Over the past two decades, a growing number of rural Americans have died by suicide, termed a death of despair. The loss of life has significant impacts on families and rural communities that, in stark contrast with urban areas, have double the rate of suicides as large cities. Among rural youth, the suicide rate is a concerning 74% higher than their city-dwelling peers.

As rural residents seek help from behavioral health providers, Blessing Health System has worked purposefully since 2021 to ensure exceptional behavioral healthcare is accessible in the rural communities it serves.

How Blessing Health System Answers the Call

The health system's 10 rural health clinics are located throughout its service to be easily accessible to all residents. In-person or virtual behavioral healthcare are available through a 62-person team of 11 adult psychiatric providers, seven child and adolescent psychiatric providers, two neuropsychologists, and 42 therapists and social workers.

Because patients have unique needs Blessing's care continuum consists of:

- Three inpatient units (children, adolescents and adults);
- A partial hospitalization and intensive outpatient program (BEST Self Center);
- Traditional outpatient behavioral healthcare;
- Services delivered by social workers in Blessing Hospital's Level II Emergency Center and on the hospital's medical floors; and
- Services delivered by social workers embedded in the health system's primary and specialty care clinics.

Short- and Long-Term Behavioral Healthcare

Social workers form Blessing's Integrated Care team dedicated to providing crisis care focused on assessment, stabilization and short-term care to guide patients through the difficulties they face. If help is needed beyond five or six therapy sessions, Integrated Care Team members are the bridge to other behavioral healthcare peers who address a patient's long-term needs. Behavioral health specialists can assist individuals with treatment-resistant depression (TRD), who've responded well to the TRD prescription nasal spray Spravato (esketamine), considered a lifesaver for many.

Mission-Driven Care That Meets Individual Needs

There isn't an exact formula for behavioral healthcare that can meet the needs of all rural residents. That's why Blessing has invested in a variety of providers, services and resources. Every individual who's still alive because of behavioral healthcare matters and is worth the time and efforts of the clinicians providing care. Making a difference, one person at a time—that's the mission of Blessing Health System.

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