

McHenry County's resources to help those in need



**GUEST
COLUMN**

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Admit it. We have all struggled or been in situations where we needed assistance to some degree. At the very least, we know of – or are caring for someone – experiencing stressors or hardships.

Individuals, couples and families facing adversity are in need of goods, services, guidance or connections to others to help manage or overcome resource issues and battles in their lives.

McHenry County is filled with wonderful resources and professionals dedicated to improving lives. However, according to our McHenry County Public Health Community Health Needs Assessment, approximately one-third of McHenry County residents don't know where to turn.

The McHenry County Mental Health Board is committed to increasing community awareness and visibility of our mental health, substance use disorder and intellectual/developmental disability services that we fund.

Our free annual People In Need forum will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 27, at McHenry County College. We urge you to come and learn more about the agencies we work with, attend an educational session, receive fun giveaways and discover how to volunteer or join the board. To learn more, visit mchenry.edu/pin.

If you can't attend, we will highlight some of our funded providers below. For a full database of comprehensive services, visit mc708.org or download our free mobile McHelp App, which has a text and chat feature.

Resources available

Whether it's help with financial hard-

ships, housing or food insecurity, there are resources here in McHenry County that can help:

Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Northern Illinois is an excellent place to receive financial counseling and guidance. Financial assistance programs and resources aimed at alleviating poverty, such as food pantries, affordable housing initiatives and health care access programs are essential to supporting residents.

Pioneer Center has a PADS homeless shelter in McHenry and is available 24/7 to assist with short- or long-term housing needs. PADS is the first step to getting connected to housing options, even if you decide not to stay at the shelter.

Veterans in need of services can connect with Veterans Path to Hope.

In a domestic violence situation, call Turning Point. We have so many services available to assist you.

Additionally, most of our police departments in McHenry County have 24/7 access to a social worker through the sheriff's office's Police Social Worker program.

Do you know someone with legal and mental health or substance use issues? Getting involved in the Specialty Courts programs through the 22nd Judicial Circuit can be explored.

Does someone you know have a substance use issue and wants help now? Call A-Way-Out Program at 815-347-0385. For nonemergency assistance, call 9-8-8. There is hope and help in all situations.

Mental health services

When individuals experience financial hardship, job or relationship/people losses, homelessness, or lack of access to health care and services, their mental health can become significantly impacted.

Stress, anxiety, depression and feelings of hopelessness can arise due to the

constant struggle to meet basic needs. For the majority, this is situational and can be resolved over time.

The Mental Health Board addresses some of the barriers in accessing and affording services/treatment by providing funded agency partners awards to significantly reduce or subsidize the cost of care for those who cannot afford it.

Sometimes limited transportation solutions to appointments are provided. Bilingual services are also available at most agencies.

For mental health services, access the following organizations: Association For Individual Development (adolescent/adult); Ascension Crystal Lake (child/adolescent counseling and PHP/IOP); Horizon's Behavioral Health; Independence Health and Therapy; Pioneer Behavioral Health (adolescents/run-away/homeless youth); Rosecrance (child/adolescent/adult and child/adolescent IOP/PHP); Thresholds (adult/transitional youth); and Veterans Path to Hope (veterans). PHP is shorthand for partial hospitalization services and IOP is an acronym for intensive outpatient services.

We also fund the psychiatry and behavioral health care elements at several integrated practices to provide low- to no-cost medical needs, including: Aunt Martha's, Community Health Partnership, Family Health Partnership Clinic and Greater Family Health.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness in McHenry County is also a great place to find peer support and advocacy.

Some organizations do not have wait times to see a psychiatrist, especially if you're OK with a virtual option.

Setting up regular counseling sessions with a therapist to battle and overcome the issues with which you struggle is a great way to start out the new year.

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Substance abuse and addiction support

Substance use can be a coping mechanism used in response to the stress and emotional turmoil that accompanies living in challenging circumstances. Individuals facing poverty and adversity may turn to drugs or alcohol as a temporary escape, creating a vicious cycle that both worsens their mental health and perpetuates their need for assistance.

We have excellent resources to assist those struggling with drugs or alcohol: Mather's Recovery, New Directions, Rosecrance and Northern Illinois Recovery Center.

The Mental Health Board provides funding for those who do not have insurance and cannot afford inpatient detox and substance use treatment at Northern Illinois Recovery Center or outpatient treatment at Rosecrance.

Rosecrance and New Directions both have recovery homes in McHenry County for those needing a more supportive living environment while being engaged in intensive substance use disorder treatment. The Other Side, the sober living bar in Crystal Lake, hosts many Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and is also a great support for those struggling with substance use and addiction issues.

Support for those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) often require support and assistance to degrees much greater than the average population, including support for daily living, employment opportunities, community inclusion, healthcare and therapy.

Finding and maintaining employment can be particularly challenging for individuals with IDD. Clearbrook and Pioneer Center, funded agencies

in our network, provide support, specialized job training and connections with businesses with accommodations in the workplace to maximize employees' potential. Both Clearbrook and Pioneer Center also assist with group home/residential needs.

Working with school professionals is best, but Service Inc. is a funded agency that can ensure you have advocacy and screenings needed for your child. Options and Advocacy is also a good resource for support and guidance. Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association or Pioneer Center's Day Program can provide engagement with others and physical activities.

It is important to note that individuals must get screened and receive an IDD diagnosis before the age of 18 to qualify for state-funded services.

Additional resources

We also fund an array of fun and amazing education and prevention programs.

Teens and youth can find support at Crystal Lake Teen Center: The BREAK and WARP CORPS.

Youth and Family Center provides bilingual services for teens and families.

And Live4Lali provides overdose prevention through education and training, including free Naloxone trainings and distribution.

Our funded agencies understand the specific needs and challenges faced by residents in McHenry County and are engaged in targeted initiatives, collaborations and community support to address those issues effectively.

You can help others by directing those in need to our agencies or to our McHelp App. You also can donate your time and resources to any of our funded agencies. They all need fiscal support, volunteers or passionate board members. Get involved today!

Leonetta Rizzi is executive director of the McHenry County Mental Health Board.