

Through the years with Kennebec Behavioral Health

Early in 1958, psychologists Charles Rothstein, Paul Perez, Joseph Sanders, Howard White, and psychiatrist Price Kirkpatrick held several meetings to discuss the status of mental health within the Kennebec County Region. The discussions made it obvious that mental health services were almost non-existent for this area and also very much needed.

On Dec. 21, 1960, the agency now known as Kennebec Behavioral Health is incorporated as Kennebec Valley Mental Health Association. Its purpose, in part, was: to promote a comprehensive community mental health program for the community of Kennebec County and to promote interest in the improvement of mental health in Kennebec County; to establish and operate diagnostic and treatment centers for the care of persons who are mentally or emotionally ill or disturbed; to render diagnostic and treatment services to the Courts in cases of adult and juvenile offenders in Kennebec County; to plan, promote, and assist in the establishment, maintenance, and operation of clinics for the education, social, psychological and physical betterment of such persons, including the carrying on of psychiatric evaluation and treatment of emotional disturbances; to provide competent psychiatric treatment of emotional disturbances; to provide competent treatment services for children & adults, and related services for the community at large...

The center begins its mission in donated office space at Thayer and Augusta General hospitals.

Other key dates:

1961 – By the end of its first fiscal year, the agency clinic had seen 182 cases, for which therapists conducted 1,134 interviews.

1962 – Within a year, the agency becomes the largest mental health clinic north of Boston; its therapists handle 207 new cases, half of them teens, in 1,247 treatment sessions.

1963 – Operational funds are scarce. Board members on two occasions “passed the hat” among themselves to raise money for the agency. Carmen Celenza of the Augusta State Hospital joined the staff as a part-time psychologist. Two years later, he would be hired as the agency’s first executive director.

1965 – Services officially expand to include Somerset County residents.

1967 – The Board directs that mid-Maine communities be asked for contributions. During the first round of requests, 69 town meetings and city councils vote the agency a total of \$17,200.

1969 – The agency builds the \$512,000 Kennebec Valley Mental Health Center in Waterville next to what now is known as the Thayer Unit of Maine General Medical Center.

1972 – The National Institute for Mental Health releases staffing money to the agency, which boosts the budget in two weeks from \$114,000 to \$1.4 million. A massive recruitment effort follows, which will lead to the agency becoming a full Comprehensive Mental Health Center by 1980.

1973 – Augusta providers move to larger quarters in the former Titcomb House at 66 Stone Street, Augusta.

1980 – KVMHC provides emergency, in-hospital, outpatient, aftercare, outreach and education services provided by 40 professionals and 24 support staff.

1985 – Rosalynn Carter speaks at 25th anniversary event. Margaret Chase Smith is honored for her long-standing interest in KBH's mission.

1991 – Agency begins offering wide range of community housing options for persons with mental illness.

1995 – The agency hires its first Director of Substance Abuse and Dual-Diagnosis Services. Receives certification by the State of Maine to provide Non-Residential, Outpatient and DEEP Substance Abuse-related services.

1996 – School-Based Services begins at Maranacook Community School

1997 – A clinical facility is added in Skowhegan. KVMHC also opens its Waterville-based High Hopes vocational clubhouse, which will earn its first of three ICCD certifications in 2000 and a CARF accreditation in 2007.

2000 – The agency's Family Visitation Center opens at 37 Stone Street in Augusta.

2002 – KVMHC opens its Capitol Clubhouse, also in Augusta. The Clubhouse will receive its first ICCD certification in 2006 followed by a CARF accreditation in 2007. Home Based Family Services program launched. Home-Based Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) services begin.

2004 – The agency as a whole receives its first three-year CARF accreditation.

2005 – Opening of our Grand View Behavioral Health clinic in Winthrop; Medical management program expands in Skowhegan clinic.

2007 – The agency begins doing business as Kennebec Behavioral Health to better reflect its expanded capabilities and geographic coverage. (The agency also goes smoke-free.)

2008 – The agency's Children's Targeted Case Management program begins.

2009 – In collaboration with the National Alliance on Mental Illness/Maine, KBH receives a grant to implement the statewide Wraparound Maine initiative in Kennebec and Somerset counties.

2010 – On its 50th anniversary, KBH provides services to just over 12,000 adults and children, with psychiatric medication services, substance abuse treatment, outpatient psychiatry and mental health care, home-based Multisystemic therapy, school-based services, two vocational clubhouses, housing services, family behavioral health and visitation services, and a community support program – all expanded. About 341 staffers are employed at its locations. Agency hosts statewide educational conference in Hallowell called "Behavioral Health at the Confluence: Inspired Hearts, Solid Science and Organizational Excellence."