

Many Rivers
Whole Health

Great Falls,
Montana

June 20 & 21,

2023

Site Inspection Conducted by the Mental Disabilities
Board of Visitors

Jeremy Hoscheid

Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

Mental Health Facility reviewed:

Many Rivers Whole Health (Great Falls)

Sydney Blair, LCSW, CEO

Authority for review:

Montana Code Annotated, 53-21-104

Purpose of review:

1. To learn about services provided by Many Rivers in Great Falls
2. To assess the degree to which the services provided by Many Rivers 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 Many Rivers for improvement of services.
5. To report to the Governor regarding the status of services provided by Many Rivers.

Site Review Team:

Board:

Tyson Schumacher, Board Member

Melissa Ancell, Board Member

BOV Staff:

Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

Vera Haffey, Legal Secretary

Jeff Folsom, Consultant for BOV

Review process:

- Interviews with Many Rivers staff and clients
- Review of treatment activities, tour of Many Rivers 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 review of Many Rivers Whole Health (Many Rivers) on June 20 and 21, 2023. The Board toured the Many Rivers Great Falls Regional Office, the New Directions Center, Wellness Recovery Center/PACT Office, and three group home locations.

Over the past two years, Many Rivers has achieved several organizational accomplishments. Many Rivers was awarded a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Expansion Grant to adjust how the services were provided for mental health and substance abuse utilizing the CCBHC model. As part of the grant Many Rivers was able to expand knowledge and use of evidence-based practices by having clinicians trained in specific treatment models including EMDR, TF-CBT, and solution focused brief therapy to provide a more robust clinical services program thus improving client outcomes. The CCBHC grant also allowed Many Rivers to open a small primary care clinic and add specific Addictions Medicine provider who offers Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to assist clients with their physical health needs in addition to their behavioral health needs.

Services Offered by Many Rivers:

- Adult Case Management
- Adult Foster Care
- Adult Therapeutic Aide (Community Based Psychiatric Rehabilitation Support)
- Behavioral Health Group Home
- Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT)
- Day Treatment
- Domestic Violence/Anger Management Group
- SDMI Group Home Waiver
- Home Support Services (HSS)
- Individual, Family, and Group Therapy (Mental Health Outpatient Therapy)
- Individual, Family, and Group Therapy (SUD Outpatient Therapy)
- Outpatient Psychiatry
- Primary Care
- Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) and Montana Assertive Community Treatment (MACT)
- Peer Support Services
- 3.1 Residential Home
- SUD Intensive Outpatient Therapy (IOP)
- Supported Employment
- Transitional Living
- Youth Case Management
- Veterans Services

Organizational Mission: Many Rivers Whole Health partners with people and communities to serve the whole person – body, mind, and spirit – by providing expertise in wellness, mental health, and substance use disorders, addressing prevention and treatment with a recovery-based approach.

Organizational Vision: To be a community based, highly respected organization known for excellence in mental health and addiction recovery services; offering compassionate, client-focused, professional support.

Organizational Planning and Quality Improvement

Many Rivers Whole Health (Many Rivers) is the result of an organizational merger in July 2022 between the Center for Mental Health and Gateway Community Services. This merger was beneficial in meeting the CCBHC grant needs as well as the needs of the clients served as it provided integration of two long-standing agencies to be able to offer more services collectively. In addition, the merger also allowed Many Rivers to break down barriers for clients needing assistance with both mental health and substance use services to be able to receive treatment under a single agency. The Board was pleased to learn that at the beginning of the merger discussions, Many Rivers had internal discussions about focusing on the big picture questions of “What do the communities we serve need?” and “What do we as a healthcare provider do well?” As typical of organizations who have gone through a merger, the Board noted that there was still some organizational cohesiveness that needed to occur. The Board was pleased to learn about the different initiatives that the Many Rivers leadership team has put in place to address this. There was a clear focus on the people aspect of the merger. Many Rivers has several in-house committees that staff could serve on. These include the Hope for Our Own, Moral, Safety, and PTO committees. The Board appreciated learning about these committees and opportunities for staff to be further involved in the overall success and culture of the organization.

A five-year strategic plan covering 2017-2022 was provided to the Board and Many Rivers stated that they were in the beginning development stages of their strategic plan for the next 4–5-year time frame. The multi-year plan will be developed as a forward looking big picture vision of where the Many Rivers Board wants to see the organization in the future but also with the realization that behavioral health market is a constantly changing landscape. Many Rivers consistently review and adjust their plan to meet the current needs of the communities they serve. In addition to the Many Rivers Board, stakeholder feedback has been utilized in the planning process. Stakeholder feedback includes the local county behavioral health advisor committees and the crisis coalitions that members of the organization serve on. Many Rivers has also utilized staff surveys and staff feedback during the strategic planning process.

