Meeting the mental health needs of children & adolescents

An interview with Heather Beachler, Senior Manager, Child and Adolescent Services; and Laura Haile, Program Administrator, Child and Adolescent Outpatient Program.

Q. What type of programs does Pittsburgh Mercy offer for children and adolescents?
We offer three distinct programs designed to meet a wide range of needs:

- Our Child and Adolescent Ambulatory (Outpatient) and school-based therapy is a partnership with 40 schools throughout Allegheny County. It provides direct onsite therapy services to students in their schools, who only miss one class period per week. That makes it incredibly convenient for families, reducing the transportation and time barriers required for separate weekly therapy appointments. Currently, we partner with Pittsburgh Public School District, Shaler Area School District, Brentwood Borough School District, and Baldwin-Whitehall School District. In addition, we offer clinic-based therapy programs – both in-person and virtual – at our Reedsdale Street center on the North Side.
- Our Child and Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program is a short-term day program for six- to 18-year-olds who are experiencing significant distress and need more intensive treatment and support. Held at our Reedsdale Center, it’s staffed by a child psychiatrist, therapists, and nurses who provide evaluation, assessment, and monitoring. The length of treatment averages 10-15 days, depending on the child’s needs.
- Finally, our Child and Adolescent Residential Treatment Facility offers a 45-60 day stay at our Reedsdale Center where youth receive 24/7 care.

In both the Partial Hospitalization Program and Residential Treatment Facility, Pittsburgh Public School teachers provide classroom studies for all ages to ensure that students’ learning objectives are not impacted. In addition, all of our child and adolescent psychiatrists provide medication management therapy as needed.

Q. What has changed since COVID-19?
The pandemic has driven more demand for our services, with increased referrals from teachers and guidance counselors. Back-to-school is always a high-demand time, and this year it’s even more so given that many students haven’t been in a classroom for 18+ months and heading back can trigger anxiety and other mental health concerns.

To ensure safety, we’ve been operating our partial and residential treatment programs at reduced capacity to comply with COVID-19 social distancing requirements. One thing that hasn’t changed: Pittsburgh Mercy continues to offer outpatient care to
Q. What’s the overall goal of your child & adolescent programs? We aim to support children and adolescents in recovery, promote healthy decisions, and help them live well in the community. We know that both mental health and behavioral health issues can significantly affect all aspects of a young person’s life. By intervening early with supportive, non-judgmental care, we’re able to make a real difference in their lives and the lives of their families.

Learn more at www.pittsburghmercy.org → Behavioral Health tab.

Celebrating Mercy Day with Carlow University

Mercy Day, September 24, marks the anniversary of the opening of the “House of Mercy” in 1827 in Dublin, Ireland, and honors Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy. Each year, we celebrate this selfless hero, who came to Pittsburgh in 1843 to minister to the growing needs of our community. Read her amazing story.

Our 2021 Mercy Day celebration featured tea parties for clients and guests, treats and games at our residential sites, and a wonderful partnership with Carlow University. Fifteen student volunteers spent the day organizing donations made to Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net, our program that serves those experiencing homelessness. Donated boots, shoes, coats, and clothing were sorted and boxed for storage at our central warehouse in the South Side, ready for distribution at our Severe Weather Shelter and Drop-in Center. Many thanks to our generous volunteers! (Photos by Heather Mull for Carlow University)

Call to Action!

United Way’s 2022 Payroll Deduction Program is underway. If your employer participates, please consider supporting Pittsburgh Mercy using the following Contribution Codes:

- Mercy Behavioral Health - Code 316
- Pittsburgh Mercy Community Outreach Programs - Code 204
- Pittsburgh Mercy Intellectual Disabilities Services - Code 887385
- Pittsburgh Mercy Free Care Fund - Code 997602
- Pittsburgh Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program - Code 9915
- Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net - Code 4677

Prefer to donate directly to Pittsburgh Mercy? Email us at development@pittsburghmercy.org or call 412-697-0730. You also can make an online donation, and recurring gift in whatever amount and frequency you prefer. Thank you for your support!

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