

NORTHWEST IOWA CARE
CONNECTIONS
MENTAL HEALTH & DISABILITY SERVICES

FY 20 ANNUAL REPORT



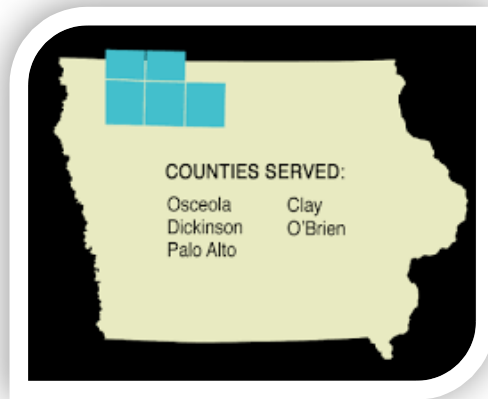
Authored by: Melissa Loehr, CEO

SUBMITTED
12/01/2020

GEOGRAPHIC AREA: *Clay, Dickinson, O'Brien, Osceola, and Palo Alto Counties*
APPROVED BY ADVISORY BOARD: 11.24.2020
APPROVED BY GOVERNING BOARD: 11.24.2020

NORTHWEST IOWA CARE CONNECTIONS

MENTAL HEALTH & DISABILITY SERVICES



Mission:

Northwest Iowa Care Connections Exists to support improved behavioral healthcare through local resources to promote full citizenship for people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.

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Introduction

Northwest Iowa Care Connection Mental Health and Disability Region was formed under Iowa Code Chapter 28E to create a Mental Health and Disability Service Region in compliance with Iowa Code 331.390. The annual report is a component of the Management Plan which includes three parts: Annual Service and Budget Plan, Annual Report and Policies and Procedures Manual in compliance with Iowa Administrative Code 441.25.



The FY2020 Annual Report covers the period of July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020. The annual report includes documentation of the status of service development, services provided, individuals served, designated intensive mental health services, a financial statement including revenues, expenditures and levies, and specific regional outcomes for the year.

Northwest Iowa Care Connections has had an eventful year. There have been several major happenings through the FY 20 Year. The biggest was the Coronavirus Pandemic. While it may go without saying this pandemic has changed the way that people have interacted in all aspects of their lives, it has exposed gaps in the mental health and disability service system, and yet it has also brought out creativity and innovation in ways to serve individuals.

Secondly, Northwest Iowa Care Connection has gone through Administrative changes. As of April 2020, Melissa Loehr was hired as the CEO to replace Kim Wilson upon her retirement on June 30th, 2020. O'Brien and Dickinson counties were transitioning to Sioux Rivers effective July 1, 2020. Existing NWIACC staff (2) that were housed and employed through Dickinson County transitioned to Sioux Rivers on July 1, 2020.

FY 20 was also spent preparing to welcome in 3 new counties Kossuth, Winnebago, and Worth Counties in July 2020. To prepare for this transition much research was being conducted about the services. In June three new Service Coordinators were hired as well as a part-time claims processor to prepare for the transition of the new counties on July 1st, 2020.



Secretary

Craig Merrill Palo
Alto County

Vice Chair

Jayson Vande Hoef
Osceola County

Board Chair

Barry Anderson- Clay
County

Bill Leupold

Dickinson County

Dennis Vandenhull

O'Brien County



Kim Wilson
CEO

Melissa Loehr
CEO Designee
Effective: 4.9.20

A. Services Provided and Individuals Served

This section includes:

- The number of individuals in each diagnostic category funded for each service
- Unduplicated count of individuals funded by age and diagnostic category
- Regionally designated Intensive Mental Health Services

