

Creating a System of Care for Pennsylvania's Most At-Risk Population

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Abstract

There has been a systematic shift towards community-based placements and services. Woods Community Services is filling the gaps between the highest level of care (Inpatient) and the lowest levels of care. By filling these gaps we are able to provide a complete continuum of care for individuals with ID and Autism. The WCS group home model fills the gap for those who are too difficult with a traditional group home model.

Introduction

Woods Services has over 110 years of experience serving children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). For the past five years, Woods Services has repositioned itself as a population health management organization and as a leader in sector.

As part of the 2020-2023 Strategic Directions plan, the Woods' team has set out to expand its services using its longstanding expertise through organic growth. With Board support, Woods formed Woods Community Services (WCS) to take its population health model into the community. Woods Community Services is a separate non-profit LLC which leverages the strong relationships, expertise and capacity of Woods Services and Woods' entire system of care encompassing six affiliated non-profit organizations.

With the news of Woods Services expansion into the community, the regional leadership of the PA Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) reached out in Fall of 2020 to explore a new partnership with WCS to serve medical and behavioral health complex I/DD adults in the southeast region. In August 2021, Woods Community Services admitted their first resident into the program. Previously, this individual spent a year of his life at Abington Hospital seeking placement in a community living arrangement. Due to his intense and significant behaviors, previous community-living arrangements were unsuccessful and he was discharged from their care. With the support of ODP and Magellan Behavior Health, Woods Community Services designed a unique treatment program for this individual that included forty plus hours of behavioral therapy from an in-house Clinician. His success in the program and within his new community has been astounding. He participates in recreational activities, has developed meaningful relationships with his neighbors and local businesses', is working towards competitive employment and is learning lifelong skills towards living a semi-independent life.

WCS receives adequate funding from ODP and Magellan to provide these individualized services. This has allowed our program to hire and retain highly skilled and qualified Behavior Support Staff who support this individual in gaining choice, freedom and control back into his life. His successful transition into community living is a testament of the highly trained and committed Behavior Support Staff who have provided him with lifelong tools to live a deeply meaningful life. It is a vision that we should all be working toward together.

Woods' population health approach was built on its successfully integrated whole-person care approach for people with intellectual disabilities, in order to address fragmentation of services and systems and barriers to care. Woods' model utilizes its health center located in Langhorne, Pennsylvania as an anchor which ties services together under one umbrella, including primary care, integrated with behavioral health and specialty medical services, behavior management, occupational, physical and speech therapies, pharmaceutical management, dental and long-term services and supports which address housing, supports in the activities of daily living, nutrition, vocational and recreational supports. The health center serves as a Patient-Centered Medical Home whose underlying tenet is care coordination which ensures communication among providers, tracks referrals and manages transitions from one level of care to another. Woods' population health approach is unique in that it brings together intellectual disability services with health care to create a truly integrated model of care for the whole person.

I/DD adult services are provided through the Home and Community Based Services waiver and require community placement in a group home, with a family member or semi-independent living arrangement. For decades, Woods Community at Brian's Home, one of Woods' systems of care organizations, has served dozens of adults aging out of the Woods Services at 21 in group home settings. However, a smaller group of adults aging out of Woods Services have severe medical and behavioral health challenges and require a more intense model of care than Brian's House can offer as a traditional group home provider. Thus, WCS was formed to address this need and ensure that clients from Pennsylvania can continue to be served by the Woods System of Care, which includes medical, dental and behavioral healthcare.

OPD has identified hundreds of complex I/DD adults with medical and/or behavioral health complexities that serves as the state's top priority for placement. ODP knows WCS and Woods Services have the knowledge, experience and capacity to serve the most complex individuals with I/DD.