

Healthbeat



NEW LOCATION, RENEWED SENSE OF PURPOSE





Christopher Lloyd, Director of Branding and Communications
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Christopher Lloyd, Director of Branding and Communications

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Christopher Lloyd, Director of Branding and Communications

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Brooke Elf, Recruiting Specialist

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PHOTOGRAPHY / ILLUSTRATION

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Stand Up for Kids!

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New location, renewed sense of purpose for Kids Talk

By Emily Jones

Kids Talk Child Advocacy Center is now in its ninth year of providing Madison County children a safe place to talk.



L to R: Julie Coon, Forensic Interviewer; Denise Valdez, Executive Director of Kids Talk; Amy Bounds, Victim Advocate; Becky Oldham, Victim Advocate/Forensic Interviewer

HOW TO GET HELP

Call (765) 641-8202

or email

kidstalk@aspireindiana.org

Kids Talk Child Advocacy Center is now in its ninth year of providing Madison County children a safe place to talk about abuse or neglect they may have experienced or witnessed. In that time they've helped more than 4,000 families begin the healing process while assisting local law enforcement in prosecuting criminals.

Now, a new era has dawned with a renewed sense of purpose and direction. Kids Talk has added sex trafficking and protection of elder abuse victims and vulnerable adults to its mission. And they renewed their in-person preven-

tion educational programs in Madison County schools, which had been suspended during the COVID pandemic, to let children know when and how to let an adult know about something they've experienced.

The evolution of Kids Talk, a program of Aspire Indiana Health, is also marked in one very tangible way: their recent move to a new location in downtown Anderson, 814 Central Avenue.

Denise Valdez, executive director of Kids Talk, says the new location provides a more modern, calming space in a safer neighborhood for families to bring their children for very delicate conversations.

Despite all these changes, the Aspire team at Kids Talk has remained remarkably stable during its existence.

"Each person plays an important part in the team. They are the reason the Kids Talk team does an amazing job at what they do!" Valdez says.

Becky Oldham is one of the individuals on the Kids Talk team. Becky's primary role is as a victim advocate and forensic interviewer. Along with this title she is also a manager overseeing the daily operations and staff oversight.

Julie Coon is the primary forensic interviewer. Although all of the individuals on this team are cross-trained to perform in all Kids Talk programs, this is her primary focus and contribution to the team.

Amy Bounds fulfills the role of victim advocate. Along with this title she is also the prevention program coordinator, and recently finished her training and certification to provide forensic interviews as well.

Each individual plays a part in the multidisciplinary team, which consists of law enforcement, prosecution, Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS), forensic interviewers, victim advocates, mental health and medical services. All members of the Kids Talk team have specific qualities that make the team successful. "We are all super compassionate. We are all passionate advocates for children," Valdez says.

There are three programs at "Kids Talk. The core program is forensic interviewing. The forensic interviewing process happens when kids are reported as abused or neglected or are witnesses to violent crimes. Rather than being interviewed

by multiple agencies for investigative purposes, they are brought to Kids Talk. The kids that are interviewed range from ages 3-17.

During the interview process, there is only one forensic interviewer in the room with a child. While the interview is being conducted, it is being observed live via video feed and recorded in another room by detectives, prosecutors and DCS. Interviewers wear discreet earpieces and carry a radio that allows investigators to speak directly in their ear in the event an interviewer doesn't ask a question that needs to be presented to the child. In cases where children disclose abuse or criminal neglect, Kids Talk facilitates monthly case review with the multidisciplinary team in order to share information, receive investigation updates and ensure seamless delivery of services to children and their caregivers.

The second program is victim advocacy. This includes talking to caregivers to prepare children for upcoming visits and answer any questions they have. During the visit to Kids Talk, advocates speak with caregivers to assess needs of the child and family, answer questions about the investigative process and victims rights, provide brief crisis debriefing if needed, educate caregivers on short and longer term impacts of trauma without intervention, encourage therapeutic

intervention and facilitate referrals to support services. In cases involving imminent threat to children and caregivers, Kids Talk advocates will help the family with protective order applications. Kids Talk advocates also provide follow up contacts to caregivers in the weeks and months following a visit to answer questions, encourage therapeutic interventions when needed and intervene with investigative agencies.

