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HEALTH-FOCUSED NONPROFIT WINS FEDERAL GRANT

OWOSSO – The nonprofit Shiawassee Health & Wellness (formerly Shiawassee County Community Mental Health Authority) has received a grant award worth up to \$3.3 million over the next five years to fund programs aimed at helping patients who have physical and mental health disorders.

Shiawassee Health & Wellness is among only three Michigan organizations to win a portion of a federal grant award of up to \$10 million, administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The money for programs to improve the coordination of physical and mental health care to benefit patients.

“We are excited to be selected to receive this grant. It will further support the work already underway with our physical health care partners in the community,” Shiawassee Health & Wellness CEO Lindsey Hull said.

Some people who suffer from mental health disorders also have physical problems such as obesity, tobacco addiction and hypertension. Two kinds of disorders can be related. For example, people with mental health issues can become obese as a result of a medication they are taking. Adults with mental health problems consume almost 40 percent of the cigarettes smoked by adults.

The challenge is integrating both mental and physical health services in order to treat a patient’s problems more effectively and efficiently. The grant will enable Shiawassee Health & Wellness to strengthen the coordination of services with local partners who provide primary health care.

“We need to treat more than just mental health. We need to treat the whole person,” said Jamie Bure, Shiawassee Health & Wellness executive assistant and operations manager. Burke prepared the grant application with Dee Buchholz, Shiawassee Health & Wellness nursing supervisor and registered nurse.

Shiawassee Health & Wellness is already integrating health services, for the past five years offering an on-site physical health clinic with partner Grant Lakes Bay Health Clinic in Caledonia Township. Grant funds will be used to expand clinic’s operation.

“Individuals with severe and persistent mental illness live on average 20 years shorter than the rest of us. This grant will give us the opportunity to positively impact this statistic in Shiawassee County,” said Dr. Brenda Coughlin, president and CEO of Great Lakes Health Centers. “Great Lakes Bay Health Centers is very excited to expand our current, successful partnership with Shiawassee Health and Wellness to integrate services further.”

Other program goals include:

- Placing mental health providers from Shiawassee Health & Wellness in the offices of primary care physicians. Shiawassee Health & Wellness is currently working with Memorial Healthcare to set up such a program at the hospital.
- Improving joint access to medical records, so both behavioral and primary health care providers will have a patient’s full information at the same time.
- Expanding services by tobacco treatment specialists from Shiawassee Health & Wellness, who currently help patients and staff at Shiawassee Health & Wellness, into the broader community.

Also receiving grant funding are Saginaw County Community Mental Health Services and Cherry Health in Grand Rapids.

Angela Minicuci, state Department of Health & Human Services representative, said the three applicants were selected based on health professional shortages and under-service in their areas, county health rankings, partnerships with other health providers in the community and progress made in creating electronic health records.

“Shiawassee Health & Wellness continues to focus on improving health outcomes for the citizens of Shiawassee County. We have had to be creative in our efforts because we have not had funding to support our work on health care integration,” Hull said. “This grant will give us an opportunity to strengthen our continuum of care for prevention, treatment and recovery support services.”