Blaine County's Mental Well-Being Initiative – A Community Project to Enhance Mental Well-Being

Blaine County's Mental Well-Being Initiative[i] seeks to grow an integrated mental health and well-being ecosystem that improves the lives of all people in our community. Spearheaded by the St. Luke's Wood River Foundation in response to a clear need for improved mental health resources, the Mental Well-Being Initiative (MWBI) is a collaboration of over 30 partners[ii]—including local government, healthcare, nonprofit, education, business, and religious organizations—working to achieve a shared vision.

Our vision is bold: Make it possible for everyone in our community to achieve mental well-being. Success will require the support and collaboration of every part of our community.

Coming Together to Create Solutions

In 2023, the St. Luke's Wood River Foundation convened various stakeholders and community members to map our well-being ecosystem – from prevention and intervention to treatment and recovery – with the goal of identifying strengths that could be amplified and vital gaps that could be filled. Based on input from the community and hours of work from Initiative partners over the past 18 months, the MWBI will implement solutions in five key areas:

1. **Create a multitude of welcoming community-connecting environments and activities** to encourage belonging among teens and cross-generational connections throughout the community.
2. **Build a robust, comprehensive community training and education** program focused on resiliency, self-regulation, healthy communication, and crisis de-escalation.
3. **Increase behavioral health access and capacity** for individuals and families by identifying and addressing inadequacies within the system and building out the necessary behavioral health workforce.
4. **Create a 24-hour mobile mental health crisis response system** and crisis stabilization options.
5. **Build the infrastructure required to sustain a collective impact approach** to prioritize our community's mental health as essential to our overall health.

Blaine County's Mental Well-Being Initiative
Goals and Objectives Winter 2024

1. Create a variety of welcoming spaces and activities that foster a sense of belonging among teens and promote cross-generational connections within the community.
   A. Build collaborative community-wide communication of events & opportunities.
   B. Partner with local businesses and organizations to build a teen-welcoming community.
   C. Develop multiple spaces throughout the valley that allow for connection and engagement.
   D. Prioritize opportunities that encourage a sense of purpose, belonging, and connection.

2. Build a robust, comprehensive community training and education program focused on resiliency, self-regulation, healthy communication, and crisis de-escalation.
   A. Offer coordinated community-wide education and training to build resiliency, durability, and neighborhood support prioritizing select high-impact populations such as teachers, coaches, and first responders.
   B. Offer mental health-related events such as speakers, movies, etc., that are free to the community and help normalize the conversation around mental health, addiction, and getting support.
   C. Prioritize educational programming that provides a foundation for success and focuses on upstream protective factors.

3. Increase behavioral health access and capacity for individuals and families by identifying and addressing inadequacies within the system.
   A. Improve accessibility and affordability of counseling services by reducing financial barriers and expanding funding opportunities.
   B. Address critical gaps in the behavioral health care continuum to ensure comprehensive, accessible, and effective care for all individuals.
   C. Strengthen resource awareness and accessibility of critical community resources that support well-being to improve individual's ability to connect with necessary services.

4. Create a 24-hour mobile mental health crisis response and crisis stabilization system.
   A. Assess and optimize crisis lifelines by addressing gaps and redundancies in these systems and analyzing coordination with local resources.
   B. Establish mental health crisis response capacity through CIT training, a dedicated response team, preventative paramedicine, and a mental health transportation solution.
   C. Build crisis care and stabilization capacity by assessing needs, exploring interim solutions, and developing 23-hour crisis care services.

5. Build the infrastructure required to sustain a collective impact approach to prioritize our community's mental health as essential to our overall health.
   A. Provide leadership and coordinate efforts among resource providers and action teams to advance community-identified priorities of the Mental Well-Being Initiative.
   B. Develop a unified communication strategy to promote mental well-being resources, programs, and events in the community

Goal #1: Community Spaces & Activities

Create a variety of welcoming spaces and activities that foster a sense of belonging among teens and promote cross-generational connections within the community.

OBJECTIVE A: Build collaborative community-wide communication of events & opportunities.

1. Market, and communicate multigenerational and teen-specific events collaboratively using shared digital communication tools for greater reach and impact.

OBJECTIVE B: Partner with local businesses and organizations to build a teen-welcoming community.

1. Develop an approach that incentivizes and trains local businesses and organizations to offer teen-centered activities in their spaces.

