

L'esprit Mental Health Center

Livingston,
Montana

March 30 & 31,

2023

Site Inspection Conducted by the Mental Disabilities
Board of Visitors

Jeremy Hoscheid

Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

Mental Health Facility reviewed:

L'esprit Licensed Mental Health Center

Chantelle Plauche, LCSW, Owner

Maria Mulvaugh, LCSW, CEO

Authority for review:

Montana Code Annotated, 53-21-104

Purpose of review:

1. To learn about the services provided by L'esprit in Livingston.
2. To assess the degree to which the services provided by Livingston are humane, consistent with professional standards, and incorporate Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors standards for services.
3. To recognize excellent services.
4. To make recommendations to L'esprit for improvement of services.
5. To report to the Governor regarding the status of services provided by L'esprit.

Site Review Team:

Board:

Tyson Schumacher, Board Member

Melissa Ancell, Board Member

BOV Staff:

Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

Craig Fitch, Attorney

Jeff Folsom, Consultant for BOV

Review process:

- Interviews with L'esprit staff and clients
- Review of treatment activities, tour of L'esprit facilities
- Review client treatment plans
- Review policy and procedures, organizational structure

Overview

Per M.C.A. 53-21-104 the Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors (Board) conducted a site inspection of L'esprit Mental Health Center (L'esprit) on March 30 & 31 2023. The Board inspected the L'esprit treatment programs which included the Adult Day Treatment, FCST programs, and outpatient offices.

L'esprit has been in operation as a licensed mental health center since June of 2015. L'esprit employees shared with the Board that during that year a significant suicide event took place that underscored the importance of an agency providing comprehensive mental health services to that community.

L'esprit offers a wide menu of services to the Livingston community which includes Case Management, Day Treatment, FCST, Home Support Services, Individual Group and Family Therapy, Medication Management, Mentoring, and a Substance Use Recovery Program. In addition to these services, the agency provides crisis response support and interacts frequently with local Law Enforcement agencies to provide support and feedback on mental health training and implementation.

During the review process, the Board came away with the two clear take aways that were noticed across the organization. The first being the strong team presence across all team members and levels of the organization (front-line, support, clinical, and leadership). All team members seem to share a strong sense of direction and purpose to the organizations mission of joining individuals in discovering paths leading to greater mental wellness.

The second take away is that L'esprit appears to be a part of the fabric of the Livingston community. L'esprit appears to have exceptional community involvement and appears to have earned the respect of the community through its commitment, dedication, and overall quality of work. During the review the Board listened to examples of creative solutions in filling community gaps as other providers have withdrawn services from the community in recent years. The emerging Montana Assertive Community Treatment (MACT) program and day services center are another example of these creative solutions. It was clear through all discussions that the L'esprit team is focused on providing integrated services throughout Livingston.

Organizational Planning and Quality Improvement

L'esprit has a process for producing and regularly reviews its strategic plan. L'esprit is currently in the process of developing a new 5-year strategic plan with the assistance of Babson College. L'esprit leadership also utilizes an annual operational plan with measurable goals which are monitored on a regular basis by members of the L'esprit leadership team and shared with other team members. During the strategic planning process L'esprit does gather information from individuals served, employees, as well as community stakeholders.

In addition to being licensed as a mental health center, L'esprit has also achieved accreditation from The Joint Commission (JACHO). Achieving this accreditation, which is typically only sought out by hospitals, speaks to the high level of services and programming the L'esprit provides.

A unique aspect of L'esprit is that all administrators of the organization are also licensed clinicians and carry an active caseload. Employees that were interviewed gave steady praise for access to leadership, their openness, and the feeling of team within the organization. L'esprit recently underwent some internal role changes with the leadership team.

L'esprit staff discussed their participation in a new recruitment and retention program with the University of Montana. L'esprit has developed a strong employee retention/ promotion effort with developing clinicians internally within the organization.

L'esprit employees 40 individuals, representing around 20-25 FTE. Primarily these employees live in or around Livingston where many clients are located. L'esprit through their MACT program does operate in Sweetgrass County (Big Timber). At the time of the visit L'esprit reported having around 136 active clients, and around 85 percent of those clients are kids. In 2017 a provider of adult case management closed, and L'esprit picked up this gap. Psychiatric services are provided by Frontier Psychiatry and a range of other providers.

Rights, Responsibilities, and Safety

L'esprit staff noted that they provide copies of the client rights to clients both verbally and in written form. Individuals that were interviewed by the Board also stated that they understood their individual rights and were aware of the Board of Visitors, the Mental Health Ombudsman, and Disability Rights Montana.

L'esprit has a grievance policy that does reference the Board of Visitors as a resource to patients and provides contact information. While visiting with clients they all understood the organization's grievance procedure but had not had to utilize that at this time. This speaks to the organizations ability to handle any concerns from clients in quick and efficient manner. Individuals interviewed by the Board shared that staff were very responsive to try to handle any sort of issue or concern that they had.

