

LAKESHORE COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE INTEGRATED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TEAM

As part of Lakeshore Community Health Care's (LCHC) commitment to patient-centered, whole health care, the Behavioral Health and Dental teams set out on a project to integrate behavioral health into dental services. Initially supported through a National Network for Oral Health Access (NNOHA) Integrated Behavioral and Oral Health Learning Collaborative, the team began to plan the launch of a suicide-specific screening process within their dental clinics. The project aimed to triage and support patients with the most urgent and imminent behavioral health needs.

LCHC selected the evidence-based Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale that screens for suicide directly and defined a triage response protocol to ensure immediate access to behavioral health case managers (BHCMS). BHCMS were also trained to deliver evidence-based brief interventions to reduce suicide risk. The team also partnered with OCHIN EPIC and Wisdom builders to optimize their Electronic Health Records (EHR) and Electronic Dental Records (EHD). This optimization included screening reminders, a flowsheet that removed any guesswork for dental team members, and new reporting capabilities to monitor adherence and outcomes. The team developed training materials, training aids, and broad-scale workforce training on behavioral health integration and suicide prevention.

Pre-launch, LCHC communicated with patients about the new screening with a pre-visit text message informing patients about the screening at the front desk and clinic signage in the dental wing. While there were initial fears from staff that patients would not want to participate in the screening, the response from patients was very positive. One patient stated, "I attempted suicide in the 80's. I would have missed a lot if I succeeded, so I'm glad I didn't. I'm so happy you are screening and getting people the help that they need. Thank you!" A hygienist shared, "While screening a 12-year-old patient, he responded 'sometimes' to the question Have you had any thoughts of killing yourself? His mother seemed



perplexed and overwhelmed. She told me he makes comments that he wants to kill himself, but she doesn't know if she should take it seriously or not. Right after the appointment, I connected them with our case manager. She got him set up with our school-based counseling program. His mom didn't really know where to start and was thankful for the help. Through the new screening process, we were able to identify and connect a child and their parent to mental health resources and support. It was awesome to be a part of that process.”

In just the first two months of the project LCHC screened more than 1,100 patients. Using a tool that takes less than three minutes, LCHC identified 129 individuals who experienced suicidal thoughts and connected them with additional supports. For 27 of those individuals, LCHC made immediate connections to ensure care and safety.

Team Members:

- Smriti Madrecha, DMD
- Shelby Kuhn, Chief Behavioral Officer
- Julie Risse, Dental Program Manager
- Heather Mulder, Hygienist & Dental Assistant Supervisor
- Behavioral Health Case Managers & Hygienists