

# HEALTH

## Partnership brings CHD clinical services to HCC campus

*Two on-site clinicians will coordinate and deliver student supports*

HOLYOKE - Holyoke Community College is partnering with the Springfield-based nonprofit Center for Human Development on a new, grant-funded venture that will allow HCC students to access a wide range of mental health and other support services on campus and in the community as they pursue their educations.

Building upon HCC's existing student support systems, the partnership will help embed CHD services on campus to help support students as they face both academic and personal challenges. In addition to ensuring mental health counseling services are available to students on campus and through telehealth, the partnership will connect students with other critical supports through CHD for a range of needs, including substance use and addiction recovery services; housing, hunger and family support.

"Mental health supports, I believe, are integral for students to complete their education because as students they are voluntarily taking on more stress in service of their future success," said Elizabeth Barron, CHD's Adult Community Clinical Services clinic director. "Any time we increase our stress, we also need to increase our support system in order to manage that stress."

The partnership was born out of an HCC initiative with JED Campus launched in October 2020 to help the college evaluate and strengthen its mental health, substance misuse and suicide prevention programs to ensure the strongest possible safety nets for students.

In November 2020, 611 HCC students responded to the Healthy Minds Study conducted by the University of Michigan for the JED Foundation, and 86 percent of those surveyed said emotional or mental difficulties had negatively affected their academic performance.

"Through this partnership with CHD and with the support and guidance from the JED Foundation, HCC will help students develop the life skills necessary to decrease the negative consequences of mental health distress, leading to increased perseverance and degree attainment," said Renee Tastad, assistant vice president of Student Affairs and dean of Enrollment Management. "HCC is known for its strong network of support services for students. This is one more way that we have dedicated ourselves to providing the support necessary to help students overcome barriers to success."

The partnership is supporting the placement of two full-time Licensed

Counselor positions, one to serve as a clinical coordinator and the other as a clinician, who will provide services and care coordination on campus and also collaborate with key HCC staff to create systems of care, reporting, and service delivery.

The clinician position will support the development and implementation of on-campus clinical services and will provide much of the face-to-face care on campus. The clinician will accept referrals from HCC staff, and provide triage assessments in order to respond effectively and quickly to students experiencing



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distress so they can be connected to therapy, HCC resources, or other community resources based on their assessment.

Working with HCC staff, faculty, and other key stakeholders, the coordinator will serve as an expert on services offered on campus, through CHD, and in the community. They will serve on HCC committees and task forces and will provide training to faculty, staff, and student leaders in areas of Emotional CPR, substance use/misuse, and risk-seeking/safety seeking behaviors. They'll also serve as a resource to students to help them navigate care.

In addition to mental health and substance use services, CHD also has resources to help students with challenges with housing instability, including emergency shelter and relationships with different stakeholders around housing. Plus, all CHD outpatient clinicians are able to help people served access housing, apply for subsidy and for low-income housing.

In tandem with HCC's student services, CHD's own breadth of community-based services will help offer students unique wrap-around supports to meet their needs for a range of challenges they may face and continuously offer support so students trying to manage stressors don't feel as though their only option is to drop out.

"It's a symbiotic relationship between the student, the communities and the supports," Barron said. "While they're are committed to improving their own lives and subsequently the communities around them, there seems to me like a duty that the communities would provide support for them while they walk through that process."