/or contemplation of suicide.

Shockingly, about 50 percent of all Americans will meet the criteria for having a diagnosable mental health disorder at some point in their lifetime according to MHA, and in half of those cases, the disorder first presents itself before a youngster turns 14 – yet many people do not seek treatment in the early stages of mental illness. Research shows that by ignoring mental health symptoms, we lose ten years to intervene in order to change people’s lives for the better. During these years, individuals

are suffering, the lucky ones have —home, family, friends, school, and work to help survive and “get by”. Intervening effectively during early stages of mental illness can save lives, change life trajectories and allow individuals to not only survive, but thrive.

One of the easiest and quickest ways to recognize the symptoms is to take a mental health screening. And this is where David Lawrence Center (DLC) can help.

We are utilizing the Mental Health Month platform to remind the community that our free, brief screenings are available on a walk-in basis at DLC year around, not just during May. We encourage anyone in need to simply visit our Admission Services to receive a free, brief screening during which you will be evaluated by a highly skilled behavioral health professional. The screening will determine if it is necessary to go further with a referral for a clinical assessment or follow up treatment for depression, ADD/ADHD, anxiety, bipolar, substance abuse, behavior problems, adjustment challenges, etc.

It is almost unimaginable in this day and age that we would be able to be seen by a healthcare professional on the very same day we feel the need for help. But our innovative, centralized admissions model allows you to receive a same day screening with no appointment necessary. This initial screening is available on a walk-in basis during normal business hours and in the evenings through our Emergency Services.

We are proud of the exceptional experience people report of our assessment and intake process. Client satisfaction surveys score us at 95 percent for easy access and the quality of our admissions team. Reports indicate staff provide great customer service and are consistently rated as highly compassionate and knowledgeable.

During this special month, we remind you that good mental health strengthens our ability to cope with everyday hassles as well as the more serious crises situations and challenges, and it is essential for creating the life we wish to lead.

We believe that good mental health is one of our greatest assets. It helps us in so many ways – with family and friends, work or school and with life in general.

David Lawrence Center is dedicated to maintaining the mental wellness of our community, and we are committed to restoring and rebuilding lives. We deliver comprehensive inpatient, outpatient,

residential and community based prevention and treatment services for the one-in-four local children and adults who may experience mental health, emotional, psychological and substance abuse challenges at any time. With our seven Collier County locations, we touch the lives of more than 50,000 people each year.

To learn more about us, please visit www.DavidLawrenceCenter.org. To take advantage of the free mental health screening for yourself or someone you love, just stop by 6075 Bathey Lane, Building B-1. If you would rather call ahead to find out the best time to come in on a given day, call 239-455-8500.

Again, it is all about awareness and early identification, and that is why we offer the screenings. Our hope is that by addressing symptoms early, thus staving off that Stage 4 mental illness diagnosis, life-changing wellness will be achieved and enjoyed.

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