2. Work with the community, businesses, organizations, and schools to provide a "teen-welcoming" culture and educate teens on community expectations and appropriate public behavior.

OBJECTIVE C: Develop multiple spaces throughout the valley that allow for connection and engagement.

1. Encourage various offerings of teen-friendly activities and spaces after school and in the evening hours that provide light supervision from adults trained in working with teens.

2. Consider creating a multi-generational space with a teen focus in Hailey that has ever-changing programming options and support from many organizations.

3. Support long-term plans of organizations seeking to increase affordable, community-connecting spaces that will be accessible to all.

OBJECTIVE D: Prioritize opportunities that encourage a sense of purpose, belonging, and connection.

1. Creating the infrastructure to connect the community with meaningful, purpose-driven volunteer or paid opportunities to support belonging, purpose, and connection among teens and young professionals.

2. Provide opportunities that promote positive cross-generational connections such as mentorship programs.

3. Support upstream prevention and protective factors specific to the well-being of teens as guided by data from the Communities for Youth.

Goal #2: Community Training & Education

Build a robust, comprehensive community training and education program focused on resiliency, self-regulation, healthy communication, and crisis de-escalation.

OBJECTIVE A: Offer coordinated community-wide education and training to build resiliency, durability, and neighborhood support prioritizing select high-impact populations such as teachers, coaches, and first responders.

1. Assess current offerings and work collaboratively to ensure programming that reaches a diverse population throughout the community.

2. Offer widespread mindfulness, self-regulation, and resilience training to the community, prioritizing target groups, with a primary design element focused on bringing the content/programs to people "where they are at."

3. Create a targeted mental health training program for youth-centric professionals to be replicated across the community.

4. Prioritize training frontline professionals in de-escalation techniques to help others in crisis. (frontline includes first responders, medical professionals, nonprofit employees, and other staff who work directly with the public.)

OBJECTIVE B: Offer mental health-related events such as speakers, movies, etc., that are free to the community and help normalize the conversation around mental health, addiction, and getting support.

1. Identify specific topic gaps to bring forward in the community, collaborate on the marketing of mental health-related events, and provide financial support to offer events free to the community

OBJECTIVE C: Prioritize educational programming that provides a foundation for success and focuses on upstream protective factors.

1. Expand existing English as a new language classes and Life Skills classes to the general community.

2. Support the creation of the Center for Career Exploration trade school opportunity to provide meaningful education for those seeking a career in the trades and/or service industry.

Goal #3: Care Access and Professional Capacity

Increase behavioral health access and capacity for individuals and families by identifying and addressing inadequacies within the system.

OBJECTIVE A: Improve accessibility and affordability of counseling services by reducing financial barriers and expanding funding opportunities.

1. **Expand Insurance and Payment Acceptance**: Increase the number of behavioral health providers who accept insurance, Medicaid, and scholarships by addressing systemic barriers and incentivizing providers to broaden their payment options.

2. **Increase Community Counseling Scholarships**: Expand the community counseling scholarship fund to ensure more individuals and families can access the behavioral health support they need, regardless of financial circumstances.

3. **Provide Access to Virtual Behavioral Health Support**: Provide access to virtual behavioral health services, coupled with support services to assist individuals in connecting with these resources.

4. **Support Behavioral Health Professionals in the Valley**: Develop initiatives to help behavioral health professionals live and work in the region, such as long-term subsidies to bridge reimbursement gaps, offering reduced-rate office space, administrative support for billing, and affordable housing solutions.

5. **Develop Career Pathways in Behavioral Health**: Create robust career pathways in the behavioral health field through internships, peer support specialist and promotora programs, and qualified mental health advocates. This will build a sustainable workforce and provide individuals with opportunities for professional growth.

6. **Incentivize Behavioral Health Careers**: Attract and retain professionals in the behavioral health sector by funding scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, and other incentives for students pursuing degrees in mental health, contingent upon a commitment to serve the community post-graduation.

7. **Advocate for Increased Reimbursement**: Advocate for increased Medicaid and Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) reimbursement rates to 75% of the standard insurance rate and reduce administrative burdens.

OBJECTIVE B: Address critical gaps in the behavioral health care continuum to ensure comprehensive, accessible, and effective care for all individuals.

1. **Expand Youth-Specific Therapy**: Expand access to specialized therapeutic services for youth, ensuring that evidence-based, age-appropriate treatment options are available.

2. **Provide Consistent Psychiatric Care**: Improve access to continuous and reliable psychiatric care, ensuring individuals have ongoing support for mental health needs.

