

2016 Community Health Leadership Award – Nomination

Nominator Name: Medrice Coluccio, Chief Executive, Providence Health & Services,
Southwest Washington Region

Organization Being Nominated: Providence St. Peter Hospital

Name of Program: The Providence Sexual Assault Clinic and Child Maltreatment Center

Program Contact: Joyce Gilbert, MD

Program Description:

Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is at epidemic levels. Current estimates are that 10 percent of all children are abused prior to their 18th birthday, a rate 2 ½ times greater than the frequency of all adult rapes. CSA is one of the most prevalent health problems children face today and is associated with devastating health and economic consequences to both the individual family and to the community in which the child lives.

Founded in 1991, the clinic is innovative leader in providing caring and quality services to victims of sexual assault and child maltreatment, and their families. The clinic, which is supported by donations to Providence St. Peter Foundation, is the only facility of its kind in the region and serves a five-county area. It receives patient referrals from law enforcement, Child Protective Services and area medical providers.

The clinic provides specialized medical care, support and resources to meet the needs of families in crisis. Located in Lacey, it is staffed by medical social workers, nurse practitioners and a board-certified pediatrician.

Population Served:

Each year, the Sexual Assault Clinic of Providence St. Peter Hospital serves more than 350 patients and their families from Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The clinic also works with Indian Child Welfare (ICW) and our tribal communities. The clinic is the only facility of its kind in the region and serves an area that is primarily rural.

Most of the patients seen at the clinic are children. This is not surprising given the fact that 70 percent of all reported sexual assaults (including assaults on adults) involve children ages 17 and under.

Goal and measure of success:

The goal of the clinic is two-fold:

First, to provide the best advocacy support for children who are suspected victims of childhood sexual abuse.

Second, to bring awareness of the problem to the community with an emphasis on prevention by educating as many as possible on the signs of abuse.

The measure of success is based on numbers of community members we educate, and the continued service to the children of our community.

How did the nominee identify the community's health need, for example, did you use the community health needs assessment?

As the largest health care provider in Lewis and Thurston counties, Providence has a long tradition of identifying community health needs. We use many resources to identify such needs, including feedback from employees, patient satisfaction surveys, health fair attendees, community partners and community opinion surveys. However, we rely most heavily on the results of our Community Needs Assessment and input from our volunteer Community Ministry Boards.

Each year, Providence conducts a Community Needs Assessment. The assessment data analysis includes:

- Thomson-Reuters Community Needs Assessment (CNI) scores by zip code
- Robert Woods Johnson Foundation county health rankings
- Behavioral risk factor data from county health departments
- Primary care physician supply analysis

Providence Southwest Washington current and prior year community benefit spending (which for 2015 was nearly \$44.1 million in uncompensated care for the residents of Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. This includes \$7.1 million in free and reduced care for those in need and \$32 million to pay for the cost of underfunded government programs such as Medicaid.)

This information is then distributed to our Community Ministry Boards, which are made up of community leaders who oversee the hospital's health care programs and services. Our Community Ministry Boards review data from the Community Needs Assessment and share qualitative information about community needs, current initiatives and partnership opportunities. They then identify projects they deem the most crucial for the areas we serve.

Four priority areas were highlighted:

- Access to Health Care
- Behavioral Health
- Health Education
- At-risk Children

We are grateful for the leadership of our Community Ministry Boards, and their guidance in providing and meeting the needs of our five counties.

Describe how community partners were involved:

The Sexual Assault Clinic receives patient referrals from law enforcement, Child Protective Services and area medical providers.

The Sexual Assault Clinic is located within the Monarch Children's Justice & Advocacy Center, which is a program of the Community Action Council. Child Advocacy Centers work to reduce the incidence and impact of child abuse by providing a coordinated, multidisciplinary response to victims of child abuse

and their families. This response includes prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment and includes community partners who are experts in those areas.

Our partners include:

- DSHS/Division of Children's Services
- DSHS/Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration
- Lacey Police Department
- Office of the Attorney General
- Olympia Police Department
- Private therapists and child advocates
- Providence St. Peter Hospital Sexual Assault Clinic*
- Rainier Police Department
- Safeplace
- Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Office Special Victim's Team
- Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Victim/Witness Program
- Thurston County Public Health & Social Services
- Thurston County Sheriff's Office
- Tumwater Police Department
- Yelm Police Department

Was the Board of Trustees or the Board of Commissioners involved in the program?

Our Community Ministry Board was instrumental in establishing the program through their decision to prioritize serving at-risk children. They advocated strongly for the program throughout its initial implementation and continue to support for the program throughout our community.

Did you use data in benchmarking and goal setting? If you didn't use data, how did you evaluate effectiveness? Please describe.

We know we help when a child is able to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment, free from abuse or neglect. The statistics of success include the rate of reunification of child with parent after adequate education and involvement of Child Protection Services within the core family. Another measure of success would be the number of convictions and plea agreements our Special Victims Team procures on an annual basis. The best measure of success is many years down the road, when an abused child is able to be a functional adult, free from trauma-related issues such as long term medical conditions or substance abuse, and then able to successfully parent their own child without abuse.

How did this project help to advance the cause of Equity of Care in Washington State?

