

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

March 8, 2023
News



Center for Integrated Neuro Rehab Highlights Brain Injury Services in Aroostook County

Center for Integrated Neuro-Rehab (CINR), a program of Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) is pleased to highlight Brain Injury Awareness Month during the month of March.

“We hope this month is a great opportunity for the community to learn more about brain injury services available here in Aroostook County,” shared Pamela Searles, OTR/L, CBIS, Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Manager. “Last year, CINR celebrated its 15th anniversary of supporting individuals with traumatic brain injury.”

Since opening in 2007, CINR has supported hundreds of individuals and their loved ones. Fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), CINR is currently accepting new clients. Services are available in Caribou and Houlton.

Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are more common than many people think. Brain injuries are most often sustained through falls, as well as strokes, and motor vehicle accidents. In Maine alone, on average every week, there are nearly 200 TBI-related hospital emergency department visits.

CINR works with individuals to assist them with gaining more skills in the areas of physical function, language/cognition, social/emotional wellbeing, and more independence with life skills. It is important that the community knows there is hope and help in overcoming the challenges associated with traumatic brain injury. For information, eligibility requirements, and to make referrals, CINR staff can be reached at 207-498-3820.

St. John Valley Associates Merges with Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc.

March 13, 2023
News

St. John Valley Associates (SJVA) and Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) are pleased to announce that the two agencies will merge, which will take effect on July 1, 2023. SJVA will retain the same personnel and level of services in the community; AMHC will provide leadership and administrative services.

“The SJVA Board of Directors are focused on continuing the mission of SJVA as set forth by the founders, and in doing so recognized the business requirements to continue to meet the needs of our current and future clients,” explained Thomas Gerard, SJVA President. “Therefore, we sought a merger with a recognized leader in our geographic area that would provide the professional business and administrative background to allow SJVA not only to survive but to grow and prosper. We as an organization look forward to the future and the enhanced benefits that AMHC will provide to our staff, clients, and the community of the greater St. John Valley area.”

“We are very pleased to have SJVA join AMHC,” shared Ellen Bemis, CEO. “In our early discussions, it was clear that our organizational missions, which focus on community integration, align well. AMHC has been a provider of behavioral health services to SJVA clients for many years, and we’re looking forward to bringing our services together.”

About SJVA

Since 1978 St. John Valley Associates has provided a center-based facility offering services to adults with intellectual disabilities. During the past 45 years, the SJVA organization has successfully lived up to the founders’ desire to continue education beyond high school for adults with intellectual disabilities. For more information, visit <https://stjohnvalleyassociates.org/>.

About AMHC

Celebrating nearly 60 years, AMHC is a nonprofit organization supporting up to 5,000 individuals annually. The agency has 26 service sites and 350 employees across Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties providing mental health, substance use, crisis, and sexual assault services. For more information, please visit AMHC at www.amhc.org.

AMHC Overnight Warming Centers in Calais and Houlton To Open Friday, March 17

March 16, 2023
News



OVERNIGHT WARMING CENTERS
Locations in Houlton & Calais

**STARTING MARCH 17
ON FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS**
Aroostook Recovery Center for Hope
106 Main Street, Houlton
Phone: 207-254-2213

**STARTING MARCH 17
ON FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS**
Downeast Recovery Support Center
311 Main Street, Calais
Phone: 207-952-9279

Days and hours subject to change, please call the center for updates.

 AMHC

Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) has received funding through the Maine State Housing Authority to open temporary overnight warming centers in Calais and Houlton. “AMHC is pleased to receive this funding through the Maine State Housing Authority to support individuals who are experiencing homelessness during the cold winter months,” explained Michelle Ferris, AMHC Chief Operations Officer. “The overnight warming centers will open on Fridays and Saturdays beginning March 17; additional days and hours will be added as staffing increases.”

The warming centers are located at Downeast Recovery Support Center, 311 Main Street, Calais and at Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope, 106 Main Street, Houlton. Staff will offer a safe, nurturing environment with places for individuals to rest and recline, have snacks, a hot drink, and bottled water. Individuals will be provided an opportunity to receive staff support to seek needed services such as clothing, food, and other community and behavioral health supports as needed.

“The centers will be open through April 30, 2023,” said Ferris. “We recognize this service may be an important lifeline to individuals in our community who are having difficulty accessing housing and other services and we look forward to offering our support.” For more information

about the warming centers please contact Downeast Recovery Support Center at 207-952-9279 and Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope at 207-254-2213.

There are immediate openings for temporary staff to support the overnight warming centers. There is an overnight shift differential and a completion bonus for staff who stay through April 30, 2023. Shifts are available between 7:00 p.m. – 7:00 a.m. Monday – Sunday; days and hours worked are flexible based on one’s availability. For more information and to apply, please contact Cory Tilley at ctilley@amhc.org.