3. **Increase Bilingual Behavioral Health Services**: Increase the availability of in-person and virtual bilingual or Spanish-only behavioral health services, ensuring immediate access to culturally competent therapy and support services for Spanish-speaking individuals.

4. **Expand Behavioral Health Group Support Programs**: Conduct an inventory of existing behavioral health group support programs, identify gaps, and collaborate with qualified professionals to expand and improve these offerings for the community.

5. **Improve Care Coordination and Transitions**: Develop a comprehensive care coordination system to ensure seamless transitions between risk assessments, referrals, and the client's treatment plan. Enhance follow-through and continuity of care to improve outcomes.

6. **Strengthen Mental Health Crisis Response and Case Management**: Strengthen mental health crisis response services and integrate case management to provide timely intervention and coordinated care for individuals in crisis.

7. **Expand Recovery Services and Treatment Plan Support**: Expand recovery services and community support resources to reinforce treatment plans and assist individuals in maintaining long-term mental health recovery.

8. **Increase Access to Intensive Outpatient Services**: Increase access to intensive outpatient programs for both children and adults to provide structured, short-term care for individuals needing more focused support.

9. **Investigate funding for Detox and Inpatient Substance Use Treatment:** Investigate funding options for detox and inpatient substance use treatment services to ensure access to critical care for individuals seeking to overcome substance use challenges and support their path to recovery.

OBJECTIVE C: Strengthen resource awareness and accessibility of critical community resources that support well-being to improve individual's ability to connect with necessary services.

1. **Increase Strategic Placement of Key Personnel**: Increase the availability of bilingual community liaisons, case managers, and licensed behavioral health professionals at strategically selected community locations to ensure broad access to support and resources.

2. **Develop a Centralized Resource Platform**: Create and launch a comprehensive digital hub that consolidates key behavioral health resources, including directories of clinicians, intensive outpatient programs, and support groups. The platform should allow users to filter resources by factors such as insurance type (including Medicaid), specialty, and service availability to ensure ease of access.

3. **Develop a Multi-Channel Marketing Campaign**: Develop and implement a targeted marketing campaign to raise awareness of the newly created resource platform and ensure the community is well-informed about where to access care.

Goal #4: Crisis Response

Establish a 24-hour Mental Health Crisis Response and Stabilization system.

OBJECTIVE A: Assess and optimize crisis lifelines by addressing gaps and redundancies in these systems and analyzing coordination with local resources.

1. **Identify Gaps and Redundancies:** Evaluate existing crisis lifeline systems to pinpoint underutilized, fragmented, or duplicated services across local, state, and national levels.

2. **Analyze Coordination with Local Resources:** Assess how crisis lifelines connect with local services, ensuring seamless coordination with healthcare providers, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and community organizations.

3. **Develop Integration Recommendations:** Create recommendations to optimize crisis lifelines' accessibility, efficiency, and responsiveness, and collaborate with stakeholders to improve system coordination.

OBJECTIVE B: Establish mental health crisis response capacity through CIT training, a dedicated response team, preventative paramedicine, and a mental health transportation solution.

1. **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training for First Responders:** Design and implement a CIT training program for law enforcement officers and EMS personnel, focusing on effective responses to mental health crises.

2. **Mobile Mental Health Response Team:** Develop a specialized team of licensed mental health professionals to respond to behavioral health crises, reducing reliance on law enforcement and improving care, de-escalation, and outcomes.

3. **Preventative Paramedicine Program:** Implement wellness checks for individuals at high risk of mental health crises, providing early intervention, support, and resources to prevent escalation and reduce emergency service demand.

4. **Mental Health Transportation Solution:** Create reliable transportation options for individuals needing mental health crisis care in Twin Falls, ensuring access until a crisis stabilization facility is established in the Wood River Valley.

OBJECTIVE C: Build crisis care and stabilization capacity by assessing needs, exploring interim solutions, and developing 23-hour crisis care services.

1. **Mental Health Crisis Data Collection:** Develop a comprehensive system in Blaine County to track and capture mental health crisis responses across local agencies, including the county, hospitals, and call centers, to inform a needs assessment.

2. **Conduct Needs Assessment:** Evaluate the demand for crisis care and stabilization services, identifying service gaps and target populations in the community.

3. **Explore Interim Crisis Care Solutions:** Investigate temporary crisis care options to implement while a permanent crisis care center is under development.

