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FOR MORE INFORMATION
Patrick Phelan
President/CEO
(815) 284-6611
patrickphelan@sinnissippi.com

Seeking Innovation to Adapt and Survive

Agencies Have to Look to the Future to Continue to Serve Their Clients.

(Dixon, IL)

While there never has been a time that Sinnissippi Centers hasn't looked for innovative solutions to providing behavioral healthcare, the road to the future for community behavioral healthcare seems to be in seeking a high level of innovation in every corner of the organization and on a continual basis.

"For many years, Sinnissippi Centers and our partner agencies in our region and across the state have suffered as funding from the state of Illinois has continued to erode," says Patrick Phelan, Sinnissippi Centers' President/CEO. "This year the losses have been at an all-time high, and unlike previous years there is very little hope that any of those lost funds will be restored," adds Phelan.

50 years after the state and federal governments began to ask community agencies to care for their most vulnerable citizens agencies like Sinnissippi Centers have come to the realization that if they are to continue with that mission they must seek innovative ways to do so.

"Legislation on the federal level, including the Affordable Care Act and the Excellence in Mental Health Act will actually lead to new opportunities," says Phelan. "In addition to funding and legislative changes, constant improvements in technology and medical knowledge will shape what is an unprecedented change in the way that community behavioral health centers do business. So, instead of continuing to lament our current situation, we are looking strategically to the future."

The Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion in Illinois means that many more have insurance coverage and can seek treatment.

The Excellence Act has created the Comprehensive Community Behavioral Health Clinic, a revolutionary model that may take a couple years to come to Sinnissippi Centers, but will allow for a new funding model, expansion of services and the ability to improve revenue for our community partners as well.

"We continue to work more collaboratively with our primary medical care providers," says Phelan. "Community behavioral health centers are the experts in behavioral change, and with the increased pressure on hospitals to reduce readmissions and expensive services, we hold the key to success for both patients and providers."

Improvements in technology have led to many new opportunities. New electronic medical

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records allow for better data reporting, and allow clients to access their own records through a patient portal. Patients will soon be able to input their own information into the record through use of tablets. In the near future, many in need of therapy services might choose to do so from their own couch, or maybe their primary care doctor's office via video conference. Web-based treatment options, and even apps for smart phones are increasing in their utility in the treatment process.

New developments in medicine are also having a significant impact. For example, Sinnissippi Centers will soon begin using genetic testing to determine which medications are most beneficial, and which might lead to side effects. A solution for the lack of available psychiatrists have developed in the form of mid-level providers, physician assistants and nurse practitioners. Phelan says, "We are looking forward to a day in the very near future where clients can access services from nearly anywhere, experience complete coordination of care along a full continuum, where data to direct treatment is plentiful, medical decision-making is well-informed and funding is sustainable. That gives us plenty of hope to brave the current challenges."

Sinnissippi Centers is a behavioral healthcare agency serving Carroll, Lee, Ogle and Whiteside Counties and provides substance abuse screening and treatment services.

For more information about programs and services, call Sinnissippi toll-free at 1-800-242-7642. Sinnissippi has office locations in Dixon, Mt. Carroll, Oregon, Rochelle and Sterling.

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