AMHC Adult Crisis Stabilization Unit in Washington County Gains Momentum

March 29, 2023
News



Photo caption: ACSU staff seated l to r: David Hodgkins, Elizabeth Bartlett; center: Bobbi Jo Shoaf; back l to r: Tiffany Harvey, Tammy Clark, Rick Devoe, Caiden Plaisted, Jeremy Steinhaus (absent: Randy French, Justin Pikulski)

Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) is pleased to provide an update regarding the expansion of adult crisis stabilization unit (ACSU) services at 127 Palmer Street in Calais. An ACSU is for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis that would benefit from a short-term stay in a safe, residential-type environment; it offers trained crisis staff to offer support, intervention, safety planning, and connection to other services that may be needed.

“The ACSU in Washington County opened in July 2021 and is currently accepting new referrals,” explained Shannon Gove, LSW, AMHC Program Director. “Since opening, the staff has served 50 clients, equating to more than 1,200 bed days. Despite workforce shortages, they continue to serve the most vulnerable in our county and beyond.”

Referrals to the ACSU in Calais can be made 24/7 by calling the unit directly at 207-454-1910, through the AMHC 24/7 Call Center at 1-800-244-6431, or by fax at 207-454-0441. Anyone is welcome to make a referral, including the individual in crisis, a family member, behavioral health and medical providers, law enforcement, etc.

“Prior to the opening of this facility, individuals in Washington County in need of a crisis stabilization unit would be referred to Bangor or Presque Isle, up to 120 miles away,” said Gove. “This resulted in individuals having to wait in emergency departments or in the community while their crisis worsened. A local resource is having a positive impact on both the individuals in need of services as well as their family members.”

The space offers five private rooms and two bathrooms, and the facility is handicap accessible. In addition, clients will have a personal space to visit with family, friends, or other supports. The open floor plan provides a kitchen, dining, and living room area.

The opening of the ACSU was made possible thanks to the grant funds provided through Davis Family Foundation, C.F. Adams Charitable Trust, and the Maine Community Foundation.

Aroostook Children's Advocacy Center Earns Accreditation from National Children's Alliance

April 5, 2023
News

ACAC recognized for its delivery of high quality and effective services to victims of child abuse



Photo caption: Katherine Bartlett, Family Services Advocate, and Lori Deschaine, Forensic Interviewer, display the letter from the National Children's Alliance confirming the Aroostook Children's Advocacy Center has successfully achieved accreditation.

Aroostook Children's Advocacy Center (ACAC), a program of Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC), is pleased to share that it has been awarded accreditation by National Children's Alliance following an extensive application and site review process. As the accrediting agency for Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) across the country, accreditation is the highest level of membership with the National Children's Alliance and denotes excellence in service provision.

"It seems fitting that we should announce ACAC's accreditation in April, which is designated Child Abuse Awareness Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month," explained Julia Miller, Program Director of Prevention and Sexual Assault Services. "We're extremely proud of our ACAC team and our community partners who made this possible.

As an accredited member, ACAC has demonstrated its ability to provide comprehensive, coordinated, and compassionate services to victims of child abuse. AMHC Sexual Assault Services opened ACAC in 2018 and has assisted nearly 400 children and their families since that time. "The closest Children's Advocacy Center used to be in Bangor," explained Miller. "A local program reduces barriers to services and connects a child and family with resources and supports in their community."

National Children's Alliance awards accredited membership based on a CAC's compliance with ten national accreditation standards to ensure effective, efficient, and consistent delivery of services to child abuse victims. According to these standards, which reflect the most recent evidence-based practices in the field of child abuse intervention and prevention, accredited members must utilize a functioning and effective multidisciplinary team approach to work collaboratively in child abuse investigation, prosecution, and treatment. National Children's Alliance also considers standards regarding a center's cultural competency and diversity, forensic interviews, victim support and advocacy, medical evaluation, therapeutic intervention, and a child-focused setting.

