



Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services

MINDFUL MATTERS

From Prison to Purpose

The bridge that leads to successful community integration.

Ashley Orr heads toward the lobby of the Clermont Recovery Center in Batavia. She's meeting clients who are arriving for a group therapy session. Ashley is one of just four people on the TASC team at Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services. TASC stands for Treatment Alternatives for Safer Communities and has been a part of our Clermont County services since 2012. Funded by a yearly grant from Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services, TASC serves an average of 225 clients at any given time. A majority of the clients are on felony probation or parole – most for drug offenses.

The TASC program is based upon a circle of support with comprehensive services. Clients initially have weekly individual sessions with their counselor and group therapy twice a week. The program length varies because it is based upon progress. The goal is to help the client in any way necessary to avoid a relapse.

What makes TASC unique is the relationship that develops between the client and the TASC counselors. Says team member Jennifer Savage, "They don't necessarily *want* to be here, but tell us that they appreciate the fact that we treat them with respect."



TASC Team Leader Michael Jones (far left), meets with Counselors Jennifer Savage, Jack Helvey, and Ashley Orr.

The TASC team leader is Michael Jones. He is very proud of his team and knows how important and difficult their work is. "Addiction is a potentially fatal illness," says Mike. "One more relapse and that can be it. Every member of my team does a great job of building a therapeutic and caring relationship with their clients. In some cases they are the only anchor they have. Many have burned all of their bridges."

And the proof of success is there. In the first six months of 2019, only one of the 47 clients who went through the program ended up in prison. According to Sharon, who is attending Ashley's group therapy session, "TASC has saved my life. It's the first time I have been clean in over 35 years."



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- Sharon, TASC Client

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Kim works on paperwork with Michael to secure the housing that he needs.

Behind the Scenes

HEROES

Almost one third of Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services employees are care managers (sometimes called case managers). But what exactly does a care manager do? In the following on-going series, we'll examine the work of care management, its role at GCBHS, and the truly amazing staff who are in the trenches day after day.

It's first thing in the morning and Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services Care Manager Kim Kendall is preparing for her first client of the day. Kim adds four new clients to her case load every week. She's part of the GCBHS Housing Support Team which works with people who are homeless and in need of mental health services. The service is typically meant to be short-term. The team hopes to connect clients with housing and address immediate issues. Once their situation is more stabilized, the client can continue to receive services from another GCBHS Care Management Team depending on their particular needs.

On this morning Kim is meeting Richard for the first time. Richard is likely experiencing schizophrenia. He was admitted to the hospital after hearing voices that told him to kill himself. Currently on medication, Richard would like to find a place to live. On this first visit, Kim gets to know him. She finds out he has no family in the area, and he needs a phone. He has access to his disability benefits but no transportation. And he needs a primary care physician that will take his insurance so he can get his medicine.

There's a lot of paperwork requirements involved with getting Richard the help he needs. They also go over a treatment plan and discuss when they will meet next. Richard has a difficult time remembering things so Kim helps him write it down. It's obvious he is touched by her caring nature. He says, "Kim, you're doing a

great job." Before he leaves she makes sure he has a card which tells him who to call and what to do if he's "not feeling like himself." Says Kim, "With so many people needing help, we have to tackle the most pressing issues. Typically it's housing but with Richard, we also have to make sure he gets his medication so he won't harm himself." Richard promises Kim he'll see her next week.

Before her next client comes in, she gets an emergency phone call. It's a client who has had a setback and is drinking. He's incredibly upset and tells her what a failure he is. Kim is calm and understanding. He tells her that everything he owns is in two garbage bags. "Are you safe," she asks? "Yes," he says. Then she says something he needs to hear, "Relapsing is part of your journey and your recovery. Don't negate all of the hard work you've been doing because of this." He begins to calm down and Kim asks him what he wants to do. She listens and tells him, "This is just one day in your life story. It's okay." He begins sobbing and thanks her profusely.

It's time to see her next client, Michael. This is the first time Kim has met Michael, who seems upbeat and friendly but he's been through a lot physically. A professional painter by trade, he suffered a heart attack and a stroke which left him in a coma. After coming to, he was without a business or a house. He has speech limitations which is frustrating for him. He knows the word he wants but it won't come. He's also dealing with partial paralysis of his hands and toes.

TOP WORK PLACES

SINCE 2010



“You wouldn’t believe how that outstanding bill can mess people up for future housing” says Kim. “I have a client we can’t get housing for because she forgot to take the utilities out of her name and someone racked up over \$15,000 in bills. How is she ever going to pay that?”

Michael is here with one mission in mind – he wants his own place and he has an application for a housing program. He’s excited until he finds out how long the waiting list is. (This is a recurring issue for people in need of housing.)

If Michael can get into the program, he will only pay 30% of the rent, which is important for someone living on social security disability (approximately \$750 a month or less). And it’s not just the waiting list; Michael also has a list of steps to do before he can even *submit* his application.

Michael is also out of his high blood pressure medicine, so Kim goes with him to pick up his prescription. It’s just part of the job. Care managers help people navigate the system. Says Kim, “When I started a year ago, it was a lot to learn. Where do you go for this certificate? Where are they located? What are the hours? Community resources change their procedures and if you don’t know that, it’s more time lost for you and the client, who doesn’t have time to waste. If *I’m* having trouble, can you imagine how difficult it is for someone who is homeless and without a car, has a mental illness and possibly other health issues?”

Kim takes Michael to the Justice Center for a background check and then to Job & Family Services for a printout of Michael’s benefits. It’s all part of the paperwork he needs for his application. Unfortunately that’s all they have time for, since Kim has other clients to assist that day. She encourages Michael to work on the additional items before they meet next week, but if not, Kim will accompany him to Social Security for proof of income, and verify he doesn’t have any outstanding utility bills. “You wouldn’t believe how that outstanding bill can mess people up for future housing,” says Kim. “I have a client we can’t get housing for, because she forgot to take the utilities out of her name and someone racked up over \$15,000 in bills. How is she ever going to pay that?”

They get back to Shelterhouse (where Michael is staying). She tells him to go grab lunch and she’ll see him next week. Then she sits down at her table, checks her next appointment and she says, “Care managers have the honor of helping people through what is the most difficult time of their life. Most have dealt with abuse or major trauma. Every story breaks my heart.”



10 years in a row!

GCBHS has been awarded Top Workplace for the 10th year in a row by The Cincinnati Enquirer. The award is based solely on employee feedback gathered through an anonymous, comprehensive third-party survey. Staff ranked the organization high in a number of areas, including flexibility to balance work and personal lives.

Management ranked high for organizational efficiency, strong values and ethics, and their frequent recognition of the high quality work done by staff.

Claudia Phillips, a Diagnostician/Clinician, recently celebrated 40 years with GCBHS. Of her longevity she says, “I know I would never have lasted here this long if I didn’t like what I do and if I didn’t trust the agency I work for. I believe GCBHS looks for ways to keep up with needed changes and are also honest and fair with their staff.”

Thank you to our hard working and dedicated staff!

Pictured above are GCBHS CEO Jeff O’Neil, with Community Supports Manager Torri Cook, and Director of Employment & Recovery Services, Kelly Smith-Trondle.

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Did you know that Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health offers an Employee Assistance Program for small & medium companies in the Greater Cincinnati Area?

Our qualified, licensed counselors can provide short term counseling, referral and follow up for individuals who are experiencing overwhelming stress or other mental health issues at home or in the workplace.

Caring about your employees' mental well-being can improve your company's overall productivity.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

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