L'esprit staff were aware of the requirements of Section 53-21-107 MCA for detecting, reporting, investigating, determining validity of, and resolving allegations of abuse and neglect of individuals.

L'esprit uses a program known as Right Response for their de-escalation. The agency has a strong capability of supporting staff through crisis and can ensure strong clinical leadership through case review and access to management.

Individual, Family Member Participation

L'esprit identifies in the individual client's chart who are family members/guardians or important people to the individual client. L'esprit also establishes parameters for communication with these individuals. Providing 'on-call' response to universal screenings including coordination with families is outstanding.

It was noted and appreciated that the L'esprit team works directly with children and families in completing the CASii assessment as well as during the treatment planning sessions and the treatment plan reviews.

The day treatment program ensures that there are daily activities planned and that the clients have health food prepared for them while they are there. L'esprit also participates in food deliveries and is passionate about food insecurity issues. Uniquely, the agency has merged the concepts of HSS (Home Support Services) with CSCT into "FSCT" to be extremely client centered.

L'esprit promotes, encourages, and provides opportunities for individual and family members / guardians participation in the operation of services. One significant example can be found in their sponsored monthly family night events which were developed through feedback from the client surveys. Feedback through client surveys is analyzed and incorporated into program or policy changes when appropriate.

Cultural Effectiveness

L'esprit has a developed plan regarding Cultural Effectiveness. Staff interviewed by the Board appeared knowledgeable about cultural, ethnic, social, historical, military service, and spiritual issues and how they impact the treatment of the individuals served. The culture of learning and acceptance was noted in several staff interactions. Staff and leadership communicated not only willingness, but an excitement and genuine interest in working with diverse clients with diverse needs.

L'esprit has a comprehensive cultural competency policy. The policy is broad and covers issues beyond traditional notions of 'culture' including specific expectations for accommodations and modifications for people with language/cultural barriers or disabilities. All staff receive cultural competency training at the time of hire and annually thereafter.

It is worth commenting that without overusing (or even using at all) the term "trauma informed care", there are numerous examples of delivering high quality care that demonstrates a truly 'trauma informed' organization. Examples include the on-boarding process, wellness, and safe care awareness, the CSCT teams' emphasis on co-regulation, team building approaches,

supervision and de-briefings, the emphasis on “right response” and the overall culture of learning.

It is notable that L’esprit has a strong “can do- will do” attitude and approach to community needs. Their services approximate a no reject- no eject / unconditional care philosophy as they appear willing to intervene in the moment and on behalf of extremely challenging clients.

The Board did note the close working partnership L’esprit has with The Sacred Walk Initiative, <https://thesacredwalkinitiative.com/>. L’esprit reported that through this partnership they have been able to work with a number of veterans in the community. It was reported that The Sacred Walk Initiative also works closely with Heroes and Horses, <https://heroesandhorses.org/> which provide expert assistance with treatment plans and treatment of tribally enrolled, or veteran, clients. The Board would commend L’esprit for already having developing the partnership with The Sacred Walk Initiative and encourage L’esprit to continue to explore additional culturally effective partnerships within the local community.

Staff Competence, Training, Supervision, and Relationships with Residents

L’esprit defines optimum knowledge and competence expectations specific to working with individuals with mental illness or emotional disturbance for each staff member providing services.

L’esprit is working to fully implement Relias as a LMS. Training is also provided by staff in a classroom style setting with significant supports for newly-onboarding staff. A majority of the training is provided by an in-house trainer which includes trauma and cultural awareness, policy and procedures, confidentiality and reporting, and then more job-specific training. Employees are on a 90-day probation cycle and receive opportunities for shadowing and feedback. A significant amount of the training focuses on community-specific areas of concern.

L’esprit offers a robust training program to all employees. Given the overall small size of L’esprit, they are able to provide additional clinical and staff supervision, which the Board feels is a strength of the organization. L’esprit is able to offer a very hands-on approach to training and recognizes the benefit of internal employee development and working with employees to find a good fit for them within the organization.

The Board was pleased to witness staff members demonstrating respect for the individuals during their interactions. Staff displayed active engagement, positive demeanor, empathy, calmness, and validated the individual client’s goals and desires. This was clearly apparent during the Board’s visit of the day treatment program and witnessing the interaction between staff and clients.

Treatment and Support

L'esprit provides a written treatment plan to all individuals receiving services. Treatment plans that were reviewed by the Board were remarkably detailed and designed to comply with every and all regulations that could be considered. 'SMART' goals were identified in nearly all areas. The completeness and comprehensive nature of the treatment plans generated questions about the overall accessibility of the treatment plans to the families, children and adults served. Finding the proper balance between regulatory guidelines and developing plans in the language and format to the persons served is a challenge. The Board would recommend that L'esprit work to develop a one-page addendum for the treatment plans that would be easy to read and understand for the individuals served. The Board believes that this would provide clients with something that they can refer to quickly when they need a reminder of treatment goals or steps in the client's individual crisis plan.