The third program is the Kids Talk prevention program, divided into two parts. The first is called Body Boundaries. This program is for younger elementary age students, generally kindergarten through third grade. It focuses on teaching correct anatomical names for private body parts and five essential body safety rules. It includes classroom instruction and body safety rules posters for the classroom. They are:

- No one can touch my body without my permission.
- No one can look at my body without my permission.
- No one can take pictures and videos of me without my clothes on.
- We do not play games or keep secrets about our private body parts.
- If someone breaks one of the rules, I will tell a trusted adult.

"We teach them that if anyone breaks one of these rules, the new rule is they need to tell an adult they can trust. A part of the

program is having the children identify individuals who they can trust both in school and at home," Valdez says. "At the end of the program the students fill out a small piece of paper indicating whether they need to talk to someone about what they have learned. Our personnel will speak privately to each child who indicates that they would like to speak to someone to assess whether the child has a concern that needs to be addressed."

For older kids, generally starting around fourth grade, there is the Staying Safe in the Digital World portion of the prevention program. Throughout this program they talk to students about safety when they're online, gaming or participating in any other digital activities.

Once in middle school, students begin having conversations about sexting, which is text messaging that includes explicit language about sex and/or exchanges of intimate photos or video. The Kids Talk team talks about the importance of consent and the long-term implications

of having explicit material about yourself floating around the web, which could potentially impact things like college applications, scholarships and even job prospects.

"We make them start thinking about what is okay and what's not okay. Sexting is an epidemic in schools. It's not just here, it's everywhere!" Valdez says.

Since Kids Talk opened, child abuse cases filed have more than tripled, with approximately 80 currently sitting in the courts awaiting trial.

Last year Kids Talk staff went through training to expand their scope to two other populations: sex trafficking victims and elder abuse victims or vulnerable adults with cognitive disabilities. Indiana is a major crossroads of child sex trafficking owing to its geographic location. While the majority of child sex trafficking cases in Madison County are perpetrated by the families of children, Kids Talk staff have the ability to identify and respond to familial cases as well as federal

cases which tend to involve children trafficked in from other areas. In cases involving elderly people and adults with developmental disabilities, Kids Talk staff are trained and certified to interview people with special needs including non-verbal victims.

Valdez says this new more expansive mission will have a big impact on the Madison County community - not only to help these specific victims, but to create an atmosphere where everyone feels less stigma about seeking help when they encounter abuse.

"It can be intimidating for victims, especially the older they get, to think about going and speaking with investigators. If they know there's a place specifically designed for victims where they'll be getting support from people who are especially trained in the trauma involved with victimization, they're going to feel more comfortable discussing things that have happened to them," she says. ■



PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEW CHIEF CULTURE OFFICER

Please join us in welcoming **Dr. Gina Forrest** to the Aspire executive team in the new position of Chief Culture Officer. Forrest is a veteran educator, trainer, researcher and thought leader who has been focusing on inclusivity issues for many years.

Learn more about Forrest and why Aspire created this position by [clicking here](#).

JOIN THE CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

If you're a past or present patient of Aspire Indiana Health, please consider volunteering for our Consumer Advisory Committee! These fine folks provide feedback and ideas on the company's policies and procedures to help improve the patient experience. It's an opportunity to improve the delivery of healthcare in central Hoosier communities.

If you're interested, please email: darrell.mitchell@aspireindiana.org



- Lillian Anderson
- Valerie Anderson
- Paul Brown
- James Call
- Amy Corlew
- Melissa Dodge
- Mike Garland
- Shayla Harris
- Amanda Metzger
- Rachael Santos
- Diadra Spalding
- Jazymne Tidwell
- Stephanie Warmke
- Clay Waterman



Aspire Indiana Health wants to thank a fantastic class of spring interns who recently finished up their stints with us. **Aerial Simmons** of Ball State University produced this video about her and other interns' experience. Take a look!

Kids-Talk is entirely grant and fundraising effort funded. Fundraising opportunities include donations and our annual comedy night On September 10, 2022 comedian Joe Deuce will be headlining at the Paramount Theatre Ballroom! Check out funny4kidz.givesmart.com for more information and tickets.

Aspire honored with three state awards



L to R: Kathleen Bowers, Syd Ehmke, Amber Gordon, Mike Keevin, Jerry Landers

Aspire Indiana Health has been honored with three awards by the Indiana Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA) recognizing the company's leading role as an innovator and nonprofit provider of comprehensive healthcare services.

"It's an incredible honor to be recognized by our peers in primary care, especially Aspire's efforts to reach challenged and underserved Hoosier populations," said Aspire President & CEO Barbara Scott. "We're very proud of these team members as well as our entire staff of dedicated individuals, who make a difference every day in the communities we serve."