Many Rivers recently implemented a new electronic health record (EHR) system which will be a significant boost for the organization as all the different treatment programs will be included in one system rather than operating out of three separate systems as in the past. With the new EHR clients now can access a patient portal where they can see some of their records, utilize telehealth

services, request appointments and complete screenings. The new EHR will also lead to better quality assurance, data collection and reporting across the organization.

Many Rivers provided the Board with an annual report which combines the different key performance indicators of the different service locations. The new EHR system will allow for an expanded availability of reporting options and evaluation of the data. The agency has a dedicated QI staff who shared with the Board some of the data products that the agency produces. The quick facts helped illustrate the current Many Rivers client population and their needs. The Board was also pleased to learn that Many Rivers also tracks client grievances and incidents reports. Additionally, these incidents are staffed with supervisors and reviewed on a case-by-case basis which is critical to ensuring good risk management. Many Rivers QI data also focuses on employee metrics that are helpful in the organizational operations covering areas such as: feedback through surveys, training analysis, community involvement, etc. It should be noted that materials provided were for the 2020-2021 years and Many Rivers was behind on producing the current year's reports. The Board would recommend that the agency work to ensure they have timely data published and available to the organization's supervisors and staff so that any actionable items can be started at the appropriate time.

The Board learned of the operational challenges faced by Many Rivers over the past few years. Since the 2017 budget cuts, providers have been forced to adjust their operating plans to ensure the agency could remain operational. The Board appreciated hearing about these firsthand and was able to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by Montana's community behavioral health providers. Many Rivers work with individual counties and efforts to seek county involvement and "skin in the game" is difficult, worth pursuing and continuing and a strength. Efforts to revisit the Intergovernmental Transfer that once benefited the organization should be supported by BOV and DPHHS.

Rights, Responsibilities, and Safety

During the Boards visit it was noted that Many Rivers had the patient rights information posted in the lobby along with brochures available for clients which also had this information. This information is also provided to clients during the initial admission paperwork in written form and verbally discussed with the individual client as part of the intake process. Information on the Board of Visitors, the Mental Health Ombudsman, and Disability Rights was also posted and visible in the group homes and community treatment locations. This advocacy information is also included in the initial intake paperwork given to the individual.

The Board also noted that the group homes and community offices had the client grievance policy and paperwork posted on a bulletin board and readily available to clients if needed. The staff interviewed understood the grievance procedure and stated that there is an attempt to resolve all grievances at the lowest level possible. Clients interviewed shared with the Board contrary views on the grievance procedure. Some clients stated that they thought the process worked fine, while other clients shared frustrations with the grievance process including not having a secure way to

deliver grievance and some clients felt that they were not always informed of the outcome of their grievances.

Staff interviewed understood the organization's abuse and neglect policy and understood their roles and responsibilities as mandatory reporters. Staff said that they felt supported by the organization if they ever had to make an abuse and neglect report. The Board did note that Many Rivers follows the requirements of MCA 53-21-107 notifying the Board when these allegations occurred and following up with the Board on the outcomes of the investigations. Staff interviewed also discussed the debriefing that occurs after incidents and that staff felt supported and able to discuss any concerns with their supervisor.

Individual, Family Member, Guardian Participation

Many Rivers primary population served is low-income adult clients who are diagnosed with a Severe Disabling Mental Illness (SDMI) or youth clients who are diagnosed as having a Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED). Many Rivers encourages family members/guardians to be involved in the individual's treatment and support as much as possible, but it was noted that with the adult clients that family member participation is often limited. Where family members may not be available, supportive or a part of care options, natural support, and improved outreach to community (non-Many Rivers service community) could be further explored as a support for the client. Many Rivers provides Comprehensive School and Community Support Treatment (CSCT) and family members are involved in the referral process as well as treatment planning process of the child. The passion and mission driven approach of the school-based team was a highlight of the review.

Some clients interviewed identified a desire for better opportunities to provide feedback to their treatment team and that current systems have a chilling effect on being able to communicate honestly and effectively. Follow-up to concerns is important. Several clients expressed a desire for "staff sensitivity training" from the perspective of feeling patronized and not talked to or accepted as adults.