Treatment plans are required to be completed within 3 weeks of intake. Adults are referred to Montana Assertive Community Treatment (MACT). MACT includes medication management, mental health assessment and evaluation, individual family psychotherapy, supportive therapy, substance abuse services, daily living skills and many others.

The partnership between and the commitment of the local school district is remarkable. The school teams are full, integrated into the flow of the school day and providing high quality services. The school personal is strong, committed to mission and vision and understand their role in providing quality care.

L'esprit ensures each client has a thorough physical/medical examination or ensures that a thorough physical medical examination has been performed within one year of the individual entering or re-entering the service. They make sure to link all individuals served to primary health services and have access to needed health care and dental care. L'esprit is also proactive in making sure medical conditions that may be responsible for presenting psychiatric symptoms are ruled out.

L'esprit utilizes a number of evidence-based treatment programs. All staff are trained in and expected to utilize trauma informed care when working with clients of all ages. Staff also utilize the illness management in recovery program. During our tour of the day treatment program, L'esprit staff told the Board about group therapy session that includes symptom management and medication education. One area where L'esprit could benefit is exploring the development of a supported employment program.

Access and Entry

L'esprit works closely with local medical care providers and does a nice job of informing the community of the mental health services they provide. L'esprit partners with several different community partners in an attempt to address the mental health needs of Livingston. L'esprit accepts referrals from multiple different referral sources and recently developed an online referral option on the organization's website www.lesprtimt.com.

In addition to the other treatment programs L'esprit recently began to offer MACT services and the Board was pleased to hear about the progress of that program. L'esprit received a grant from the Montana Health Care Foundation to assist with the startup of this much needed program. L'esprit also offers Case Management, Substance use disorder services as well. L'esprit also has an individual who is a trained NARCAN trainer providing that training to different businesses around Livingston as a benefit to the community. L'esprit is an active member in the community and participates in many different community groups in order to help meet the needs of the community.

L'esprit provides access to appropriately qualified and experienced staff member at all times, including after regular business hours. This is accomplished by a 24/7 call line for individuals to call after regular business hours.

Continuity of Services through Transitions

L'esprit works closely with individuals and families to ensure smooth transitions of services. L'esprit regularly reviews the individual's treatment plan and assists with making arrangements for services and support when available in the community. L'esprit also partners with local law enforcement to promote Situational Awareness and continuity of services in crises situations in the community

The Board review team had an excellent discussion regarding the use of natural supports, with special emphasis on transitional age youth. Specifically, considering emphasizing goals of building networks of community support for youth versus transitioning to adult services. The strength of L'esprit in the community lends opportunity to great success potential in this area.

Strong emphasis in school-based services on transitions involving promoting kids from grade to grade and into new schools.

The case manager/family support specialist will work to help clients secure housing and keeps up with resources that can benefit clients and constantly connects with the community to find the best fit that will ensure a successful discharge plan. The case manager/family support specialist help to develop and discover a stronger network of services and opportunities to see the clients gain as much independence in their lives.

Review of client treatment plans showed that the plans were very informative, descriptive, and explained history, diagnosis, treatments, use of medication, care and included crisis safety plans.

Overall & Recommendations

Overall, the Board came away very impressed with L'esprit and the treatment and services that they provide. L'esprit provides a great benefit to the Livingston community and the Board was pleased to hear about the potential expansion of some services into neighboring counties.

There is a distinct cohesion of the staff that radiates compassion and care for the people they serve. Keeping that small town feel is their strength and it does not hinder their ability to offer the highest standard of care. L'esprit has become an integral part of the community and their dedication to excellence has provided a lifeline to a special population of their community that most of the time have no voice or support.

The Board also appreciated hearing about how L'esprit recognized the need to develop internal employees and the steps that it has already taken to create their own employee pipeline, such as an enhanced clinical supervision model. These steps will only help to ensure that high quality services and programs will continue.

Recommendations:

- The Board does recommend that L'esprit review the creation of a supported employment program for clients.
- The Board does recommend that L'esprit explore an easy to reference one-page treatment plan overview for clients to easily review their treatment goals and crisis plan when needed.
- The Board recommends continued collaboration with community stakeholders within Livingston and potential expansion of services into neighboring counties.
- The Board recommends continued exploration of potential partnerships for additional cultural effectiveness opportunities within the community.
- The Board recommends exploring adding an "other" button on the online referral platform. This may be helpful for folks signing up for services that may not understand the technical names of programs and what they mean.