

Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center

Lewistown,
Montana

September 19 & 20,

2023

Site Inspection Conducted by the Mental Disabilities
Board of Visitors

Jeremy Hoscheid

Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

Mental Health Facility reviewed:

Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center (Lewistown)

Christy Kemp, Interim Administrator

Authority for review:

Montana Code Annotated, 53-21-104

Purpose of review:

1. To learn about services provided by the Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center (NCC).
2. To assess the degree to which the services provided by the NCC 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 NCC for improvement of services.
5. To report to the Governor regarding the status of services provided by NCC.

Site Review Team:

Board:

Tyson Schumacher, Board Member

Melissa Ancell, Board Member

BOV Staff:

Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

Vera Good, Patient Advocate

Review process:

- Interviews with NCC staff and clients
- Review of treatment activities, tour of NCC facility
- Review client treatment plans
- Review policy and procedures, organizational structure

Overview

The Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors (Board) conducted a site review of the Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center (NCC) per M.C.A. 53-21-104. The Board reviewed the different units and treatment programs within the facility, interviewed staff and residents, and reviewed a sampling of resident treatment plans.

The NCC is licensed as a long-term care facility located on expansive grounds in an appealing part of the Lewistown community. The NCC is a facility for people who have mental disorders and who require a level of care not available in the community, but who do not require the intensive psychiatric treatment available at Montana State Hospital. Similar to Montana State Hospital, the NCC can accept residents voluntarily, but the vast majority of residents are involuntarily committed by the District Courts around the State. The NCC may also discharge residents who can function in, or benefit from, community settings. The NCC is licensed for up to 117 beds and had a census of 66 patients during the Boards review.

Organizational Planning and Quality Improvement

The NCC is among the state operated facilities within the Healthcare Facilities Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). Currently the NCC is in-between facility administrators but does have strong support from the current interim administrator as well as a full-time member of the Alvarez and Marsal (A&M) consulting team who is contracted with Department of Public Health and Human Services to work with the state operated facilities.

The NCC did provide the Board a draft 2023-2024 strategic plan that will be approved upon the successful hiring of a new facility administrator. In the strategic plan it was noted that installing an electronic medical record (EMR) system was noted for several years. Currently the facility only has two departments that appear to have an electronic system: recreation, and laundry. The rest of the facility runs on paper, with documentation having to be entered by staff into text documents and reprinted back into binders. It is commendable how effective the facility is with the current paper system, but it is clear that it creates some delays in aggregating information about clinical performance and requires a lot of expensive labor that could be freed up to do more meaningful tasks.

In the annual report for the NCC it was noted that each internal department had their own mission or purpose statement. This was very reflective of the care provided and the pride each department takes in the facility. Maintenance issues appeared to be taken care of quickly, and bigger ticket items such as roofs were aggressively fought for to ensure they got what was needed to ensure the residents were safe and dry.

The NCC has a dedicated team of two staff who oversees the Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) department of the hospital. These two individuals showed a clear understanding of the importance of the department and have begun to implement several new processes to better collect patient care data and analyze this data to provide better information during treatment plan reviews and the patients overall progress while in treatment. The NCC is also monitoring really great risk metrics such as infection risk, fall risk, incidents, and so forth and the quarterly reports reflected improvement in key areas such as medication management, infection control, and fall risks.

Rights, Responsibilities, and Safety

The NCC had clearly posted on each of the facility wings information about individual patient rights as well as material posted showing the contact information of the Board of Visitors, the Mental Health Ombudsman, and Disability Rights. The Board was also pleased to see the contact info for the Senior Long Term Care Ombudsman and other Senior Organizations was available to the patients as well. In talking with residents, they understood how to utilize the grievance forms and said that staff were willing to assist them if they ever needed to file a grievance. The residents shared that they themselves have not had to write a grievance as the staff or nurse on the units does a good job of helping them.

Resident rights appeared to be very well known through the facility. In resident interviews there was much positivity about the staff and what they're able to do for them. The Board noted that there was a lot of resident-focused language and there was little to no discussion about the past offenses of the residents, only the care and treatment that was provided. It is clear that people who work at the NCC care about providing humane and safe care for residents irrespective of their histories.

