
BURLINGTON COMMUNITY LIFE CENTER

MISSION AND OVERVIEW

The Burlington Community Life Center is a Department for the Town with the responsibility of providing mental health and social services to families with children, adolescents and young adults (specifically ages 9-22). BCLC also provides information and referral services for ALL Burlington residents of any age. In addition, BCLC staff provide screening for People Helping People, primarily for residents making requests of the Covenant for Basic Needs (established in 1981).

The BCLC has been in operation since 1974 when it became a Town department. Prior to this, the office had opened under the name House of Common in 1972. In 1978, BCLC was given the specific mandate to provide counseling services to teenagers and their families. In recent years, there was increasing demand for BCLC to provide services to younger children, so the age range was expanded down to nine years old.

The BCLC continues to work with adults and young people on such diverse problems as family conflict, adolescent issues, parenting skills, marriage and relationship problems, drug and alcohol use, depression and suicide, neglect, domestic violence and the like. The BCLC offers individual, family, and group therapy services, and our philosophy is oriented toward involving entire families in treatment whenever possible. Since it is within the family that these problems are most acutely felt, and these same families often possess the best and most available resources to resolve problems, we believe that family therapy is often the most useful and effective means of treatment. Evening appointments may be arranged for working families by calling in during regular office hours (9-5). (During later evening hours and on weekends, the telephone answering machine will collect messages for BCLC staff and refer callers to a 24-hour back-up emergency mental health service if there is an immediate crisis which cannot wait until staff are available.)

INTERDEPARTMENTAL/AGENCY COLLABORATION

BCLC staff work collaboratively with town departments and other mental health and social service agencies. We coordinated a training on domestic violence in January and February not only for our staff and students, but for the school department's pupil service staff including guidance

counselors and nurses. The training, led by Caitlin Bradford of the Support Committee for Battered Women, was useful and very well received.

Discussions regarding issues of violence prevention was a new initiative in the fall of 1998 when the clergy association met with BCLC staff, Ellie Packer (high school Adjustment Counselor), Dennis Thompson (Youth Services Officer), and Paul Anderson (DARE Officer). These discussions are on-going.

At the request of the school's Health department, we have again provided workshops for sophomore health classes on depression.

Charlie Franich, BCLC therapist, and Connie Skourtis, Pine Glen PTO, were re-elected in June, 99 to serve as the new co-chairs of the town's Drug & Alcohol Task Force. Again this year, Peggi Durand and Charles Franich have worked very hard with Ellie Packer in the school department to implement a Peer Education Program with over 75 juniors and seniors at the high school. In the spring, these high school students speak with between 200-250 seventh graders about the dangers of substance abuse. The assumption is that seventh graders will be receptive in a different way to these issues when hearing about them from other youth. The design of this program has been in demand by schools across the state as a model for others interested in addressing the problems of substance abuse through peer education.

BCLC staff also met regularly with members of the Burlington Clergy Association and were involved in local and regional meetings of agencies and programs concerned with mental health or social services (Lahey Initiative Committee on Domestic Violence, Lahey Community Benefits Committee, Local Officials of Human Services Council, Fox Hill School Council, and other adolescent service organizations).

SOCIAL SERVICES

The BCLC also offers ALL Burlington residents a range of social services including the administration of resources offered through People Helping People, Inc. PHP is an umbrella organization made up of community volunteers who help oversee and coordinate the efforts of three established groups: Community Pantry, Covenant for Basic Needs and Burlington Holiday Program (formerly Burlington Santa). Wes Simons continued to serve on the Board of Directors of PHP. Many residents are aware that

the Holiday Program helps families during Thanksgiving and Christmas. However, some other extensions of this program help needy families throughout the year with summer camperships, back-to-school clothes and the like.

The Covenant for Basic Needs is managed by the PHP Board which works with the Burlington Clergy Association providing limited help for those residents experiencing financial emergencies. The BCLC staff screen those applying for this assistance. In FY 1999, we handled requests that involved 114 residents. This is in addition to the many requests from residents applying for the Holiday Program and the scores of residents already served by the Pantry.

Several residents have put a lot of time and energy into making this program work. Our thanks to members of the PHP Board and all those residents who contributed time, talent, and money to help PHP through another year.

BCLC also maintains an information and referral service to assist ANY resident in locating the particular social service that a resident may require. Staff have assisted young people and their parents in situations requiring hospitalizations, finding appropriate emergency or residential care, and the like. Due to dwindling resources and program cuts, this search has been more difficult and sometimes resources have been unavailable.

STATISTICAL NOTES

An average of 217 residents each month receive counseling services. Well over 100 received assistance from People Helping People throughout the year, and especially during the holidays.

COUNSELING CASELOAD AGE DISTRIBUTION (12 MONTH PERIOD):

- 160 Adults (26 & Older), 47%
- 19 Young Adults (19-25), 6%
- 158 Adolescents & Children, 47%

TREATMENT MODALITY

- 191 **Family Treatment, 57%**
103 Adults (18 young adults: 19-25yrs)
88 Adolescents & Children
- 84 **Individual Treatment, 25%**
69 Adults (parent with adolescent in family) 82%
15 Young Adults, Adolescents & Children
- 11 **Team Treatment, 3%**
6 Adults
5 Young Adults, Adolescents & Children
- 51 **Group Treatment, 15%**
51 Adolescents

REFERRAL SOURCES:

1. Schools: 45%.
2. Family and Friends: 10% (Approximately 61% of these residents had been clients at BCLC and recommended our services.)
3. Self-referrals: 19% (A majority of these self-referred clients were former clients who returned to deal with new crises or issues, and because they were happy with the services provided previously.)
4. Community Sources: 23% (police, clergy, doctors, crisis team, other town departments, DMH, DSS)
5. Other Sources: 3% (2 from psychiatric hospitals; 9 other therapists or mental health clinics)

OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES

As in previous years, the BCLC provided administrative and other support to a number of programs in the community of benefit to Burlington residents. Michele Trigilio continues to do an excellent job coordinating the FISH and Rent-A-Kid programs. FISH (Friends In Sharing Help) volunteers provided 120 rides to local medical and social service appointments for residents in need of transportation. The Rent-A-Kid referral service received 116 requests from adult residents who wanted to hire young people to do a variety of odd jobs.

TRAINING

The BCLC provides training to graduate student interns as part of their professional education. BCLC has provided field placement training since the late seventies to graduate students from Boston University, Simmons College, Lesley Graduate School, Tufts University, Antioch University, Northeastern University and University of Massachusetts. We thank the students for their long hours of service and dedication.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors at the Community Life Center continued their involvement and I deeply appreciate their help and support. Board members include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Ronald MacKenzie, Chair | Thelma Iozzo |
| Marilyn Langley, Vice-chair | Ann McNamara |
| Father John Crispo | Roberta Mills |
| Candace Gustafson | Betty Murphy |
| Michael Howard | Russ Petersen |

SUMMARY

The demand for our services continues to be heavy while other resources in the area continue to diminish. Our thanks to the many in town who have supported our efforts.

Respectfully submitted,
Wesley M. Simons, Executive Director