"Network of Care gives us a centralized Service Directory that makes it easy to locate whatever behavioral health service a person might need."
- Adrienne Mickler, Executive Director of Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, Maryland

Maryland's Behavioral Health Service Offerings Administered by Anne Arundel County Using Trilogy's Network of Care

Situation

The state of Maryland, home to more than six million, traces its history back as one of the original Thirteen Colonies of what was to become the United States. The area has great geographic beauty, with 16 of Maryland's 23 counties sitting along the shores of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Nearly 20 years ago, Frank Sullivan, as Executive Director of Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency (since retired), was searching for a way to integrate mental health services offerings, to make the system easier to navigate for those in need. Anne Arundel is the state's largest county, and home to Annapolis, the state capital.

"Back then we had a bunch of different systems that didn't talk to each other," Sullivan recalls. "It wasn't a system. It was just a hodgepodge of services that people had put together. There was no central directory of services. The big question was: 'If the service providers that were working inside the system couldn't figure it out, how could a person with mental health needs figure it out?' We needed to find a better way."

Solution

Several years ago, Sullivan as a member of the National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors, would often speak with other county behavioral health directors in Maryland and beyond about the difficulty of tracking who was offering which services—and the lack of a comprehensive directory of services.

Network of Care … serving the State of Maryland. Seen here is beautiful Annapolis, along the shore of Chesapeake Bay.

One of Sullivan's fellow directors in Maryland heard Bruce Bronzan, a co-founder of Trilogy, speaking about Trilogy's recently launched Network of Care, which utilizes the Internet for social good by providing fast and easy access to comprehensive community services, information, support, and assistance on a localized level to millions of people nationwide. Sullivan and his colleagues were impressed by Network of Care's goal to ensure "No Wrong Door" exists for those in need of social services and to provide trusted information for anyone interested in making better decisions about the health and well-being of themselves and those around them.

Bronzan, who passed away from lymphoma in 2020, was a much-honored advocate for healthcare who served as a county mental-health program director, and then served as a county supervisor for eight years as the lead for all health and human-services programs. He was a member of the California State Legislature for 10 years and chairman of the Health Committee and the Select Committee on
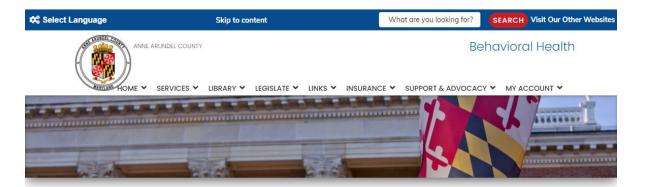
Mental Health, before leaving the public sector to create Network of Care with co-founder Afshin Khosravi.

Deployment Statewide

"As soon as I heard about Network of Care, I knew this was exactly what we needed," Sullivan recalls. "A few of the smaller counties in Maryland had already decided to adopt Network of Care. I said: 'The whole state needs this.'"

Soon after, the State of Maryland adopted the Network of Care for all 23 counties plus the City of Baltimore, covering 24 jurisdictions, with the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency acting as the state's coordinator for Network of Care services. Maryland residents have been benefitting from Network of Care since 2005.

Adrienne Mickler, who succeeded Sullivan as Executive Director of Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, worked closely with Sullivan, as the organization's Chief Financial

Welcome Page for the State of Maryland's Network of Care site.

Officer, in the early years of launching and nurturing the Network of Care.

"Network of Care gave us the comprehensive directory of services that all of our counties had long needed," Mickler says. "It has united what previously were fragmented services. Trilogy also worked with us to create a Veterans' Services directory of services, which all of our counties also use."

Chelsea Bednarczyk, Chief Operating Officer, Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, reports that the state's Network of Care site is visited 1.6 million times a year, with another 120,000 visiting the Network of Care's Service Members, Veterans & Their Families websites.

Marketing the Site to Residents

The Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency has long been diligent in spreading the word about the state's Network of Care site as a central clearinghouse for information on behavioral health resources.

"Every time we meet with providers around the state, we discuss Network of Care," Bednarczyk says. "We also provide hands-on training, in terms of how to update a directory listing to

help them ensure their information is always current."

The Anne Arundel team also works to engage providers across Maryland.

"Several of our staff members are on county-wide committees, and they talk about Network of Care within the committees," Bednarczyk says. "This includes asking for feedback from behavioral health providers about what they'd like to see moving forward with the site. We also make flyers in-house for veterans' groups to hand out to members, and spread the word at community health fairs. We want everyone to know about this valuable resource."