Table A. Number of Individuals Served for Each Service by Diagnostic Category

FY 2020 Actual GAAP	NWIACC MHDS Region	MI (40)		ID(42)		Total
		A	C	A	C	
	Comprehensive Facility and Community Based Treatment					
Core						
	Treatment					
42305	Psychotherapeutic Treatment - Outpatient	1				1
42306	Psychotherapeutic Treatment - Medication Prescribing	61	7			68
43301	Evaluation (Non Crisis) - Assessment and Evaluation				1	1
71319	State MHI Inpatient - Per diem charges	4				4
73319	Other Priv./Public Hospitals - Inpatient per diem charges	1				1
	Basic Crisis Response					
44301	Crisis Evaluation	11				11
44307	Mobile Response	15	24			39
44313	Crisis Stabilization Residential Service (CSRS)	2				2
	Sub-Acute Services					
	Support for Community Living					
32329	Support Services - Supported Community Living	5		2		7
	Support For Employment					
50367	Day Habilitation	1		5		6
50368	Voc/Day - Individual Supported Employment	3		5		8
	Recovery Services					
45366	Peer Family Support - Peer Support Services	3				3
	Service Coordination					
	Core Evidence Based Treatment					
	Core Subtotals:	107	31	12	1	151
Mandated						
74XXX	CommitmentRelated (except 301)	121	2			123
75XXX	Mental health advocate	268	6			274
	Mandated Subtotals:	389	8			397
Core Plus						

	Justice System Involved Services					
44346	Crisis Services - Telephone Crisis Service	28	15			43
46305	Mental Health Services in Jails	24				24
	Additional Core Evidence Based Treatment					
	Core Plus Subtotals:	52	15			67
	Other Informational Services					
	Community Living Support Services					
22XXX	Services management	326	25			351
31XXX	Transportation	1				1
32326	Support Services - Guardian/Conservator	1				1
33340	Basic Needs - Rent Payments	7				7
	Community Living Support Services Subtotals:	335	25			360
	Congregate Services					
64XXX	RCF-6 and over beds	20				20
	Congregate Services Subtotals:	20				20
	Administration					
	Uncategorized					
	Regional Totals:	903	79	12	1	995

Table B. Unduplicated Count of Individuals by Age and Diagnostic Category

Disability Group	Children	Adult	Unduplicated Total
Mental Illness	72	627	699
Mental Illness, Intellectual Disabilities	1	7	8
Total	73	634	707

B. Regionally Designated Intensive Mental Health Services

The region has been in development for an **Access Center** which will need to meet the following requirements:

- Immediate intake assessment and screening that includes but is not limited to mental and physical conditions, suicide risk, brain injury, and substance use.
- Comprehensive person-centered mental health assessments by appropriately licensed or credentialed professionals.
- Comprehensive person-centered substance use disorder assessments by appropriately licensed or credentialed professional.
- Peer support services.
- Mental health treatment.
- Substance abuse treatment.
- Physical health services.
- Care coordination.
- Service navigation and linkage to needed services.

NWIACC has been in a collaborative discussion with Rolling Hills and Sioux Rivers Regions about a way to partner for the development of an Access Center to be operational by July 1, 2021. NWIACC is looking at

contracting for use of the Access Center some components of this being available virtually to allow the closest services to the individual's home.

<u>Date Designated</u>	<u>Access Center</u>
	<i>In Development</i>

The region has continued to be in development for the following **Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)** teams. Currently, NWIACC, Sioux Rivers, and Rolling Hills have been in a collaborative discussion to work to bring a fidelity review, including a peer review as required by subrule 25.6(2), and documentation of each team's most recent fidelity score. One barrier throughout the year was workforce shortage to have full staffing.

<u>Date Designated</u>	<u>ACT Teams</u>	<u>Fidelity Score</u>
2017	Seasons Center-	<i>Working on</i>

The region is working on the development of Subacute service providers that meet the criteria and are licensed by the Department of Inspections and Appeals. This will be done in conjunction with the Access Center.

