Behavioral Health and Developmental Programs
Donna Duffy-Bell, Administrator

During this time of COVID:
Be good to yourself,
Be better to others and
Wear a mask!

The Bucks County Suicide Prevention Task Force unveiled a new, simple tool for its toolbox! Featuring the National Suicide Prevention Hotline and the Crisis text line, signs have been mounted in the Bucks County parks which seek to extend a helping hand to people in crisis. Please take a few minutes to watch an unveiling by our partners in suicide prevention here.

If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide, please call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or text "BCHOPE" to 741-741
Bucks Crisis Line: 1-800-499-7455; Mobile Crisis: 1-877-435-7709
First Responder Support Team: 267-839-5400

Everyone needs a H.E.R.O (Host-Home Emergency Respite Option)!
Respite care services allow family members and others to take a break from their respective caregiver duties, which helps to prevent unwanted crises and ultimately increases the overall wellness of the family. H.E.R.O. is a specialized respite care service program aimed at keeping youths in their communities and reducing unnecessary out-of-home placements. Who is eligible? Youths whose needs can be supported in a community/family setting. Who can help? Relatives and family members of youths who are identified as at-risk or high-risk with behavioral health needs, local families who live in the community and within a family setting that can promote stability and allow youths to thrive during a short-term stay can also help. For more detailed information on this new program as well as the eligibility criteria, contact hero@childandfamilyfocus.org or visit www.childandfamilyfocus.org.

Forensic Specialists (aka Boundary Spanners) Hard at Work
To date, our new Forensic Specialists have completed 214 forensic profiles to assess psychosocial and legal history relevant to treatment and re-entry; 786 Offender Management System Screenings to assess for MH and/or DP history; and, in the past two months, assisted in four discharges from the Southeast Regional Forensic Hospital (Norristown State Hospital Forensic Unit) and one discharge from the Civil Step Down Unit. Nine individuals have been assisted with re-entry and connection to treatment.

Rachael Neff, Human Services Director

Dear Bucks County Residents –
As we begin the year 2021, I am optimistic about several initiatives in place that are intended to further strengthen human services for residents in Bucks County. One partnership we have very recently launched is our Human Services Co-Responder Initiative. This initiative progressed because of the partnership with the Bensalem Police Department, Bucks County Commissioners’ leadership and our Human Services Division. The co-responder initiative places social workers within the Bensalem Police Department to respond to individuals with police who may be better served through social services. The initiative is aimed at supporting individuals with human services needs and diverting them from further interactions with the criminal justice system.

Walter Bynum and Rachel Agosto joined Bucks County Human Services as our first co-responder team and we are thrilled to have them on board. Working directly out of the Bensalem Police Department, with a variety of human services agencies, they will be pioneering an initiative that we hope to expand throughout Bucks County. The Human Services Division has partnered with an evaluation team to track the success of this program and we plan to report back on it later in 2021.

As we move down a brighter road for 2021, we cannot forget that the year 2020 has made lasting impacts on individuals who access our services. The Human Services team is aware that there are ongoing stressors impacting our communities. Parents and caregivers have lost jobs, food insecurity is significant, older adults are experiencing isolation, children have not been in a regular routine with schooling, drug overdoses are climbing and individuals continue to experience mental health crises that require immediate support. This edition of our newsletter highlights ways you can reach out even as we move through an ongoing pandemic and unprecedented times. As always, please turn to us for support.

In November, Donna Duffy-Bell was one of three county administrators statewide to receive the annual President’s Recognition Award from the PA Association of County Administrators of Mental Health and Developmental Services for outstanding commitment and accomplishment! While this award typically is given to one individual, PACA acknowledged that this has been an unprecedented year and wanted to recognize multiple individuals. Other award recipients included the administrator from the Carbon/Monroe/Pike County Joinder and the administrator from Blair County. Congratulations, Donna!
Despite the many changes happening due to the COVID pandemic, the Area Agency on Agency continues to find new ways to provide services to older adults (i.e., 60+). Over the last several months the AAA has offered free presentations and classes virtually. Some of the classes we have offered include: Tai Chi, Chair Yoga, MyLife MyHealth and Walk with Ease. We have also provided presentations, including Resident Rights & Ombudsman Services and APPRISE Medicare Counseling Services. Recordings of these presentations are on the county website under Area Agency on Aging. A special webinar called “Caring for the Caregiver” was also provided to help meet the growing needs of caregivers in the home. Although our office is minimally staffed due to the COVID pandemic, we are available to assist people remotely. By calling our office at 267-880-5700, our receptionists can direct callers to the appropriate person to assist them. Our Information and Referral Department can answer questions, schedule virtual assessments for services, assist with any need for protective services and provide resource information. Our protective services 24/7 phone number to make reports of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of a senior is 1-800-243-3767.

**Informational Presentations:**
- APPRISE Medicare Services
- Ombudsman Services
- Caregiver Services
- Overall Agency Services
- Protective Services

**Health and Wellness Classes for Seniors:**
- Tai Chi
- MyLife MyHealth
- Walk With Ease
- Chair Yoga

For any of our services or to register for any virtual presentations or classes listed above, please call 267-880-5700 or email us at aging@buckscounty.org

In FY 2020, through the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging, 1,126 seniors in Bucks County received community-based services to help them stay safe and healthy in their homes. Services included home delivered meals, assistance with personal care, light housekeeping, transportation, and ongoing care management.

**READ ABOUT OUR AMAZING HUMAN SERVICES STAFF**

**Tana Wentzel from Area Agency on Aging** kept the office running during the pandemic and came into the office every day to keep office functions moving despite new restrictions, barriers, and responsibilities.

