

**Washington State Hospital Association Hospital Governing Boards Committee
Community Health Leadership Award**

Organization/Health System Nominated

Skagit County Public Hospital District No. 2 (DBA: Island Hospital) Island Hospital.

School Based Mental Health: A Rural Collaboration Model

Vincent Oliver CEO

Contact Person

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City

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1. How did your organization, or the one you nominate, identify the community's health needs as the foundation for establishing this new "above and beyond" project and/or program within the last five years?

The Anacortes Community had witnessed significant reductions in community mental health services while there continued to be a significant need particularly at the high school level. Anacortes is a relatively isolated community 16 miles away from public mental health serving agencies. This geographic barrier is exacerbated by limited public transit and a single bridge serving as the only means of connection with the Skagit County at large. Given this isolation of the community and the hardship endured by families needing to travel a significant distance for service, Island Hospital, in collaboration with Anacortes School District (ASD), developed this program.

2. What innovative actions did the organization take to address those identified needs – ie: what is the resulting project?

This program has been exceptionally well received. In a community needs assessment completed in 2013 mental health and substance abuse were the top two needs identified. A integrated model of intervention integrating community involvement/ownership, mental health and substance abuse with primary care will be developed tailored to meet the specific needs of the Anacortes community.

3. Who were the other community collaborators essential to creating this new project/program?

The school-based mental health delivery model is a natural extension of outreach in the community. With seven clinics at Island hospital, the school-based clinicians have increased access to primary care providers who are also providing care to many of these students, thereby increasing communication and coordination of care. This results in an overall increase in positive health for patients and increases the health of the community. This being said, on a systemic level the relationships forged and nurtured between the City of Anacortes, Anacortes Police Department, Anacortes School District, Island Hospital, Island Hospital Foundation, Worthington Foundation and the Anacortes community has immeasurably supported this mission. Initially the program was funded by the Island hospital foundation with \$60,000 annually which was followed by additional funding from the ASD, \$7,000; Worthington Foundation, \$10,000; the Anacortes Police Department, \$2,500; and Rotary Club, \$ 40,000, over 4 years.

4. How were members of the Governing Board of a WSHA member organization involved in a meaningful way in establishing this project/program? (ie: design, approval, implementation, etc.)

Key in the development of this program is the relationships between the hospital CEO, School Superintendent, clinical staff, Anacortes Police Department and local community as well as the Island Hospital Board of Commissioners.

5. What results are you seeing with this new project and/or program? What difference has it made in your community?

To date, more than 1,000 mental health appointments have occurred on site at school. This level of service where youth spend a majority of time has proved invaluable. It not only assists youth and their families but also the needs of educators and staff. Youth have a variety of experiences at school in the community and in their home life that interferes with quality of life and the opportunity to learn: substance abuse, interpersonal violence, depression, anxiety and other brain-based diseases. This building-based program is effective in reaching out to those most troubled in their daily living experiences. Students are able to access these services also during vacations and school breaks and are seen at the clinic (on the hospital campus). This further integrates the services and relationship between student, family, school district and hospital.

The close proximity of the hospital and the school district offers ease of access to emergency services when needed. This past school year a student had been severely assaulted by an adult caretaker in his home and attended school the following day.

The mental health clinician on site was able to walk the student over to the Emergency Department for immediate care and coordinate CPS involvement and police intervention to ensure child safety. The clinician demonstrated flexibility and met immediate need of medical attention for this student. Clinicians utilize the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) and in particular, the Youth Self Report (YSR) which has 8 clinical domains measuring pre-intervention needs and post intervention outcomes. This measure is supported by extensive research and assists the clinician in assessment and treatment. As the program begins the fifth year we consistently record ‘statistically significant’ reductions in symptoms after intervention.

The ASD also contracts with Island Hospital for on-site psychiatric consultation and direct service delivery as provided by the child and family psychiatrist at Island hospital. This has proved invaluable to district staff in supporting students and families with more significant mental health needs.

Efforts must be made to build systematic state agendas for school-based mental health, emphasizing a shared responsibility among families, schools, and other community systems, Brener ND, Weist M, Adelman H, Taylor L, & Vernon-Smiley M. (2007). This program has achieved tremendous success and recognizes the value of evidenced based intervention (UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools).

In 2013, the Anacortes School District and Island Hospital sponsored a two-day training by Dr. Eric Johnson, Ph.D., ABPP Oregon Forensic Institute to train local law enforcement officers, district administrators, mental health providers, and school counselors in the methodology of conducting risk and threat assessments for youth who engage in threatening verbal or physical behavior at school. The resultant increase in risk assessment skills among local professionals allows the district and community to act early with individualized interventions tailored to student need and risks. This training further supported the Safety Assessment Team, which Island Hospital developed in partnership with the Anacortes Police Department and the ASD. When a student engages in violent behavior or

threatens violent behavior, the Team provides expertise and guidance, offering recommendations to district personnel on how to manage the risk.

“AHS Counselors and the therapist have been able to consult to provide a unified approach to best keep students engaged in school. The services have been invaluable.”

“One of the challenges for school districts around the country is how to support the mental health needs of all students, especially those from families living in poverty. Our partnership with Island Hospital provides an innovative approach to addressing this challenge. Students now receive professional services to address critical mental health and social service needs. As a result, they are able to stay connected to school, and, ultimately, achieve greater academic success. The nation needs more models like this.”

Dr. Mark Wenzel

Superintendent

Anacortes School District