<u>Date Designated</u>	<u>Subacute</u>
	<i>In Development</i>

The region has been in development the following **Intensive Residential Service** providers which meet the following requirements:

- Enrolled as an HCBS 1915(i) habilitation or an HCBS 1915© intellectual disability waiver supported community living provider.
- Provide staffing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- Maintain staffing ratio of one staff to every two and on-half residents.
- Ensure that all staff have the minimum qualifications required.
- Provider coordination with the individual's clinical mental health and physical health treatment, and other services and support.
- Provide clinical oversight by a mental health professional
- Have a written cooperative agreement with an outpatient provider.
- Be licensed as a substance abuse treatment program or have a written cooperative agreement.
- Accept and service eligible individuals who are court-ordered.
- Provide services to eligible individuals on a no reject, no eject basis.
- Serve no more than five individuals at a site.
- Be located in a neighborhood setting to maximize community integration and natural supports.
- Demonstrate specialization in serving individuals with an SPMI or multi-occurring conditions and serve individuals with similar conditions in the same site.

The Region will continue to work on this model throughout the year. It should be noted that the low reimbursement rates have made this a difficult area to make progress on with providers.

<u>Date Designated</u>	<u>Intensive Residential Services</u>
	<i>In Development</i>

C. Financials

FY 2020 Accrual	Northwest Iowa Care Connections	MI (40)	ID(42)	Admin (44)	Total
Core Domains					
COA	Treatment				
42305	Mental health outpatient therapy **	\$ 2,812			\$ 2,812
42306	Medication prescribing & management **	\$ 33,206			\$ 33,206
43301	Assessment, evaluation, and early identification **		\$ 156		\$ 156
71319	Mental health inpatient therapy-MHI	\$ 9,364			\$ 9,364
73319	Mental health inpatient therapy **	\$ 896			\$ 896
	Crisis Services				
32322	Personal emergency response system				\$ -
44301	Crisis evaluation	\$ 15,025			\$ 15,025
44302	23 hour crisis observation & holding				\$ -
44305	24 hour access to crisis response				\$ -
44307	Mobile response **	\$ 219,556			\$ 219,556
44312	Crisis Stabilization community-based services **				\$ -
44313	Crisis Stabilization residential services **	\$ 3,200			\$ 3,200
44396	Access Centers: start-up / sustainability				\$ -
	Support for Community Living				
32320	Home health aide				\$ -
32325	Respite				\$ -
32328	Home & vehicle modifications				\$ -
32329	Supported community living	\$ 19,370	\$ 951		\$ 20,321
42329	Intensive residential services				\$ -
	Support for Employment				
50362	Prevocational services				\$ -
50364	Job development				\$ -
50367	Day habilitation	\$ 135	\$ 32,497		\$ 32,632
50368	Supported employment	\$ 65,268	\$ 14,425		\$ 79,693
50369	Group Supported employment-enclave				\$ -
	Recovery Services				
45323	Family support	\$ 836			\$ 836
45366	Peer support	\$ 1,985			\$ 1,985
	Service Coordination				
21375	Case management				\$ -
24376	Health homes				\$ -
	Sub-Acute Services				
63309	Subacute services-1-5 beds				\$ -
64309	Subacute services-6 and over beds				\$ -
	Core Evidenced Based Treatment				
04422	Education & Training Services - provider competency	\$ 681			\$ 681