4. **Develop 23-Hour Crisis Care Services:** Create 23-hour crisis care services (stand-alone, embedded, or in-home) that are available on a walk-in basis or through referrals from family, friends, EMS, law enforcement, and healthcare providers.

Goal #5: Collaboration Infrastructure

Build the infrastructure required to sustain a collective impact approach to prioritize our community's mental health as essential to our overall health.

OBJECTIVE A: Provide leadership and coordinate efforts among resource providers and action teams to advance community-identified priorities of the Mental Well-Being Initiative.

1. **Facilitate Collaborative Meetings and Dialogue:** Organize and lead regular meetings with community partners, ensuring consistent communication and collaboration at every stage to advance the goals and objectives of the Mental Well-Being Initiative. Foster a culture of inclusivity and shared responsibility in driving progress.
2. **Build Sustainable Infrastructure for Ongoing Collaboration:** Establish and strengthen long-term systems and structures that support sustained collaboration between service providers, agencies, and organizations. Promote the concept of mental well-being as a collective, interconnected ecosystem, ensuring continuous engagement and coordination.
3. **Lead Sustainability and Strategic Planning Efforts:** Spearhead initial sustainability assessments and scoping efforts. Lead collective goal-setting processes, and create a framework for ongoing strategic planning, collaboration, and measurement of progress, ensuring alignment with the long-term vision of the Initiative.
4. **Develop a Shared Data Dashboard:** Design and implement a user-friendly, centralized dashboard to streamline the sharing of data, track progress, and monitor the achievement of goals related to the Mental Well-Being Initiative. This will provide all partners with transparent and up-to-date information to inform decision-making and continuous improvement.

OBJECTIVE B: Develop a unified communication strategy to promote mental well-being resources, programs, and events in the community.

1. **Collaborate to Promote Mental Health Initiatives:** Partner with community organizations to collectively promote mental health-related events, programs, and discussions. Identify gaps in coverage for key mental health topics and work with partners to create and deliver targeted events that address these unmet needs.
2. **Create a Comprehensive Resource Communication Plan:** Develop and implement a strategic communication plan that consolidates and disseminates all available mental health resources in the community. Take an ecosystem approach to ensure clear, accessible, and timely information about resources, services, and support options is communicated to diverse community members.
3. **Develop a Spanish-Language Communication Strategy:** Work closely with Hispanic leaders and community stakeholders to design a culturally relevant and language-specific communication strategy. This will ensure effective outreach and engagement with the Spanish-speaking population, making mental health resources and programs accessible to this community.

[i] Steering Committee members include Daniel Abrahamson (Roots Community Health Center), Amanda Deaver (Upstream Strategic Communications), Delvin Ash (St. Luke's Wood River Foundation), Sally Gillespie (Spur Community Foundation), Tyler Norris (MWBI Chair), Erin Pfaeffle (St. Luke's Health System), Deb Robertson (St. Luke's Wood River), Michelle Ross (St. Luke's Health System), Sarah Seppa (St. Luke's Center for Community Health), Megan Tanous (St. Luke's Wood River Foundation), and Jenna Vagias (MWBI Project Manager).

[ii] Initiative community pledged partners as of November 13, 2024 include:

- **Nonprofits:** St. Luke's Wood River Foundation, Spur Community Foundation, The Hunger Coalition, Love Like Ky, Wood River Community YMCA, The Crisis Hotline, Blaine County Education Foundation, Far + Wise, The Advocates, The Space, Just Serve, Higher Ground, Flourish Foundation, The Alliance of Idaho, National Alliance on Mental Illness WRV, Redside Foundation, The Community Library
- **Healthcare:** St. Luke's Wood River, Family Health Services, KH Counseling, Alpine Integrative Wellness, Sun Valley Ketamine Clinic, Flow State Psychotherapy, Resiliency Rising, Carbonate Recovery Center
- **Government:** Blaine County, Blaine County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Blaine County Sheriff's Department, Blaine County Recreation District, Hailey Public Library, Hailey Fire Department
- **Education:** Blaine County School District, The Sage School
- **Faith-based:** Wood River Interfaith Council, Light on the Mountains Center for Spiritual Living
- **Collaborations:** 5B Suicide Prevention Alliance, 5B Digital Wellness Network, Wood River Early Learning Collaborative, Communities for Youth
- **Individuals:** Rene Smey, Kim Pertel, Tom Poole, Laurie Strand