

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2015

Putnam Advocates for Mental Health Treatment

Improving mental, emotional and behavioral health is a top priority in Putnam County's Community Health Improvement Plan, and this month—Mental Health Month—the Department of Health is promoting the advantages of addressing mental health symptoms as early as possible, before symptoms escalate.

This, in fact, is the theme of 2015's Mental Health Month, conceived in today's texting parlance as "B4Stage4."

"Unaddressed mental health issues can escalate to critical levels and potentially lead to suicide," said County Executive MaryEllen Odell. "That's why our mental health providers and community partners are working hard to treat these problems head on and early in the process."

"When we think about heart disease or cancer, we don't wait to treat them," added Health Commissioner Dr. Allen Beals. "We start as soon as possible—before stage 4. We should do the same for individuals who have mental health issues, and Putnam County's mental health providers are taking the lead to make this happen."

Research shows that ignoring symptoms results in precious lost time. It is during the earliest years that individuals still have support through family and friends, and at school and work, that improve recovery efforts and outcomes. Intervening then can change the life trajectory of people living with mental illnesses.

Megan Castellano, executive director of the Mental Health Association in Putnam County, Inc., and Marla Behler, program coordinator for the Child Advocacy Center of Putnam County, have been instrumental in this community effort. Together they co-chair the Suicide Prevention Task Force that started in 2013.

Task force members and CHIP partners include Putnam Family and Community Services and the entire Mental Health Providers Group; the Department of Health; the Department of Social Services, Mental Health and Youth Bureau; Putnam Hospital Center; and the Veterans Task Force.

Everyone is encouraged to learn the signs and to ask for help, if needed. The Mental Health Association in Putnam County's national organization, Mental Health America, has fact sheets and online adult screening tools for depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder available at www.mentalhealthamerica.net.

Mental Health Month, commemorated each May, was started 66 years ago by Mental Health America to raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of good mental health for everyone.

For more information and a list of resources in Putnam County, including the Putnam County Cares app, visit www.putnamcounty-cares.com/speak.