

## Mental Health issues

Mental/behavioral health issues have reached epic proportions in Michigan. It has been the number one health need in MiThrive reviews in our region for several years, and the need has intensified with the pandemic. We face issues of lack of providers, severe underfunding/reimbursement, and lack of housing for providers if they could be found. Remote (telehealth) is somewhat helpful but is not appropriate for all situations.

The Northwest Michigan Community Health Innovation Region (CHIR) has been working to address these issues across 10 counties in Northwest Michigan (Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Benzie, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Kalkaska, Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet). The behavioral health initiative (<https://northernmichiganchir.org/northwest-chir/behavioral-health-initiative/>) has 14 action teams. Its Blueprint for action (<https://northernmichiganchir.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Post-Summit-Blueprint-for-Action.pdf>) shows that many of the people suffering from behavioral health issues or substance abuse remain untreated. The CHIR effort aims to

1. Increase the availability of behavioral health providers and services – including recruiting additional providers (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, licensed professional counselors and case-workers, etc), Expand the spectrum of services offered, including Crisis services and increase and coordinate funding. Increase internships and mentorships.
2. Promote easier access to behavioral health services and supports
3. Enhance the willingness and ability of people to seek support

## What can be done?

1. \$5 million has been pledged by Grand Traverse County to help fund a Crisis Center in Traverse City and Munson has also made an investment. The hope is that the crisis center will serve people from all of Northwest Lower Michigan with inpatient and outpatient behavioral health care. But more funds are needed, and there is a need to recruit more providers. A multidisciplinary center may attract providers who want to practice the highest level of care. Leelanau County, with a little over 20% of the population of Grand Traverse County, should fund the crisis center or recruitment efforts with a \$1 million investment, perhaps over several years.
2. Leelanau County commissioners sit on the Board of Northern Lakes CMH. Commissioners should support getting a grant writer to apply for grants to obtain a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic in our area.

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