



## News Release

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### **Health Center Introduces Mental Health Services for Children & Families**

Mashpee – As children enter adolescence they, and their families, face a time of growth, change, and developmental and social challenges. Some weather this period better than others. Many, however, fall victim to substance abuse and unhealthy behaviors and relationships. Eventually, the entire family can become impacted. At present, many families on the Upper Cape that are confronting the challenges of adolescence face huge obstacles navigating a mental health system that is fragmented, inaccessible and lacking in providers.

Help has arrived. With three-year funding totaling \$275,000 from The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation, Community Health Center of Cape Cod has established the Family Resource Center for Behavioral Health for families with at-risk children and youth up to age 23. The new initiative tackles the problem on two fronts: increasing adolescent-specific behavioral health services to underserved and uninsured young people and their families; and strengthening the community's ability to support young people and their families and improve their ability to prevent, identify and decrease risky behaviors in teen and adolescent populations.

“The purpose of our Family Resource Center is to improve the health and well-being of adolescents and their families by reaching them earlier and providing access to services and connection to stable supports,” says the Health Center’s Director of Behavioral Health Tim Lineaweaver, LMHC. A second key component of the program, he explains, is to work closely with area schools, physicians’ offices and youth organizations to train personnel to identify at-risk youth and improve their response to adolescents and families in need.

According to Mr. Lineaweaver, on a daily basis, the Health Center sees young people and families confronting substance abuse and social and mental health issues who have no where to turn for help. The shortage of clinicians, especially child psychiatrists, is dire, he says. Currently, there is a six to eight week wait for an appointment with a child psychiatrist. The alternative is to go off Cape, as far away as Boston.

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The Family Resource Center has a part-time child psychiatrist, James McGuire, MD and social worker, Lisa Tager, LICSW. Their services are complemented by the Health Center's existing counselors and psychiatrist. The Family Resource Center provides screening, referral, adolescent-specific counseling and psychiatry, and family and substance abuse counseling, all of which are integrated with the Health Center's primary care and dental services. "That is the strength of our program," says Chief Executive Officer Karen Gardner. "We can provide all of these services under one roof."

The program calls for widespread community collaboration. Mr. Lineaweaver explains that often, staff in schools, physicians' offices and youth organizations are the first ones to notice signs of trouble in a young person. The Resource Center will provide training to these organizations on how to identify a youth in need and connect them and their families to services. Resource Center staff will also provide clinical consultation at the request of collaborating organizations.

The community is solidly behind the new initiative, says Ms. Gardner. Nearly 20 organizations provided letters of support or intent to collaborate as part of the Health Center's request to the Tower Foundation. As part of its strategic planning process, Health Center officials held discussions and focus groups with schools and community organizations in the Upper Cape to get their input on the health challenges in our area. These groups included school superintendents, town selectmen, health and human service agency directors, guidance counselors, school nurses, and county officials. Overwhelmingly, they reported that the lack of behavioral health – especially child psychiatry - services for children, adolescents and their families is the most pressing need in their communities. "We look forward to the youth community's involvement as we further develop the program," she says.

Ruth Provost, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Cape Cod sees firsthand the problems at-risk children and their parents face and is eager for the program. "For many of our parents, even finding treatment is almost impossible, they are overwhelmed by the problem or honestly don't see the need. Having the Family Resource Center nearby and easily accessible is going to make it so much easier for them to explore their options and help their children," she says.

Currently, Family Resource Center services are provided at the Health Center's Bourne office and are available to Health Center patients or to individuals/families that do not have a regular primary care provider or are unable to obtain behavioral health services. For more information about the Family Resource Center call Ms. Tager at 508 759-7971 or Mr. Lineaweaver at 508 477- 7090, ext. 127.

*Community Health Center of Cape Cod is a non-profit Federally Qualified Health Center that provides access to health care for adults and children with MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, Medicare, private insurance, or no insurance at all. Services include primary and preventive care, dental care, behavioral health, coordinated case management, and prescription assistance, at locations in Falmouth, Mashpee and Bourne. Visit the Health Center online at [chcofcapecod.org](http://chcofcapecod.org)*

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