Individual and family driven case management services seem to be at a low. The challenges created by the several waivers, use of peers and overall workforce shortages need to be addressed at the agency and at the state level. This included concerns about recent changes in the ability to transport clients, having to do the work for outside case managers who are overloaded and undertrained, and a lack of clear roles and responsibilities.

Many Rivers demonstrated remarkable commitment to employing and supporting those with lived experience. This does create some challenges and concerns were raised regarding ex and/or current clients/ staff access to medical records of others.

Cultural Effectiveness

Many Rivers did not have a specifically developed Cultural Effectiveness Plan (CEP) but all Many Rivers employees complete cultural competency and diversity training upon hire. This training is completed through the Relias online learning platform. This training course provides staff with important information about becoming more respectful and culturally competent. The client's individual beliefs and personal spiritual and religious choices are an important part of the individual's treatment plan.

Staff interviewed stated that they have contact information for people in the local area who provide cultural opportunities and religious services. Outside of mentioning taking clients to a Native American pow wow there was not any additional detail about other culturally competent activities or services that clients engage in. Clients interviewed shared with the Board that they would appreciate more opportunities to engage in cultural or religious activities but that they are expected to make the initial contact, which is a barrier for some individuals.

The Board was pleased to learn about the CCBHC-IA grant that Many Rivers had recently applied for. Included in the organization's proposal was a training program for all employees regarding cultural awareness, diversity, and inclusivity. In addition to this training program, the Board would also recommend that Many Rivers continue to network developing links with other service providers and organization that have relevant experience and expertise in supporting people from all cultural, ethnic, religious, and racial groups.

Staff Competence, Training, Supervision, and Relationships with Residents

Many Rivers defines knowledge and competence of all staff positions as noted in the job descriptions provided to the Board. Many Rivers provides all new staff with a 2-day orientation training program along with MANDT de-escalation training, CPR & First Aid along with a series of required online trainings.

It appeared that there were some discrepancies in the staff's perception of training offered and ability to attend additional training opportunities. One staff member stated that they had received all the needed training and were encouraged to attend additional training opportunities provided by DPHHS or other mental health organizations. The other staff stated almost the exact opposite, including that there was a lack of communication regarding training opportunities and that they were unable to access the Relias online learning management system. It appeared to the Board that some of this staff confusion could be related to lingering post-merger effects and emphasized the need for further organizational cohesiveness.

Many Rivers also offers employees an Education Incentive Program which allows employees to take additional Relias training courses and earn money for their additional training. The Board

was pleased to learn about this program and the overall encouragement from leadership for employees to take advantage of additional training courses.

Staff interviewed and observed during the tours of treatment locations all appeared to have a good relationship and were actively engaged with individuals. Staff displayed a positive demeanor and a respect for the individuals they were serving.

Many staff expressed the need for de-escalation training beyond the 'MANDT' system. It could be worthwhile to explore other de-escalation programs that could better provide the training staff feel they needed.

Staff interviewed expressed satisfaction with the supervision they received. Staff spoke highly of the professional demeanor and availability of their supervisors if they ever needed assistance. Many Rivers has a strong leadership team with historical knowledge of the state systems and institutional knowledge of the agency. Furthermore, the leadership is deep with clinical backgrounds rooted in direct care experience. This leadership and experience is an asset and a strength to the organization.

The Board did hear a common theme from Many Rivers leadership and staff regarding therapist retention. The Board also recognizes the shortage of therapists across the community mental health centers. During discussions the need to create an administrative rule and incentive for therapists to work collaboratively with the licensed mental health centers was brought up. This would greatly help solidify the major need for clinical staff across the community based mental health centers and is supported by the Board.

Treatment and Support

Many Rivers provides a wide range of services for its clients and appeared to be actively engaged in fulfilling its organizational vision. Many Rivers was one of the first organizations in Montana to be awarded the CCBHC Implementation Grant and they dove head on to tackle the needed organizational and treatment changes that are required as the implementation of the CCBHC model. Many Rivers provide whole person (body, mind, and spirit) centered treatment and the Board is excited to see the future of the CCBHC model in Montana and the availability for clients to have both their mental health and substance use disorder needs treated under one comprehensive agency. The Board does caution Many Rivers not to expect the adoption of CCBHC's to be a panacea of funds that will create reimbursement streams that will solve all problems. This effort will require many changes, all of which are believed to improve client care system wide.

