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Interview Paper

Michelle Hall has 26 years of experience in the mental health field including and prior to her current position. Her experience includes but is not limited to, coordinator in a rape crisis program, a student in a graduate school program, child therapy, geriatrics, child hospitalization program, foster care, CEO of Martin Center, and child inpatient care at a psychiatric facility. Currently she is a licensed mental health counselor and manager at Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic, in Bellingham, WA; her experience in this position has lasted 8 years.

The roles and responsibilities of a manager at Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic include but are not limited to collaborating with other agencies and professionals, oversee the internship program, and supervise 8 clinicians and 500 cases. As a practicing mental health counselor Michelle offers advice and assistance to her colleague clinicians on how to work with different clientele.

Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic offers a variety of services which surround their mission statement: “The Clinic promotes the health, well-being, and safety of our community through quality counseling and psychiatric services for all in need, and the support and safety of those at risk.” (Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic, 2012) They serve diverse populations. The services range from collaboration with schools, hospitals, and case managers (if they have one) to offering emergency services to individuals who require it. The Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic also has multiple other attached agencies they

partner off of; these include Rainbow Recovery Center, Martin Center, Drug and Alcohol Counseling Center, and the main clinic.

The core services range around outpatient therapy for children, adults, and the elderly. Other services include medication treatment, social detox, psychological assessments, mobile outreach, geriatrics, primary care, help with reentry from prisons, support finding employment, and counseling. Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic offers services to all individuals, most of which are on Medicaid or Medicare.

Interventions that are often used among practicing clinicians vary dependent on the need of the client. Most commonly clinicians practice cognitive-behavioral therapy (a form of counseling), medical treatment, or motivational interviewing. Motivational interviewing consists of helping the client to understand where they are and how they can create a plan to reach a goal. This practice includes use of open-ended questions, using affirmations, reflective listening, and summarizing; this can be also known as OARs or change talk. In some more extreme cases emergency hospitalization can be used as an intervention technique but this is not the ideal solution for any client.

Prevention models being used are similar to their interventions, but the biggest hope of the agency is that clients seek help sooner rather than later, allowing the clinicians to analyze the best way to help. In some cases clinicians use cognitive-behavioral therapy as a form of prevention, as well as motivational interviewing. These are often used to help the client seek new goals and work toward self-reliance, in hopes they will not need emergency hospitalization.

Barriers to client success vary among the diverse population as well as the reason for attending the clinic. Often times it is difficult for populations, such as those experiencing

homelessness, to access care or find transportation to the clinic. As there are limited resources for those experiencing homelessness or crises, transportation or access to care often prevents them from seeking it or following through with prior commitments to treatment. Quick access to care is a major concern for client success.

It used to be the case that Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic did not accept walk-in patients; this was a huge barrier to client success as well. However, this has recently changed. Prior to this change clinicians would schedule a patient within 10 days of interest, unless it was an emergency where they would be scheduled within 72 hours. Often by the time their appointment came around the incident to warrant the client to seek care had calmed down. In some cases clients would no longer see the need to access services or they may have already escalated and required emergency services. Today procedure is a bit different and walk-in patients are now accepted. It is very rare an individual seeking care is turned down; in rare instances when the office becomes overly busy they will be scheduled for the next morning. The Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic always has a minimum of one or two available clinicians on staff at all times, available to those who do not have appointments.

Agency to agency collaboration is important to Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic as they have many sister agencies (Rainbow Recovery Center, previously Martin Center, and two local counseling offices). Depending on the client's needs and history it is also essential for professionals to collaborate with other agencies such as schools, the Department of Social and Health Services, police departments, primary care facilities, and other related agencies the individual may be affiliated with. Often these relationships began with the initial client assessment. As time passes the relationship will grow and include updating professionals of other

agencies on the progress of the client. In some cases this can include completion or complications in treatment, such as required emergency hospitalization.

Internally it is important to maintain relationships between professionals both in and outside the common workplace. For Michelle, as a manager at Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic, it is in her responsibilities that she supervises and assists her colleagues when needed. It is also important for professionals, such as Michelle, to maintain relationships with professionals in other agencies to ensure open communication and collaboration about client progress.

For Michelle Hall, her career as a manager at Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic is very diverse. Their offered services are available to a diverse population and have become easier to access through years of development. During the interview, she was able to confirm that Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic collaborates with multiple agencies around the community and has been able to develop new and important relationships with both the agency as a whole and the professionals internally. Maintaining relationships is one of the key principles in Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic, and also an important trait of Michelle Hall.

## References

Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic. 2012. Retrieved from:

<http://www.whatcomcounseling.org/about-us#section2>