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OVERVIEW 2023

HISTORY & MISSION

Walk-In Counseling Center is a 501.c.3 nonprofit that was founded in 1969 by a group of young psychologists as a radical approach to addressing the unmet need for accessible mental health services in the Twin Cities. **We provide free, anonymous, easily accessible mental health counseling to people who have urgent needs and few service options.** We help people stabilize during a time of crisis and resolve problems before they become so severe they require expensive hospitalization or police involvement, or result in tragedy or major life changes. Our services help people cope and function more effectively in their families, jobs, school and community. All services are provided by volunteers: clinicians, lay people from the community, and students from local Universities. Walk-In is as relevant today as it was in 1969. What a vision those founders had!

PROGRAMS & SERVICES—2023

Mental Health Counseling

We operate free counseling clinics that are all accessible by phone or computer via Zoom. In January 2023, we re-opened in-person clinics three afternoons per week. People come for help with:

depression and anxiety
suicidal ideation
trauma and abuse

grief and loss
bullying and school problems
concern about a loved one
relationship issues

undiagnosed mental illness
drug and alcohol abuse
job loss and unemployment
LGBTQ issues

During clinic hours, clients are seen (via Zoom or in person) without an appointment. Counselors meet privately in Zoom “breakout rooms” or physical meeting rooms at our house on Chicago Avenue, with clients to discuss presenting problems, identify, and provide the most appropriate services. These include: future appointments for brief treatment counseling, direction for crisis intervention, affirmations and support, or referrals and connection to another agency for more appropriate services or for related needs (e.g., safe housing, basic needs assistance, chemical dependency treatment, employment, etc.). Clients who request it are also seen via appointments for “brief treatment” for several (up to about 12) sessions.

Demographics of the nearly 1,600 individual clients served in 2023:

- 47% were non-white (when race was identified)
- 58% women, 36% men, 6% other identification or unknown
- 73% were between the ages of 18-40; 2% were under age 18; 25% over 40
- A number could not use their insurance because of long waits for an appointment, their hesitance to seek “mental health” services; and not wanting a diagnosis on their health record.

In 2023, **100+ people volunteered at Walk-In.** Clinically trained volunteer counselors, team consultants and lay receptionists **served nearly 1,600 clients in 3,800 free counseling sessions.** The contribution of those volunteer hours was valued at **\$890,000**. Over the past 54 years, the value of their contributions is estimated at more than **\$32 million**.

Training and Support of Volunteers

Although our volunteers are highly skilled professionals, ongoing training provided by Walk-In ensures they have the knowledge of and use best practices with our diverse clientele. We provide quarterly trainings for volunteers and representatives of sister agencies on such topics as: trauma, couples/relationship counseling, sexual assault, risk of harm to self or others, confidentiality, mindfulness, models/methods of assessment and interventions, co-occurring mental health and chemical abuse, and single session therapy.

Consultation and Training for Professionals

During our 54 years Walk-In has been a helping a resource for other clinicians and social service organizations. Gary Schoener directs our Consultation & Training Institute. He is internationally known for his expertise in professional boundaries, ethics, professional misconduct, and other difficult organizational issues. He has provided consultation, training and coaching on these topics for many years.

IMPACT

We believe that when individuals get the help they need to deal with life's challenges they "do better": they are more likely able to get and maintain employment, refrain from illegal activity, resolve drug/alcohol issues, maintain housing, support their children, and have healthier relationships. When individuals do better, so do their families and communities.

Since the pandemic we provide our services in a hybrid model via in-person and virtual (phone and internet) services. Many of the client satisfaction survey participants in 2023 were people who came to the in-person clinics (people who came virtually had to take the extra step of going onto our website to access the survey questionnaire. Most did not_. But, of the 56 people we were able to survey:

- 94% were satisfied with the services
- 94% would refer a friend or loved one to Walk-In
- 92% felt more hopeful as a result of coming to Walk-In
- Clients came primarily because counselors are mental health professionals, services are free, and no appointments are needed.

And the clients tell us:

Thank you, this is amazing!

A+++ for everyone there.

I wasn't able to keep going alone anymore.

I hope you know how great an impact you're making in this community.

Therapist very empathetic while also stabilizing. I feel like the staff cares about me and my concerns.

As a person who is broke and suffering from depression, this has given me a light at the end of the tunnel.

This place has changed my life. It has helped me grow and given me strength to stand up to life's challenges. I am so grateful for your services.

I am literally telling everyone. . . I'm screaming it to the world

I've had many therapy sessions in the past, yet I had never experienced anything anywhere near as potent as this approach . . . no nonsense feedback was WONDERFUL!

Any many more. . .

And special thanks to our volunteers: 90% said their experience as a volunteer was outstanding or very good.

And to referring agencies: In a survey of referring agencies in the mid-2010's, 100% of respondents said our services effectively address gaps in the mental health service system; 97% said free services and access without appointments are important or extremely important for clients. One provider said, "*Walk-In is absolutely critical to filling the gap in mental health access...and there is no one else doing what Walk-In is doing.*"

To our knowledge, back in 1969, Walk-In was the first or second such walk-in counseling service in the world. Today we are the only such service in the world that is staffed entirely by volunteers.

Walk-In is a *primary* safety-net service, and we will continue to be badly needed in 2024 and beyond.