The NCC also has available a resident request form which is available when the individual is unable to leave their room to access the client store. The NCC Client Store will receive those request forms and deliver those requested items to the individual resident. While this process is not overly complicated, it was clear the residents felt it showed that the NCC cared about their needs. The staff at the Client Store shared that if they did not have a requested item in stock, they would try to find a suitable replacement or work on getting that item delivered to the NCC.

Individual, Family Member, Guardian Participation

The NCC encourages patients and their family members in the treatment process during the individual's treatment stay. The Board heard multiple examples of family members that will spend time with the individual patient and will attend the patients' scheduled activities throughout the day.

Given the unique and complex geriatric psychiatric population served at the NCC, the Board learned that for some of the patients there was little to no family involvement. Staff reported that this was due to a variety of reasons ranging from the severity of the individual mental illness, the emotional toll the illness can have on family members, or the individual patient may not have any family members who are still living or able to physically travel to Lewistown.

The NCC screens all guests through an electronic system and provides identification badges. They do not restrict guests unless required to and try to be as accommodating to family members and guests as they can.

The topic of patient guardianship was brought up during discussion with NCC staff. After the initial discussion it was made very clear that the patients at the NCC could benefit from having timely access to a court appointed financial guardian to assist the patients with managing the complex financial needs they themselves may not be able to manage.

Cultural Effectiveness

The cultural effectiveness at the NCC was one of the highlights of the Boards review. The NCC has implemented Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards (CLAS) which have been approved by the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). The Board was pleased to learn about the implementation of these standards as they appear to be a great way to improve the quality of services to all residents.

The Board was able to see real time examples of cultural effectiveness as the Community Center seamlessly transferred over from hosting the Resident Council luncheon with the Board to hosting a religious service for the patients provided by a local community pastor. The Recreation Department appeared to try to find solutions to all the residents' requests for religious services. While not all religious sects are practiced in the Lewistown community, the staff shared how they would get creative and utilize on-line resources and streaming options to meet the resident's individual requests.

The Board also learned about the different cultural activities offered to residents. This includes attending local pow-wows and other Native American activities, smudging of resident's rooms.

Staff shared with the Board the desire for Native American Culture training for all staff. The main objectives of the cultural effectiveness training will help define common terms when discussing the different cultures and ethnicities, explain the self-awareness in cultural competency, learning how a resident's culture can impact their perception of health and their illness and what positive ways that the awareness, knowledge, and skills can be unused in the patient's treatment plan.

The Board also appreciated seeing that the NCC recognized the individual patients that are Veterans and hosted several different activities throughout the year to recognize these individuals for their service to our country. In each client's treatment plan the Board found detailed information about their specific cultural needs

Staff Competence, Training, Supervision, and Relationships with Residents

The NCC ensures staff educational competency as noted in job descriptions for the various positions at the NCC. The NCC also has a training curriculum for new staff which focuses on the expectations specific to working with this patient population.

The Board learned that contracted staff would shadow other NCC staff for 16 hours and permanent staff will do a 40-hour job shadow. This time frame could be extended until the individual feels comfortable with the job duties. Staff are provided with a new hire packet which provides the new employee with an explanation of the facility and the departments that they will work in. Staff are also given an orientation checklist and a duties checklist which are to be completed within the first 30 days of employment.

Staff at NCC have the opportunity to attend a variety of different training courses or conferences throughout the year. In addition, staff regularly receive scheduled in-service training along with 12 CEU's provided by the NCC per year.

Given the nature of the NCC supervisors regularly spend time on the floor with staff. The supervisors ensure that staff interact with the individual patients in a positive and professional manner. The Board was pleased to see staff engaging in supportive treatment with the individual patients on treatment units.

From an operational efficiency standpoint, the Board believes that the NCC could benefit from the implementation of an on-line learning management system (LMS) for their staff. Tracking this information on paper is inefficient and staff time could be utilized elsewhere.

On the topic of electronic systems, it was also noted that CNAs, and non-core staff do not have access to email or to computers and only recently were computers installed in nursing stations. The Board would also recommend that every staff member that works at the facility have access to basic computer resources including email to ensure important communications are received.

It also appeared that the NCC was lacking the infrastructure necessary for an electronic medical record (EMR) system. This is an area that needs to be solved in order to be ready to move forward with the state operated healthcare facilities electronic medical records system project.