	Northwest Iowa Care Connections	MI (40)	ID(42)	Admin (44)	Total
COA					
32396	Supported housing				\$ -
42398	Assertive community treatment (ACT)	\$ 10,701			\$ 10,701
45373	Family psychoeducation				\$ -
	Core Domains Total	\$ 383,035	\$ 48,029		\$ 431,064
Mandated Services					
46319	Oakdale				\$ -
72319	State resource centers				\$ -
74XXX	Commitment related (except 301)	\$ 38,393			\$ 38,393
75XXX	Mental health advocate	\$ 61,945			\$ 61,945
	Mandated Services Total	\$ 100,338	\$ -		\$ 100,338
Additional Core Domains					
	Justice system-involved services				
25xxx	Coordination services				\$ -
44346	24 hour crisis line*	\$ 36,000			\$ 36,000
44366	Warm line*				\$ -
46305	Mental health services in jails	\$ 12,480			\$ 12,480
46399	Justice system-involved services-other				\$ -
46422	Crisis prevention training				\$ -
46425	Mental health court related costs				\$ -
74301	Civil commitment prescreening evaluation				\$ -
	Additional Core Evidenced based treatment				
42366	Peer self-help drop-in centers				\$ -
42397	Psychiatric rehabilitation (IPR)				\$ -
	Additional Core Domains Total	\$ 48,480	\$ -		\$ 48,480
Other Informational Services					
03371	Information & referral	\$ 13,380			\$ 13,380
04372	Planning, consultation &/or early intervention (client related) **				\$ -
04377	Provider Incentive Payment				\$ -
04399	Consultation Other				\$ -
04429	Planning and Management Consultants (non-client related)				\$ -
05373	Public education, prevention and education **				\$ -
	Other Informational Services Total	\$ 13,380	\$ -		\$ 13,380
Community Living Supports					
06399	Academic services				\$ -
22XXX	Services management	\$ 84,383			\$ 84,383

COA	Northwest Iowa Care Connections	MI (40)	ID(42)	Admin (44)	Total
23376	Crisis care coordination				\$ -
23399	Crisis care coordination other				\$ -
24399	Health home other				\$ -
31XXX	Transportation	\$ 355			\$ 355
32321	Chore services				\$ -
32326	Guardian/conservator	\$ 1,000			\$ 1,000
32327	Representative payee				\$ -
32335	CDAC				\$ -
32399	Other support				\$ -
33330	Mobile meals				\$ -
33340	Rent payments (time limited)	\$ 1,575			\$ 1,575
33345	Ongoing rent subsidy				\$ -
33399	Other basic needs				\$ -
41305	Physiological outpatient treatment				\$ -
41306	Prescription meds				\$ -
41307	In-home nursing				\$ -
41308	Health supplies				\$ -
41399	Other physiological treatment				\$ -
42309	Partial hospitalization				\$ -
42310	Transitional living program				\$ -
42363	Day treatment				\$ -
42396	Community support programs				\$ -
42399	Other psychotherapeutic treatment				\$ -
43399	Other non-crisis evaluation				\$ -
44304	Emergency care				\$ -
44399	Other crisis services				\$ -
45399	Other family & peer support				\$ -
46306	Psychiatric medications in jail				\$ -
50361	Vocational skills training				\$ -
50365	Supported education				\$ -
50399	Other vocational & day services				\$ -
63XXX	RCF 1-5 beds (63314, 63315 & 63316)				\$ -
63XXX	ICF 1-5 beds (63317 & 63318)				\$ -
63329	SCL 1-5 beds				\$ -
63399	Other 1-5 beds				\$ -
	Community Living Supports	\$ 87,313	\$ -		\$ 87,313
Other Congregate Services					
50360	Work services (work activity/sheltered work)				\$ -
64XXX	RCF 6 and over beds (64314, 64315 & 64316)	\$ 343,810			\$ 343,810
64XXX	ICF 6 and over beds (64317 & 64318)				\$ -
64329	SCL 6 and over beds				\$ -

	Northwest Iowa Care Connections	MI (40)	ID(42)	Admin (44)	Total
COA					
64399	Other 6 and over beds				\$ -
	Other Congregate Services Total	\$ 343,810	\$ -		\$ 343,810
Administration					
11XXX	Direct Administration			221,119	\$ 221,119
12XXX	Purchased Administration			45,805	\$ 45,805
	Administration Total			\$ 266,924	\$ 266,924
	Regional Totals	\$ 976,356	\$ 48,029	\$ 266,924	\$ 1,291,309
(45XX-XXX)County Provided Case Management					\$ -
(46XX-XXX)County Provided Services					\$ -
	Regional Grand Total				\$ 1,291,309

Transfer Numbers (Expenditures should only be counted when final expenditure is made for services/administration. Transfers are eliminated from budget to show true regional finances)

13951	Distribution to MHDS regional fiscal agent from member county	\$ 620,198
14951	MHDS fiscal agent reimbursement to MHDS regional member county	\$ 1,562,240

*24 hour crisis line and warm line are transitioning from additional core to state wide core services with state funding.