Syd Ehmke, Vice President of FQHC Medical Services, was honored with the Debra Meers Grassroots Advocacy Award, which is given to a person who has been a strong voice for community health centers within the state, national legislature and local community.

Ehmke has improved Aspire Indiana Health's quality program, enhanced community health worker programming, expanded the Harm Reduction Program syringe exchange services in Madison County, strongly advocated for tobacco cessation among those with substance use disorder and most recently

navigated Aspire Indiana Health's telehealth response to COVID-19, including overseeing the sourcing and distribution of more than 40,000 COVID test kits to partners and organizations serving at-risk populations.

Jerry Landers, Vice President of Strategy and Business Development, was given the Employee of the Year Award, which recognizes a primary health employee (nonpractitioner) who has demonstrated excellence through: 1) patient advocacy; 2) innovative programs/services/systems; or 3) collaborative efforts.

Among Landers' recent accomplishments are partnering with a school system in a rural part of Indiana to open a medical clinic in a severely underserved community, and overseeing the Crowne Plaza Project team for Aspire that advocated on behalf of Indianapolis' homeless population during the height of the COVID pandemic.

This project, a broad collaborative effort with the city of Indianapolis, was awarded the IPHCA Special

Based Services; and **Mike Keevin**, Vice President of Social Drivers of Health.

The Crowne Plaza Project was an ambitious undertaking involving the city of Indianapolis and a number of government and nonprofit agencies to move homeless individuals into temporary housing and eventually into permanent housing.

Launched in August 2020, it was designed to keep

to food, etc.), and 3) work with several other agencies to provide housing services including search and placement in permanent housing, access to furniture and support for moving in to their new homes.

The result was a significant shift in Indianapolis' homeless population that had been living on the streets during the COVID pandemic to a more stable indoor living situation on a temporary basis with access to

"It's an incredible honor to be recognized by our peers in primary care, especially Aspire's efforts to reach challenged and underserved Hoosier populations,"

— Aspire President & CEO Barbara Scott

Exemplary Project Award, which honors a notable project by a member organization that has demonstrated excellence through 1) advocacy; 2) innovative programs/services/ systems that have increased access, improved health care services to the community, or decreased disparities; or 3) collaborative efforts to reach high-risk populations in the community.

In addition to Landers, the Aspire Crowne Plaza Project team included **Amber Gordon**, Manager of Social Drivers of Health; **Kathleen Bowers**, Director of Home & Community

homeless individuals who were at heightened vulnerability for COVID healthy and safe.

Aspire Indiana Health was closely involved, using its longstanding expertise in getting challenged and at-risk populations, including veterans, housed in a stable and affordable environment.

Aspire acted to 1) Advocate on behalf of the residents and act as mediator between them and the hotel, 2) provide individual case management to link them to other services (primary care, behavioral care, substance use treatment, employment, access

healthcare services, and eventually to permanent housing. The project's success received notable media coverage.

"It was the relationship and the trust built between Aspire, the other service providers, and ultimately the clients that contributed to the success of the project. We helped the residents on an individual level immensely but we also helped them on a global level by getting all of the entities out there to work together," according to the project team. ■

Welcome New Employees!

Camesia Davidson

Non-Clinical Internship
Indianapolis

Jon Lambert

CC/LSI
DeHaven

Mercede Paul

Non-Clinical Internship
Administration

Brittany Fancher

CC/LSI
DeHaven

Sara Leatherberry

CC/LSI
Noblesville

Antonio Rawls

Front Desk Associate
Progress House

Gina Forrest

Chief Culture Officer
Administration

Brittany Malon

License Eligible Staff Therapist
DeHaven

Mackenzie Smith

Non-Clinical Internship
Administration

Jessica Guzman

Non-Clinical Internship
Administration

Jeremy Middleton

CC/LSI
DeHaven

Rachel Snyder

Supervisor, Home &
Community Based Services Y&F
Indianapolis

Olga-Marie Jodio

Nurse Practitioner — Psychiatric
Indianapolis

Priscilla Nickerson

Data Entry Clerk
Carmel

Top 5 Hottest Jobs

- 1 [CCLSI](#)
- 2 [Life Skills Coach](#)
- 3 [Safety Coordinator](#)
- 4 [CMA](#)
- 5 [Manager- Home and Community Based Services](#)

