

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COUNSELING FOCUSED CARE MODEL

Lake Superior Community Health Center piloted a Focused Care Model of Behavioral Health Counseling to address a long-standing access challenge at its Superior site, where demand for behavioral health services exceeded provider capacity. In May 2026, the behavioral health waitlist included over 700 people. The team identified an opportunity to use available summer capacity among school-based counselors, whose caseloads temporarily decline when school is not in session, to offer short-term, structured counseling to appropriate clients on the waitlist.

The model is a 10-week curriculum developed by Kraig Peterson, Director of Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse. It provides targeted, solution-based counseling for clients who are clinically appropriate for focused support rather than long-term psychotherapy or a higher level of care. A behavioral health care coordinator reviewed the waitlist, contacted potential participants, screened for interest and fit, and scheduled eligible clients for a Focused Care assessment followed by weekly counseling sessions.

The pilot team is monitoring outcomes using behavioral health PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scores collected at baseline, with follow-up measures planned at the midpoint and conclusion of the program. The team also plans to gather patient feedback through an end-of-pilot questionnaire to inform future process improvements.

Early Implementation Results

Early outreach and assessment data show that 25 clients were contacted. Eight clients agreed to participate in the short-term Focused Care model. These 8 participants were scheduled for assessment, and 5 participants were active Focused Care clients as of July 16, 2026.

Baseline Clinical Measures

Baseline PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scores are collected when possible. These scores will be compared with midpoint and final scores to assess changes in symptoms and functioning over the course of the intervention.



*LSCHC Focused Care Pilot Team:
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Anticipated Impact and Spread

The pilot expanded access by connecting clients to counseling who otherwise may have waited many months for traditional psychotherapy. The team anticipates the model will improve patient functioning, reduce depression and anxiety symptom scores, and ease waitlist pressure. It also supports care team well-being by improving productivity and job satisfaction for school-based counseling staff during the summer, and the program gives the pilot therapist structured professional development through curriculum use and process improvement work.

Lake Superior Community Health Center hopes to expand the model in future years, spread the approach to other clinic sites, and share outcomes and lessons learned with other behavioral health groups and associations.

Focused Care Pilot Team

- Kraig Peterson, MSW, LCSW, LICSW, BCD, Director of Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse
- Stacey Miner, Behavioral Health Manager
- Danielle Lilyquist, Patient Services Coordinator for Behavioral Health Program
- Kristi Swan, LMFT, Mental Health Therapist