



SECTION

Health department explains new student services Four more community meetings planned for this month

By Margie Carter
The Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) held a town hall meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 4, the first of five scheduled throughout the county, to provide information for the new Douglas County Health Center. The presentation was led by Abby Hendren of DCHD and the clinic manager.

The health center process began in March 2022, when the health department submitted an application to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) for a grant to establish a “school-based health center.” The program has been used by school districts and health departments around the state in the past and is characterized as being

responsible for providing comprehensive primary and preventative physical, mental health, and health education services for students and their families. Upon completion of the application, DCHD began a needs assessment with local school districts which included surveys and additional research data. Although

the needs assessment identified Arcola district as being most in need of services, space limitations would not allow for the health center to be located on-site in Arcola schools. The department recognized that the center would have more impact and still be accessible if located at the site of the current health department, which will serve

vice Tuscola, Arcola, Arthur, Villa Grove, and Shiloh school districts. After a brief overview of the advisory board’s involvement and the services that will be available, Hendren introduced Wade Stark, LCPC, as the mental health provider for the health center. Stark said he grew up in Mattoon and is excited to service the community that is close to home. With 8 years of experience, Stark is trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and crisis intervention, as well as a certified Anger Management Counselor. He will also be leading the adult and teen group therapy sessions currently scheduled to start in Aug 2023.

The anger management program is compliant with the local court systems, such as probation requirements. The microphone passed on to Matya Riley, FNP-C, who will be the medical provider for the health center. Riley is certified as a provider in lactation consulting, GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality, World Professional Association for Transgender Health (W-PATH), and Medication Cannabis Patient Program (MCP). As a certified Family Nurse Practitioner, she will provide services ranging in well-baby care, school and sports physicals, care and treatment of minor injuries, immunizations, and substance use disorders.

The clinic will also have a certified medical assistant, Dayse Vilelia. During the Q&A portion of the town hall, a representative from the Danville Branch NAACP spoke of a transportation grant that their center had received which covered Vermillion and Douglas County. DCHD administrators seemed interested in connecting both programs, as it would mean the center could possibly offer transportation for clients and patients.

A member of the advisory board also spoke with insight on the results of the surveys that area school districts returned. He said as it stands now, Douglas County has one mental health provider for every 10,000 residents. More alarming, he stated that 1 in 4 eighth graders reported having seriously considered suicide and that 4 in 10 reported suffering with debilitating depression/anxiety.

Members of the public were given the opportunity to ask questions as well. One resident spoke of the limitation of services offered at the public schools and asked if the health center would be looking into providing transportation during the school day for patients. Hendren replied that the subject was already on the board’s radar, along with the services they offer and staying current with the needs of the community. The opening date for DCHD is set for Feb 6. The center will operate 5 days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Wednesday 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Hours were approved by the advisory board but may change as the program develops.

Most private insurances will be accepted, as will Medicaid. Uninsured patients can utilize the center’s sliding fee scale based on income, though it was noted that all clients/patients would be served regardless of ability to pay.

Among the day-to-day services offered, DCHD will begin group therapy for both DBT and anger management, with separate sessions for adults and teens. Group therapy will consist of 12-week courses, with adult anger management starting in June and DBT in October. No date was set for the teen anger management group.

The remaining town halls will be held from 6-8 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

- Camargo Library — Jan. 9
- Arcola School — Jan. 11
- ALAH High School — Jan. 18
- Shiloh School — Jan. 25

Questions can be directed to Abby Hendren at ahendren@dchealthil.org or 217-253-4137.

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