**Core services for children with a serious emotional disturbance (SED)

Table D. Revenues

FY 2020 Accrual	Northwest Iowa Care Connections		
Revenues			
	FY19 Annual Report Ending Fund Balance		\$ 3,002,470
	Adjustment to 6/30/19 Fund Balance		\$ 2,570
	Audited Ending Fund Balance as of 6/30/19 (Beginning FY20)		\$ 3,005,040
	Local/Regional Funds		\$ 923,915
10XX	Property Tax Levied	\$ 853,800	
12XX	Other County Taxes	\$ 1,155	
16XX	Utility Tax Replacement Excise Taxes	\$ 26,224	
25XX	Other Governmental Revenues	\$ -	
5310	Client Fees	\$ 26,617	
60XX	Interest	\$ 5,211	
8110	Private Source	\$ 10,539	
8200	Unclaimed Voided Warrants	\$ 219	
8490	Misc	\$ 150	
	State Funds		\$ 67,326
21XX	State Tax Credits	\$ 47,681	
22XX	Other State Replacement Credits	\$ 19,645	
2250	MHDS Equalization	\$ -	
24XX	State/Federal pass thru Revenue	\$ -	
2644	MHDS Allowed Growth // State Gen. Funds	\$ -	
29XX	Payment in Lieu of taxes	\$ -	
		\$ -	
	Federal Funds		\$ 294
29XX	Payment in Lieu of taxes	\$ 294	
2345	Medicaid	\$ -	
	Other	\$ -	
	Total Revenues		\$ 991,535

Total Funds Available for FY20	\$ 3,996,575
FY19 Actual Regional Expenditures	\$ 1,291,309
Accrual Fund Balance as of 6/30/20	\$ 2,705,266

Table E. County Levies

County	2017 Est. Pop.	Regional Per Capita	FY20 Max Levy	FY20 Actual Levy	Actual Levy Per Capita
Clay	16,170	\$ 30.30	\$ 489,951	\$ 242,550	\$ 15.00
Dickinson	17,199	\$ 30.30	\$ 521,130	\$ 257,985	\$ 15.00
O'Brien	13,801	\$ 30.30	\$ 418,170	\$ 207,015	\$ 15.00
Osceola	6,045	\$ 30.30	\$ 183,164	\$ 90,960	\$ 15.05
Palo Alto	9,092	\$ 30.30	\$ 275,488	\$ 136,380	\$ 15.00
Region	62,307		\$ 1,887,902	\$ 934,890	\$ 15.00

D. Status of Service Development in FY2020

Northwest Iowa Care Connections has undergone large changes throughout this past fiscal year however service development has continued to be a priority of the Region. When the legislation changed and added children with serious emotional disturbances to the core populations that the Regions served, the Region while being reluctant due to no additional funding carried on to continue the mission “to support improved access to behavioral healthcare through local resources...”



Under the Introduction title of this report, the staffing changes were noted. A unique opportunity was presented to the region with the opportunity to hire new staff with unique qualifications to serve adults and the new addition, children. In June, the Region hired 3 service coordinators, 2 of those being designated as children coordinators with together over 33 years of clinical experience. This addition alone is a valued asset to the Region and the individuals we serve. Ongoing service development and collaboration occurred with other regions and providers to make gains and progress towards core mandates to be operational by July 2022.