Treatment and Support

The treatment plans reviewed by the Board were thorough and appeared to be specific to the individual patient's treatment needs. The NCC could benefit from an EMR that will provide one easy to read comprehensive treatment plan that includes the individual psychiatric care, cultural plan, and any other plan that is needed for the individual specific treatment. The facility hopes that utilizing an EMR will help them get to a more refined interdisciplinary treatment plan and connect other aspects of the operation to it, including recreation/daily clinical/psychiatric/medication/etc.

The NCC could benefit from additional clinical staff on site. The NCC is facing similar staffing struggles to other healthcare facilities across the state. There is a continued heavy reliance on contracted staffing to meet staffing needs. It was reported to the Board that 50% of staff are contracted staff. The labor pool of the facility is complex in that travelers from CNAs and Nurses come from as many as 7 different contracts for traveling staff.

The facility trains in MANDT but is switching over to CPI and performs very few physical restraints. The Board supports the switch to CPI and encourages the NCC to continue with regular training/drilling of the techniques due to the infrequency of use at the facility so that in the event that the techniques are needed, staff are able to safely and properly implement.

There are quite a few activities going on that make the NCC look and feel less institutional including garden areas, pictures and décor, appealing paint colors, and a nice community room that is used to gather resident council and provide activities. It was clear that staff take an active interest in providing a care environment that works well for the residents. In the more independent wing this was particularly evident in the aesthetic of the wing.

There is an onsite pharmacy that is staffed by a pharmacist and pharmacy tech that supports the entire campus and works with the local pharmacies for backup as needed. Shipping medication into the facility can be delayed due to the rural location so the partnerships with the local pharmacies help support medication changes.

Psychiatric services are provided through a contractor, Frontier Psychiatry. The facility currently does not have an onsite provider. There have been some concerns in transitioning to telehealth due to resident's understanding of the technology and general distrust. The Board would encourage the NCC to continue gauging the performance of the telehealth arrangement and to determine if it remains an appropriate way to deliver the service, or if onsite days will be needed.

The recreation department also provides a significant amount of in-town and around-town activities such as hikes, bowling, and other enjoyable activities. They have policies to help with

registered sex offenders to ensure community safety and purport good community involvement. The Board highly commends the recreation department both for the activities of keeping residents happy (with the added benefit of reducing behavioral issues), and for the community presence that this provides. A good community connection is a key strategy for a facility such as this.

During the Boards tour a staff arrived with puppies and the residents lit up with smiles of joy. The Board was also pleased to note that the NCC had taken adequate measures to help ensure that visiting animals did not pose a risk to residents. The Board was happy to see that folks felt comfortable with this arrangement as it was clear this brought residents a lot of pleasure.

Recommendations

Overall, the Board was pleased with the visit to the NCC. The NCC has been through a lot of change in the past few years, but it was clear that the leadership team and staff are there to provide the best possible care and treatment that they can to some of our state's most vulnerable patient populations.

Recommendations from the Board:

- The NCC could benefit from additional community and statewide presence of the facility. This could be from the creation of a social media presence and allowing more patients families to keep up to date on activities at the NCC. This could also lead to increased volunteers from the community and help gain potential new employee prospects. The Board would also encourage the NCC to participate more in local Lewistown community activities by having a table or booth at local events.
- The Board recommends that the NCC create some materials that the recreation department could give employers/community members when they are out and about. This could be a fast fact type pamphlet, or one-pager that helps identify volunteer communities and makes light of the investments that are made into the local community with businesses, and employment.
- The Board recommends that every staff member that works at the facility have access to basic computer resources including email to ensure important communications are received.
- During the 2023 Legislative session a request was brought forward to drill a well on the NCC campus to prevent future water outages due to issues with the local Lewistown water system. This request was not approved, but the Board would strongly recommend and encourage DPHHS, the Healthcare Facilities Division, local Lewistown water/sewer, and the 2025 Legislature to revisit this need at the NCC. This issue directly impacts patient care.
- Guardianship –The Board recommends that NCC leadership and DPHHS Legal Team work to address the concerns shared about guardianship. Staff shared different examples about patients who would benefit from having a court appointed guardian. The financial complexities of navigating Medicare/Medicaid spend down requirements are extremely difficult for a geriatric psychiatric patient. Not having access to a guardian puts the clients in a situation where they could potentially experience the loss of several thousands of dollars.
- Implementation of a robust learning management system (LMS) would be helpful to augment the great training that is being provided, but hopefully one with content that

comes included so that staff can opt/be required to do elective trainings to help improve their skills.