The Providence Sexual Assault Clinic serves our community's most vulnerable population—its children. In Washington, the statewide average for the number of households that are either at or below the federal poverty level or are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) is 32 percent. Each of the counties within the service area of the clinic is above this level. This means that up to 43 percent of the households within our service area struggle to meet basic needs, which can result in living in inadequate housing, poor nutrition, and lack of access to healthcare, all of which can impact health.

Carrying out the Providence mission means providing compassionate care to all, especially the poor and the vulnerable. The program provides roughly \$1 million in uncompensated services each year, which is evidence of our commitment to serving victims of sexual assault.

In addition, we know that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) affect a child not only while they are experiencing trauma, but also throughout their lives. ACES, when left untreated, can impact a person's long term health and have been linked to obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide, heart disease, cancer and stroke. Additionally, ACEs can lead to health behaviors like smoking, alcoholism, drug use, and physical activity.

By working with children to address both the physical and emotional tolls of sexual assault while they are young, we are helping them be happier and healthier in childhood and in adulthood. Consequently, we are helping prevent some of the long term health impacts of ACEs and enabling these children to lead healthier, more fulfilled lives for the rest of their lives.

What results are you seeing? What difference has this program made in the community?

Child physical abuse and child sexual assault are traumatic events for both the child and their family. Providence St. Peter Sexual Assault Clinic and Child Maltreatment Center can address these traumatic events without causing further trauma to the child victim. This is accomplished by coordinating interviews of the child, working with the partnering agencies to facilitate the best practice in forensic interviews and medical examinations, providing trauma-informed care for the child and non-offending caregiver, and facilitating long term follow up and counseling.

A testimonial to the success of this system occurred recently: A nine year old boy and his 11 year old sister were sexually abused by a member of their family. Both children had forensic interviews at the Providence Clinic, and medical examinations by our specially trained staff. The children participated in counseling with trauma trained staff at Monarch. Included in all of these encounters was Astro, our facility dog who is certified and specially trained to assist trauma victims through the interview process, medical examinations, and counseling. As the court date approached the 9 year old was quite fearful of facing his abuser and telling the judge everything that had happened to him. The prosecutor recommended and obtained permission for Astro to accompany the child to court and lay in the witness box to help calm the child. This worked exceptionally well with the 9 year old who was able to discuss many terrible things that had been done to him to both the judge and the jury; the jury did not even know the dog was present. The collaboration between law enforcement, medical personnel, counselors, and the judicial system benefits the victim by streamlining the steps toward recovery and prosecution, thereby reducing further trauma, and allows justice for the crimes committed.

Has this program been awarded or recognized by others?

Each year, Providence Health & Services recognizes programs and services across our entire organization that demonstrate extraordinary community-focused service through its Mission Leadership Award. In 2013, The Providence Sexual Assault Clinic and Child Maltreatment Center received the Mission Leadership Award.

In addition, the American Hospital Association (AHA) featured the Providence Sexual Assault Clinic and Child Maltreatment Center in its Community Connections: Ideas & Innovations for Hospital Leaders publication. A case study describing the Clinic was included under the category "Social and Basic Needs." As the AHA states, "non-medical needs are often intricately tied to personal health and well-being." The AHA recognizes hospitals working to address social, basic and personal needs as a way to improve their communities' health.

Who else was involved in making this successful?

The Providence Sexual Assault Clinic and Child Maltreatment Center partners with all of the organizations that are co-located at the Monarch Children's Justice & Advocacy Center. By providing comprehensive legal, medical and behavioral health services in one location, we reduce trauma to children and their families, helping them move beyond the abuse more quickly. Together, we are all making a real difference in the lives of our community's most vulnerable children.

Anything else you want to add about this program?

Child abuse and sexual assault treatment is just one of our approaches toward the problem; we also work toward reducing and eliminating it from happening. Research has documented that community education is one of the most important, least expensive, and most effective approaches to combat the problem.

Our "Darkness to Light" trainings, offered six times a year, teaches adults to recognize, prevent and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. The program is designed for individuals concerned about the safety of children as well as organizations that serve youth.

The program includes:

- An interactive workbook and a 7 Steps Guide for each participant containing the full program curriculum
- An accompanying 1.5 hour VHS/DVD integrating segments of sexual abuse survivors relating their stories of violation and healing, with segments from the author of the curriculum and from professionals who interface daily with the problem of sexual abuse
- Opportunity for discussion about important issues in sexual abuse prevention and the relevance of these issues within organizations that serve children and adolescents.

After training participants will:

- Understand the facts of child sexual abuse - incidence rates and effects on individuals and society
- Understand how child sexual abuse happens

- Understand that adults are responsible for the protection of children
- Understand the importance of screening staff/volunteers who work with children and adolescents
- Have resources to react responsibly to incidents of child sexual abuse
- Understand the proactive role youth-serving organizations need to take to protect children and educate their communities about child sexual abuse

Since the program's beginning in 2008, our facilitators have educated 1,026 people in our community. Our goal for Darkness to Light is to reach 10 percent of the population of Thurston County, invoking a community shift in attitude leading to zero tolerance and heightened vigilance against all potential perpetrators.

Recent comments from participants of our class include:

- "Great and effective training"
- "Empowering and inspiring"
- "The personal stories were impactful"
- "Great instruction, great information"

If we can significantly decrease the number of victims of child sexual abuse, we can go a long way toward ensuring a healthier community.