E. Outcomes/Regional Accomplishments in FY2020

During FY 2020, NWIACC had several initiatives that it continued to work on throughout the region. These include:

Crisis Services- 24-hour response/ Assessment & Evaluation. Since 2016, there have been 10 emergency time slots available each week in the county-based Seasons Center offices on a first come first used basis. During FY 20 A total of 73 slots were utilized to serve the NWIACC Region.

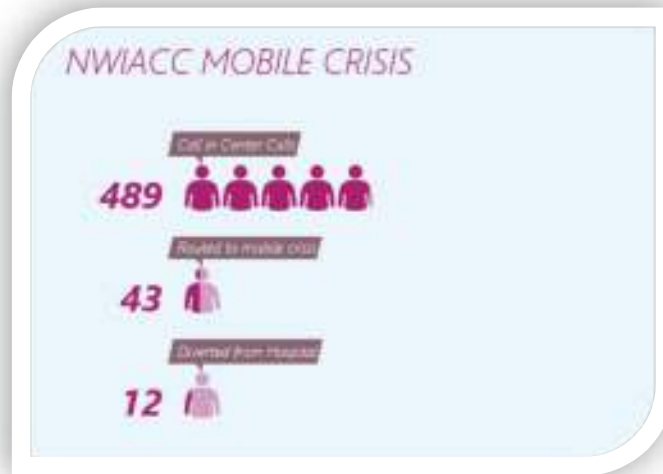




Crisis Stabilization Services- This has been made available through Turning Point in Sac City & Sioux Rivers Regional Assessment and Stabilization Center in Sioux City. A crisis stabilization home provides mental health services in a less restrictive setting. The average length of stay is between 3 to 5 days. The hope is that the individualized served will be aided in psychiatric, therapeutic, medication, and environmental changes. The Crisis stabilization team will work with paid and natural supports when discharging the individual back to their home to reduce the need for ongoing crisis services.



Mobile Response- available through Seasons Center is managed 24/7 and can/will deploy the Mobile Response team as needed. Below is a monthly graph of calls received from the mobile crisis provider. It should be noted that due to the COVID-19 Pandemic things changed for the mobile crisis as of March when much of the world and business closed their doors, Mobile crisis continued to provide 24/7 telephone contact and virtual visits rather than face-to-face.



<i>Month</i>	<i>Number of calls into call in center</i>	<i>Requiring Mobile crisis screening</i>	<i>Diverted from hospital</i>
July 2019	33	3	6
August 2019	39	1	1
September 2019	39	0	0
October 2019	51	2	2
November 2019	51	10	7
December 2019	40	7	6
January 2020	41	7	4
February 2020	41	7	3
March 2020	41	5	1
April 2020	48	0	0
May 2020	36	0	0
June 2020	29	1	0
Totals:	489	43	12

It should be mentioned that NWIACC does not contract with Foundation 2/ Your Life Iowa. Seasons Center utilizes its crisis line to assess and dispatch its mobile crisis unit when the need arises. Additional support through the statewide Your Life Iowa Crisis line is available to residents.

Jail Diversion: A change occurred in FY 20; Northwest Iowa Care Connections held a contract with Hope Haven for jail services. The agency discontinued providing these services. A contract was started with Integrated Telehealth Partners (ITP) for jail services such as psychiatric evaluations and medication evaluations/ refills. The usage over the last fiscal year taking into consideration that the change that occurred mid-year was 4 assessments provided. Ongoing usage will continue to be provided to the counties in the entire region.



Stepping Up Initiatives: NWIACC continued the Stepping Up Team Initiative, comprised of area law enforcement, corrections, service providers, and regional representatives. It is estimated that 2 million people who are booked into jails each year have a mental health diagnosis and another ¾ of them have substance abuse issues. Stepping up Initiative supports counties in developing and adopting cross-system action planning and technical assistance such as training and provide alternatives to incarceration. The NWIACC region holds quarterly meetings to problem solve on how to respond to individuals in need. The Stepping Up Team has a collaborative approach and effort to work together to be responsive in the least restrictive way possible. Moving forward service coordinators will continue to be involved and continue to coordinate these services into the FY 21 Regional counties.