One innovative idea implemented several years ago, emerged from tragedy. After a cluster of student suicides, a "Warm Line" telephone number was placed on the back of student school ID cards.

"If a student feels they are in a mental health crisis, they can call the Warm Line, which puts them directly in touch with a crisis intervention team," Bednarczyk says. "We train all of our phone counselors to utilize Network of Care when they're trying to find services, including for locations nearest to the caller."

Sharing with Schools and Social Workers

When Network of Care was first rolled out across the state, Sullivan says his team made a point of visiting schools and social workers to tell them about this new resource—something which they continue to do periodically.

"We received a tremendous reception in the schools," Sullivan says. "Teachers and counselors told us: 'This is wonderful. It's going

to make it easier for us to deal with families and children that are having problems because it is holistic and helps with our interactions.' We enjoyed the same reactions when we showed it to social workers in Family Services. In both cases we could see a huge spike in usage from schools and social workers after our presentations, and the numbers stayed up there, showing they had bookmarked it as a daily tool."

Benefits

The State of Maryland has enjoyed a number of benefits since deploying Network of Care, including:

- Providing a central Service Directory to remove barriers for those in need.
- Bridging silos of services to support a 'No Wrong Door' experience.
- Getting information out to prevent tragedies.
- Library of current and vetted resources.
- Personalization to allow users to save articles and other information.
- Tool for easily tracking legislation.

Central Service Directory Removes Barriers for Those in Need

Network of Care has given Arundel County and the State of Maryland a centralized Service Directory where residents—and providers—can easily locate information on behavioral health, aging, substance abuse, veteran services, and other areas of need.

"From the very beginning we wanted to eliminate any barriers to service," Mickler says. "Network of Care has been around for a long time, so they understand behavioral health, and they understand information flow. Network of

Care gives us a centralized Service Directory that makes it easy to locate whatever behavioral health service a person might need."

Ease of use is especially important in serving those in need of services.

"When an individual is seeking behavioral health services, it can be a very vulnerable time in their life," Bednarczyk says. "Some of these people may be in crisis, so it's really important that it's easy and not frustrating to find the information they need. For many people, this might be the moment where they either seek services or they say: 'Forget it! This is too difficult.' Which means they may continue on a downward path."

The central Service Directory Network of Care provides is also important to mental health and related providers. It gives them the ability to make their services known—including small nonprofit organizations and individual practitioners.

Bednarczyk notes users also benefit from the search feature that allows a person to look for services using a Zip Code filter to find the nearest locations for resources. Sullivan agrees: "Network of Care allows a user to search by radius from where they live. Accessibility is very important, especially if someone doesn't have a car and has to see if a location is served by public transit."

"No Wrong Door" As Network of Care "Bridges Silos of Services"

As soon as Network of Care was deployed for the State of Maryland, Sullivan saw that it solved the most pressing problem he and other county behavioral health directors had seen:

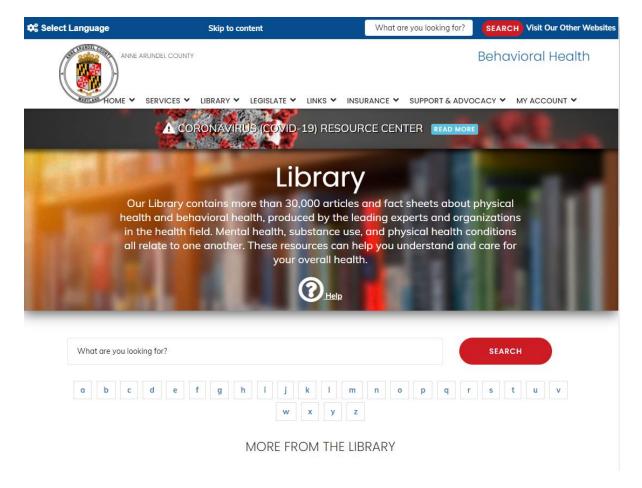Unifying information from what had been separate service silos.

"Good services were out there," Sullivan recalls. "But the information about the services was fragmented, incomplete, and difficult to find. Network of Care's centralized Service Directory bridged the gaps between silos of service. All of this enabled the concept of 'No Wrong Door,' because once a person contacted any provider, the provider could use Network of Care to search for additional services a person might need. This is especially important when assisting someone with co-occurring disorders."

Bednarczyk agrees about the value Network of Care brings to coordinating care between behavioral health providers.

