Finding the right health care can be a challenge for anyone. For people with complex behavioral health, substance abuse, physical health, and social needs, however, it can be nearly impossible.

Many of our community members with the most complex health needs become health care “super-utilizers” – a term that refers to individuals whose needs are not well met in the current health care system, and as a result they bounce from emergency room to emergency room, inpatient admission to admission, and even from institutionalization and back again – without solving their health care needs.

Thanks to support from donors like you, CHL’s Community Support Program (CSP) is working to improve health care access and patient outcomes for our region’s “super-utilizers” through an innovative program of short-term, intensive outreach and care management.

CSP services focus on helping clients overcome obstacles to establishing and maintaining access to health care, community-based resources, and social supports. CSP staff meet with clients in a variety of settings including hospitals, clinics, at the client's home, in the community, or at CHL. In concert with clients, CSP staff coordinate with clients’ health care providers, help clients with transportation to appointments, connect clients to housing and benefits programs, link clients to support groups, and foster empowerment and recovery for clients.

By supporting CHL and its programs, you helped James, a CSP client, find his Superman. Here are James’ own words of gratitude about the difference you and CSP made in his life:

“I am visiting family in the area for Thanksgiving. Last year at this time I was homeless, drinking, and using drugs. I went to the emergency room and a nurse had me meet a man named Richard [a CHL case manager]. He helped me. He put me in a shelter. He helped me go to Detox. Richard did a lot to help me. He saved my life. If I did not meet him I would not be here today. I have been sober for a year now. I have an apartment and see my family all the time now. I got a job and I am saving money to buy a car. I wanted to let someone know how much Richard helped me... It’s the time of year to be thankful, and I wanted to thank him. If I could buy him a cape I would because he is truly my Superman.”
Every mother knows how difficult it can be to raise a baby. Imagine facing those challenges while struggling with depression as well.

That was the situation that Erika found herself in when her son Lucas was born. In addition to the everyday challenges she had raising Lucas, Erika felt overwhelmed, alone, and was suffering from depression.

“I hid away from everyone.”

“I felt like I was always being punished, like maybe I had done something wrong. I was telling myself I didn’t deserve things, that I wasn’t a good mom, that I wasn’t good enough.” As time passed, Erika removed herself from involvement with the world around her.

“I hid. I hid away from everyone,” Erika explains. “I lost a lot of friends. I couldn’t explain to people why I didn’t want to talk to anyone. I didn’t feel like I was worth their time. I was not feeling good enough to talk to anyone, so why should I bring anyone down? I might as well just stay alone.”

Erika’s negative state and emotions spiraled downwards. At one point, after a horrible sleepless night, she intentionally hurt herself and ended up in the emergency room. She says that during her time at the hospital, one of the doctors said, “It sounds to me like you didn’t really want to hurt yourself, you just wanted to be heard. You just wanted someone to listen to you.”

“When you change the way you’re thinking, everything else changes too.”

Fortunately, Erika found CHL’s Moving Beyond Depression program, a comprehensive, evidence-based and integrated approach to identifying and treating depression in mothers through a systemic, home-based program of In-Home Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Erika’s clinician, Heather, came to Erika’s home for 15 separate therapy sessions.

Erika said that Heather helped her learn to recognize her negative, self-defeating thoughts and overcome them. Erika explained, “That’s something I still use every day. I just tell myself, ‘No, that’s not right. You need to look at this situation differently.’ And when you change the way you’re thinking, everything else changes too. I needed that.”

Thanks to her time with Heather, Erika’s outlook on life has changed dramatically. “Before, I thought that I wasn’t going anywhere or doing anything with my life. I thought because I’d had kids I’d given up – that I’d chosen that life and I couldn’t choose any other option other than being a mom. Now, I’m going to school... and I see myself opening up my own shop and being a career woman and a mom. I thought I’d lost all that and that I wasn’t going to be able to be the person I always wanted to be. And now I can.”

Erika says that, “I still have those moments and days that come when I feel a little sad or confused but I can tell myself ‘No, it’s okay, you know what to do, you know how to make it better. Maybe it just means you need to take a bath tonight, or maybe you need to do some yoga. I have to just remember.’ And thanks to Heather I know how to do that.”

“I want every mom to remember that she’s important.”

When asked about advice that she would give other moms with depression, Erika is quick to point out the difficulty people have in asking for help. “I know a lot of people get embarrassed and ashamed at feeling that way...they have to not be afraid to go talk to someone. I want every mom to remember that she’s important, and when someone has that sense of worth then they are able to be the best that they can be.”
Generosity from Fallon Health

Fallon Health’s gift to CHL’s Families and Communities Together program will bring wellness education to children with serious emotional disturbance.

CHL recently received a $15,000 grant from Fallon Health to support the development of a wellness program for children in our Families and Communities Together (FCT) program. Pictured from L to R: Kimberly Salmon, Director of Community Relations at Fallon Health; Carolyn Droser, Vice President at CHL; Janice Rose, Family Partner Supervisor at CHL’s FCT Worcester program; Nicole Gagne, CHL’s Interim President; Rosa Hernandez, Director of Intensive Care Coordination at CHL’s FCT Worcester program; and Kathy Mullen, Senior Care Products Account Executive at Fallon Health.

Critical new services for CHL clients

Support from donors and funders allows CHL to continuously expand and improve the services we offer to our clients. Over the next few months, we will open two new programs aimed at helping people recover from behavioral health issues, addiction, and homelessness.

STAR Program in Worcester

CHL was recently awarded a contract from the Mass. Department of Mental Health to open a new residential program for homeless individuals. The Stabilization Treatment and Recovery (STAR) Program will offer a community-based, early recovery model of housing as an alternative to shelter placement for nine homeless individuals. In addition to housing, the STAR Program provides help to secure benefits, assistance completing housing applications, social support, and crisis intervention.

Office-Based Opioid Treatment in Leominster

In an attempt to reduce opioid addiction in north Worcester County, CHL applied for and was awarded a contract from the Mass. Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) to offer Office Based Opioid Treatment (OBOT) at its 40 Spruce Street primary care clinic in Leominster. OBOT is an evidence-based approach that acknowledges that opioid addiction is a chronic medical condition similar to other medical conditions. OBOT provides medication that enables opioid-addicted individuals to discontinue the misuse of opioids without experiencing withdrawal symptoms. Coupled with mandatory addiction counseling, OBOT can help people on the path to life-long recovery from opioid-addiction.
Newslink, CHL's newsletter, is published several times each year.

Questions and comments can be directed to:

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Fun times for CBFS clients at the CHL Sock Hop!

Thanks to your support, a number of clients in CHL's Community Based Flexible Supports (CBFS) program had a blast at an old-fashioned Sock Hop this Spring. CBFS services are for clients served by the Mass. Department of Mental Health, and provides rehabilitative interventions and supports in partnership with clients and their families to promote and facilitate recovery. Events like the CHL Sock Hop offer clients opportunities for creative expression through music and the arts - and another way to facilitate wellness and recovery.

My Gift To Help Adults, Children, and Families Recover

YES! I want to assist Community Healthlink to help people recover from the effects of mental illness, addiction, and homelessness!

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