**Joyce Schug from Behavioral Health and Developmental Programs** is the unsung hero within Human Services by bringing her best to work every day and giving tremendous support to her colleagues. Her altruism ripples within the division and the community.

**Jennifer Gramlich from Children and Youth** has taken on various challenges this past year with clients, provided necessary resources to clients so their basic needs are met and worked to break down language barriers for clients.

**Ana Rosado from The Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc.,** was nominated because she works day and night (even weekends) to address our clients’ concerns, share her wealth of knowledge, and remain available to address needs immediately.
Bucks County Children & Youth Social Services Agency

Marjorie McKeone, Director

In fiscal year 2019-2020, 53 children were adopted, which included 14 sibling groups, two 17-year-olds, and a 15-year-old!

Please consider helping by contacting Bucks County Children & Youth at 215-348-6900 to learn more about our foster care program. You can make a real difference in the life of a child by providing a solid foundation, helping prepare them for independence, and providing mentoring opportunities!

A letter from the Director:

Bucks County Children & Youth Social Services Agency was created in 1965 with the intention of ensuring child safety and helping families. Our staff works tirelessly to support children and families in the Bucks County community; their work sometimes takes time away from their own families, but they wouldn’t have it any other way. Our hope is that the residents of Bucks County will learn of the work that Children & Youth provides to the community every day.

In Fiscal Year 2019-20, our staff investigated reports involving 4,383 families (representing 9,190 children), which came from schools, teachers, nurses, guidance counselors, hospitals, and neighbors. In most cases, we provided information and assisted families in locating parenting services, housing, medical assistance, counseling, food banks, and other resources.

In our General Protective Services (GPS) Unit, we serve children from birth to 18 years old. In Fiscal Year 2019-20, our GPS caseworkers served 1,204 families (representing 3,654 children). Staff assisted in transporting parents to various appointments, locating employment and housing, and referring and initiating services to help parents who are dealing with substance abuse issues. Through our collaboration with community agencies, we helped to provide families with food, diapers, infant formula, clothing, and home goods (e.g., dishes, linens, pots/pans, beds, furniture). One of our staff members rented and drove a U-Haul truck to help move a family to their new home.

Less than 10 percent of the children we serve need to be placed into foster care. The primary focus of our work includes ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. Our permanency caseworkers worked diligently in assuring children who were placed in foster care received services to help them adjust to moving into a foster home. More than 60% of our foster families are kinship homes—grandparents, aunts/uncles, or cousins. Approximately 40% of our foster families are unrelated to the children and give their time, hearts and home to nurture children until they are able to return to their parents. For those children unable to return to their parents, the Adoption and Safe Families Act, enacted in 1997, requires our staff to seek a permanent home if parents are unable to resolve the issues that caused their children to be placed into foster care.

A letter received through our Bucks for Kids program from former foster parents:

“If not for Bucks County Children & Youth Social Services, we would not have the beautiful family we have today…We are extremely thankful that God brought us across paths with BCC&Y, Bucks for Kids. Thank you for the great work you have continued to do in our community. You make a difference in kids’ lives today, and also in their future. Our dear family is a testament to exactly that.”

Network of Victims Assistance (NOVA) has joined forces with Penn State University, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and other local organizations for the Safe and Healthy Communities Initiative, designed to reduce the rates of child sexual abuse through evidence-based programs. The free Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children training is available to all Bucks County adults. Attend one of our scheduled trainings or contact us to bring the training to your workplace, school, organization, or place of worship.

Visit https://www.novabucks.org/stopcsa for additional information!
BC-ROC Recovery House Program: “The Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Recovery Housing Plan was designed to assist individuals in transitioning from treatment into their home communities. By funding short-term rent in a supportive, sober environment, Bucks County aims to assist vulnerable individuals in maintaining recovery while engaging in fulfilling life activities, such as finding employment, developing a support network, and feeling valued in society. Data collected related to this program indicates that individuals with complex needs spent 60% fewer days in treatment because they had housing options upon discharge. This corresponded with a 40% reduction in the cost of care for these same individuals post-discharge. Most importantly, however, are the human successes.”

- Monica H. Gaffin, M.Ed., MSW, LCSW
Bucks County Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Programs

When surveyed, we received the following responses from BC-ROC Scholarship recipients:

"It was a relief going to a recovery house. Not having to worry about rent [made it] easier to focus on my game plan to stay sober."

"I'm clean and sober and doing great. Thank you so much for the opportunity to get my life back."

"I'm still sober and am employed again. And it's [because of] programs like yours and people like you that care. Thanks will never be enough."

The Bucks County Drug Court program celebrated its 10-year anniversary in October! The primary focus of Drug Court is to help individuals address the challenges of having a substance use/co-occurring diagnosis and criminal thinking behavior by connecting them with structure and treatment. If you have any questions, please email Ana Rosado (arosado@buckscounty.org) or Warren Grant (wrgn@buckscounty.org).

Bucks County Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc. is working with the Bucks County hospitals to provide free Narcan to individuals who are at risk for an opioid overdose and are in the emergency department due to an urgent medical condition. Narcan is a life-saving medication that is used to reverse respiratory depression that results from an opioid overdose.

Looking for Volunteer Work?
Shelters could use your support! Local shelters need your help more than ever with winter approaching. Visit the two shelters’ links below to learn the requirements for volunteering and additional information.

https://www.ahtn.org/volunteer-with-ahtn
For more information contact Crystal Myers, Program Consultant, at 215-550-3868 x106 or email Cmyers@ahtn.org

www.co2ssh.org/volunteer