

Building Brighter Futures

building capacity ... building health ... building hope

Established in 1927 as the Atchison Child Guidance Clinic, The Guidance Center is a community based, not-for-profit agency that serves as the state designated Community Mental Health Center for the Atchison County. The Guidance Center (TGC) began renting space on the top floor of the Atchison Hospital in 1983 to provide outpatient services for children and adults with mental illnesses. Individuals and families seeking mental health services through the Center increased rapidly over the next few years, resulting in a need for additional office space. In 1987, the organization moved to our current space located in the Atchison Hospital basement. At that time, the Center employed five therapists and three additional staff members. It was believed that the new space would accommodate the needs of the community for many years to come.

In 1990, the Kansas Legislature enacted the Kansas Mental Health Reform Act. The act designated community mental health centers as gatekeepers for admission to mental health services, created screening and diversion services for state hospital admission, allocated state hospital bed days to each center, and reallocated funds from hospitals to communities. The ultimate goal of the act was to reduce the institutionalization of adults with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness and children with Severe Emotional Disturbances through comprehensive community based services and supports. The process resulted in a significant increase in staffing requirements during the in order to meet the needs of individuals requiring services through the Atchison Guidance Center.

Mental illness takes its toll on individuals and the community. For the individuals themselves it is at many times an unbearable burden and in turn affects, if not dominates the lives of their families. According to the National Institute on Mental Health, "The burden of mental illness on health and productivity . . . has long been underestimated." It is costing our country billions of dollars each year in health care and in loss of business productivity.

National statistics indicate that 22% of the population has psychiatric disorders at any given time with 5% of those suffering from severe mental illness. It is estimated accordingly that with a population of 16,745, that more than 3,000 individuals in Atchison County will suffer from psychological disorders at any given time, with 200 of those having severe and persistent mental illness. In 2007, The Guidance Center provided community based mental health services for 935 individuals. Fifty-one were adults experiencing severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and 133 were children with severe emotional disturbances (SED). National statistics also indicate that an additional 5% of the population will experience some form of substance abuse addiction annually. In 2007, the Atchison Guidance Center provided substance abuse recovery services for 126 individuals.

The growth experienced at The Guidance Center has had a significant impact on the agency and its services. As the increasing numbers of individuals seeking mental health services place pressure on our existing facilities, equipment and resources; board members, management and staff have begun to envision a better way to deliver services and reach out to those in need. This vision includes a larger facility to help support the future work of the organization.

A two hundred percent growth in demand for services over the past 18 years necessitates expansion and renovation of existing space or relocation to a more ideal facility. To that end, TGC is seeking \$1.2 million in local funding to improve access to mental health care for members of the Atchison community. Increased space will allow The Guidance Center to more readily accommodate persons currently receiving and/or seeking treatment and support, while addressing anticipated growth in need, and will serve as the foundation for implementation of new programmatic directives identified in The President's New Freedom Commission Report. The report calls for expansion of mental health rehabilitation and recovery services, and the implementation of new best practices. Specifically, the funds will enable improvements in the following services: 1) expand treatment, education and support programs to meet new evidenced based practices; 2) expand alcohol and drug abuse recovery services for persons with co-occurring disorders of mental illness and substance abuse; and 3) expand consumer-driven services.

***Building Better Tomorrows* is a project designed to meet both current and a twenty-year projected growth in the demand for mental health services in Atchison County.**