Many Rivers ongoing commitment to residential supports is commendable. Residents in the transitional living and congregate care facilities report appreciation for the opportunity and support offered. The Board noted some concerns about the lack of movement or opportunity for clients to continue to transition towards independence. This is exacerbated by clients' clearly communicated desire to remain comfortable and where they are. The desire to grow 'adult foster care' services may help address the challenges in transitional living flow. The congregate care

facility observed was in tremendous disrepair. The Board noted the presence of possible wood rot at one location, the potential need for upgraded security cameras, and it appeared overall that the facilities could benefit from increased regular general maintenance and upkeep.

The MACT team and their effort to bring more comprehensive support services to rural communities is applauded by the Board. The MACT Team is made up of a self-contained multidisciplinary team that provides 24/7 coverage throughout the year. The Board learned of the different assistance provided through MACT and the overall need within the community/service area for additional MACT Teams.

Many Rivers appears to be deeply committed to its outpatient service practice. It is hoped that this commitment can and will continue to complement the need for a robust continuum of community-based services that provide a safety net for all community members. As the Board learned about the different service programs offered and assessments it appears to the Board that assessment tools such as the DLA-20 could be better and more efficiently leveraged in Mt. Pacific reviews.

Clients made the comment that staff at Many Rivers would bend over backwards for them, but this comment was focused more on the staff's personal financial resources that staff use while taking clients on outings. The Board recognizes that there is a reimbursement process in place for staff but given the difficult financial environment it would be beneficial for staff if Many Rivers could provide those funds ahead of time for staff.

During the Boards review of individual client treatment plans seem to predicate the acceptance of some services to benefit from others. For example, day treatment requirements. It appears that treatment plans are driven by staff availability and the business model of available hours versus a more dynamic, flexible, individually driven plan of treatment. It is understood that current workforce challenges drive this, but caution should be taken that new 'norms' are not set. The cans and cants of which services are available create a loss of individually driven planning.

Access and Entry

Many Rivers works closely with other healthcare providers (Benefis, Alluvion) as well as local law enforcement in Great Falls to make services convenient to those who need them. The collaborative approach was noted by the leadership team and staff members. This sort of community collaboration between providers and law enforcement has been extremely beneficial for many clients within the Great Falls community who need treatment services.

Individuals who enter services receive timely assessments and the individual's treatment plan is developed upon admission into services. The new EHR system will allow for an even quicker response from Many Rivers as clients can complete these assessments online while waiting for their appointment.

Many Rivers staff are appropriately qualified and experienced as noted by job descriptions provided to the Board. Many Rivers staff are available on-site at all locations during regular

business hours and clients have access to an after-hours contact number. The Many Rivers group homes staffing varies depending on time of day and the level of staffing required by licensing. The Board did note a potential area of concern related to the availability of overnight staff at one of the group homes and how that shift is not always staffed due to staffing shortages. Many Rivers implements an afterhours on-call system where residents could contact the on-call supervisor, but the Board questioned the effectiveness of this system if a client was in a crisis type situation.

Continuity of Services through Transitions

Many Rivers appeared to ensure that transitions for individuals moving out of treatment are in place before those individual complete services at Many Rivers. This appeared true in all treatment settings.

Many Rivers appears to be a good partner in supporting the states challenges to solve for improved crises response system with an emphasis on rural counties. Many Rivers had also begun efforts to establish crisis beds in Lewis & Clark County however, the current financial model of the states crisis beds appears to be a barrier to this service.

Many Rivers interest in resuming regular staffing and communication with the Montana State Hospital (MSH) as the ADRT group once did should be pursued. Over the past few years' poor communication between MSH and community providers, such as Many Rivers, has become a norm that must be reversed.

Recommendations

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Continue to focus on organizational cohesiveness and employee integration as an ongoing aspect of the merger.

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Review grievance procedure/process to ensure the option for secure delivery of client grievances and to also provide clients with a timeline for a response/resolution to grievances.

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Pursue and develop a complete cultural effectiveness plan for the organization and explore additional cultural and religious resources available within the community and surrounding areas.

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Review staffing levels at residential programs, especially having overnight staff available to residents.

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Review MACT/PACT case load numbers and need for additional MACT/PACT teams.

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Complete needed maintenance/upkeep and repairs at residential facilities, including safety cameras for client's safety.

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Make available funds ahead of time for staff to participate in client activities or outings.

The Board recommends that Many Rivers: Continue to promote and offer additional educational and training opportunities for staff regarding trauma informed care, de-escalation, and other related trainings.