Assertive Community Treatment: was started in October 2017 with Seasons Center. It should be noted that workforce shortages reflected in the ACT Team not always being fully staffed during the fiscal year. Seasons Center continued to carry out activities to actively recruit for positions and that should be commended. The graph below shows the team of individuals that serve on each ACT team. Seasons has conducted internal fidelity reviews and is now awaiting a Regional review which is being implemented through Regional collaboration between NWIACC and Sioux Rivers and

Rolling Hills Regions. During the fiscal year, the team had between 19 to 24 clients on their caseload, this averages to 22 clients served monthly through this program.

Supportive Employment: NWIACC works with clients, families, and providers to provide employment services to those within the Region. Funding has been provided with Sioux Rivers to support the Individualized Placement Services (IPS) Model to the Region. In FY 20 there were a total of 29 individuals served, 24 of those were employed during the year. There were a total of 26 new jobs obtained during the year.



The individuals who are being served by IPS program have made significant gains, let us meet two consumers and hear their stories:

Client #1: 25-year-old male. He started employment at a resort in the banquet department. Later moved to maintenance. This individual has moved up, received two raises, bought a car, and moved out of their habilitation home and obtained their own home and became their own legal guardian after years of having a parent in that role.



Client #2: 18-year-old female. This individual has been hospitalized 37 times before having any employment. Since becoming employed she has worked steadily, not missed work. She plans to obtain a CNA License as well as work part time.

Permanent Supportive Housing: NWIACC continues to provide support to individuals in need of housing such as residential care facilities to supported community living services. Service Coordinators work with clients to assess and evaluate living situations and brainstorm and work together to build on daily living skills and help clients achieve and maintain the lowest level of care possible. Service Coordinators can help individuals and families navigate through these changes of care. NWIACC has been working with community partners and agencies to address transitional housing options for the homeless and individuals who have mental health needs. There is more work to be done on this, but NWIACC continues to place this as a priority and will continue to work with the Regional Transitional Housing Team to address needs and help navigate barriers in the region.

Regional Collaboration with Providers, Stakeholder, Regions

Northwest Iowa Care Connections prides itself on developing and maintaining relationships with clients, families, stakeholders, counties, and communities in the region.

Another big area of collaboration to note would be the CEO collaborative throughout the mental health disability services region. This collaboration is instrumental to work together to build services, support individuals, and continue to build the mental health system in Iowa. This collaboration will continue to be a regional priority.



Provider Network

Northwest Iowa Care Connections service contracts require that all providers meet applicable licensure, accreditation, or certification standards. However, Northwest Iowa Care Connections makes serious efforts to stimulate access to more natural supports in its service provider network. Successful attainment of positive outcomes, consumer and family satisfaction, and cost-effectiveness measures are the most important factors in continued network participation. NWIACC values all its partners and looks to continue to build the network to serve individuals and continue to work towards the mission to improve access to behavioral healthcare.

Conclusion:

Northwest Iowa Care Connections Mental Health and Disability Service Region is proud of the work it has accomplished in FY 20. The Region went through numerous changes towards the middle of the fiscal year and continued to work diligently to provide the best care and services to clients. The COVID-19 pandemic created many more challenges throughout the year but also allowed being more creative in the work we do to continue to serve individuals.



Kim Wilson, CEO of Northwest Iowa Care Connections retired on June 30, 2020. Ms. Wilson worked tirelessly on behalf of the region and her hard work should be commended. She served on numerous committees, boards, and was an advocate for many regarding mental health and disabilities services. Northwest Iowa Care Connections would like to thank Ms. Wilson for her dedication and work!

Northwest Iowa Care Connections will continue to work towards our mission to support improved behavioral healthcare through local resources to promote full citizenship for people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.