"Network of Care enhances collaboration between providers," Bednarczyk says. "A provider may be contacted by someone with multiple needs, or by someone outside their scope of practice. When this happens, they can use Network of Care to find the services the person needs and provide a warm handoff, or begin a collaboration. This is part of 'No Wrong Door,' meaning that from whatever point a user might enter the site, they will be able to navigate to the best information and services to meet their needs."

Getting Information Out: "You Can Prevent a Lot of Social Tragedies"

Anne Arundel County has been a pioneer in providing early intervention for people in crisis—including providing licensed social workers to go out on calls at the request of police. Sullivan credits Network of Care for helping to get critical information out to where it is needed.

The easily searchable Network of Care Library offers State of Maryland users more than 30,000 articles and other resources.

"Network of Care helps us put the information out there, as with our Warm Line," Sullivan says. "You can prevent a lot of social tragedies from escalating by simply saying: 'There is help for you.' And believe it or not, that's a big deal."

"When someone feels their life is falling apart and they start acting up, often somebody calls the police," Sullivan says. "This brings up a big decision point. Is this going to be treated as something that's going to necessitate arresting the person? Or are people going to recognize it as this person is totally losing it because they feel their life is falling apart and we have a way to navigate to the information and services they need. This is something we've been doing for

years, and Network of Care is an important piece of this. When somebody is drifting off, that person, or somebody that cares about them, can come to Network of Care to find help."

Praise for Network of Care Library: "Google Gives You Too Much ... 37,000 Hits on Depression"

The Network of Care Library has proven to be a valuable tool for individuals, and the friends and families supporting them, across the State of Maryland.

The Legislate feature helps users stay current on state and federal legislation.

"The great value in the Network of Care Library is that all of the articles and other resources found there have been reviewed and vetted by professionals," Bednarczyk says. "There is a lot of misleading information out on the Internet, so it is important to be able to offer vetted, and easily understood, material across the spectrum of behavioral health issues."

The Library is especially helpful for people who have just received a diagnosis for themselves or for a family member.

"People can search the Library for information on medications, medical tests and procedures, behavioral issues, and a wealth of other topics," Bednarczyk says. "And all the content can be instantly translated into more than 100 languages."

"Google can be very inefficient and frustrating," Sullivan says. "I recently did a search for articles on depression and got more than 37,000 hits. Another thing is that the Network of Care Library articles, in addition to being vetted and current, are also written at a grade level that most can easily understand. This means users don't have to wade through densely written scientific literature."

Personalization Allows Users to Save Articles and Other Information

Dana Curry, Training and Events Administrator, Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, reports that users like that Network of Care makes it easy for them to save whatever articles or other resources they find for later reference.

"Network of Care gives users the ability to open a free account so when they find something that might be useful to them, they can save it, and they will always be able to find it within their account," Curry says. "This means they don't have to click around the site trying to find something again. It's a really nice feature."

"The ability to save content for future use is very user friendly," Bednarczyk says. "This makes it easy to share information with a family member or friends. Someone can say: 'I found an article about that medication you just started taking.' The personal account even allows users to create different folders to organize their saved content.

Tracking Legislation Made Easy

The Legislate feature of Network of Care helps individuals, as well as providers and agencies, track legislation of interest on both the state and federal level.

"I presented this to various leaders of county organizations, and they really loved the Legislate feature," Curry says. "From the home page they can just click on Legislate to follow state and federal bills related to behavioral health. The county leaders really liked that feature."

The information is updated daily so users can keep track of a bill's progress, amendments, and upcoming votes. The feature also has a built-in email link to make it easy for users to communicate with legislators about a bill.

"We're a small not for profit, so it is extremely helpful to have a tool that helps us track what's happening with legislation that might pertain to either our agency or the providers that we work with," Bednarczyk says. "All of the information

we need is in one spot, which saves us the time of otherwise having to visit other sites to get information or updates."

About Trilogy

The Network of Care utilizes the Internet for social good by providing fast and easy access to comprehensive community services, information, support, and assistance on a localized level to millions of people nationwide. The goal of the Network of Care is to ensure "No Wrong Door" exists for those in need of social services, and to provide trusted information for anyone interested in making better decisions about the health and well-being of themselves and those around them.

Starting with a pilot project in the area of aging and long-term care for the Californian counties of Alameda and Sacramento in 2000, the Network of Care quickly grew to over a dozen counties before expanding into the behavioral health field for San Diego County in 2003. The success and growth of these websites eventually led to the development of a suite of Network of Care products and services. For more than two decades, Trilogy has developed hundreds of Network of Care websites for more than 30 states and over 600 counties. Trilogy Integrated Resources continues to improve the platform with the latest version released in 2019. For more information, visit us at www.trilogyir.com.