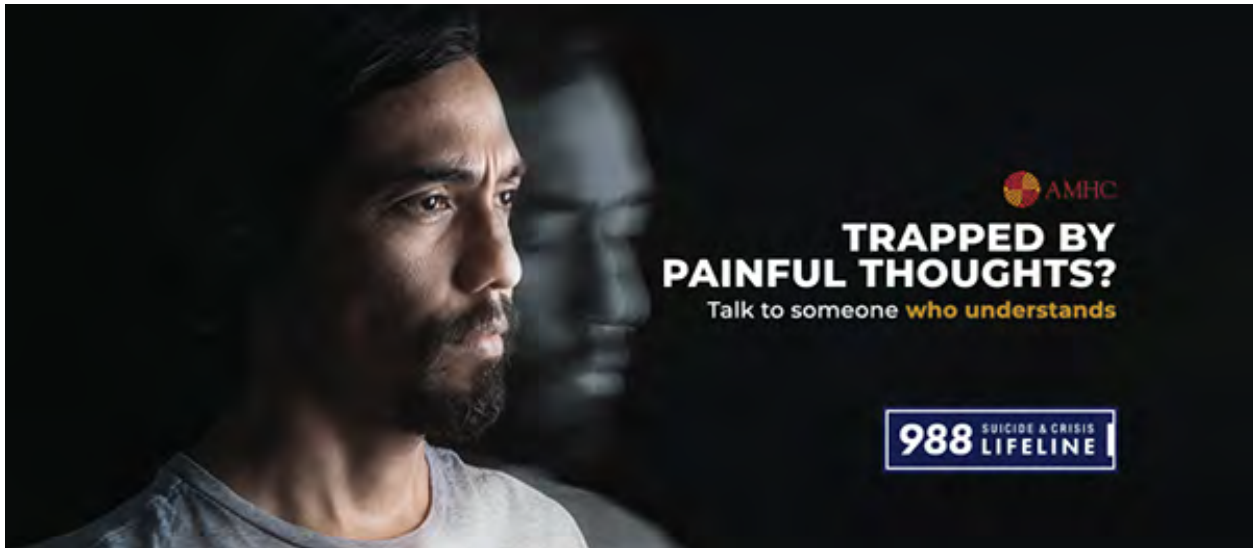
"Aroostook Children's Advocacy Center is to be commended for its excellent work serving victims of child abuse. As the national association and accrediting body for Children's Advocacy Centers across the country, our goal is to ensure that every victim of child abuse has access to high-quality services that result from professional collaboration," remarked Teresa Huizar, executive director of National Children's Alliance.

National Children's Alliance is a nonprofit association and accrediting body providing comprehensive care through hundreds of Children's Advocacy Centers nationwide with a forward-thinking approach that stays at the forefront of every child's future. For more information, visit nationalchildrensalliance.org.

Learn more about Aroostook Children's Advocacy Center at www.amhcsas.org.

AMHC Highlights Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September 11, 2023
News



September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) encourages everyone to be aware of the signs and symptoms of suicidal thoughts and what to do and not do in response to helping a loved one.

“According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, on average, one person died by suicide every 32 hours in the State of Maine in 2020,” explains Sarah Wright, Director of Crisis Services. “Maine is ranked 15th in the nation for its suicide rate; it is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-34 and ages 35-54.”

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) says the following warning signs could signal that someone is experiencing suicidal ideation (thoughts about suicide):

- Comments like “I wish I weren’t here” or “Nothing matters”
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Impulsive or reckless behavior

NAMI offers this advice: If your friend or family member struggles with suicidal ideation daily, let them know they can talk with you about what they are going through. Make sure that you adopt an open and compassionate mindset when they are talking. Instead of “arguing” or trying to disprove any negative statements they make, try active listening techniques such as reflecting on their feelings and summarizing their thoughts. This approach can help your loved one feel heard and validated.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, AMHC is available to anyone in Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties. To access AMHC’s Mobile Crisis Services team, please call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 or the Maine Crisis Line at 1-888-568-1112.



Celebrating nearly 60 years, AMHC is a nonprofit organization supporting up to 5,500 clients annually. The agency has 26 service sites and 350 employees across Aroostook, Washington, and Hancock counties, providing mental health, substance use, crisis, sexual assault services, and traumatic brain injury (Aroostook). For more information, connect with AMHC at www.amhc.org.

AMHC Introduces Share Facts Save Lives

September 26, 2023
News

Central Platform for Substance Use Disorder Information and Resources

INTRODUCING ShareFactsSaveLives.org

A new central platform for reliable, current substance use disorder information and resources.

- ✓ Harm Reduction
- ✓ Prevention Methods
- ✓ Treatment Resources
- ✓ Recovery Support



We believe through education we can reduce stigma and save lives.

On behalf of the Aroostook Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (ACORP), Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) is pleased to introduce Share Facts Save Lives, a website and social media platform dedicated to sharing substance use disorder information and resources, including harm reduction, prevention, treatment, recovery support, and ending stigma.

“It is fitting that we launch Share Facts Save Lives in September, which is designated National Recovery Month,” said Deb Jacques, AMHC Director of Marketing and Development. “This website and social media platform provide visitors with education and resources based on facts, evidence-based practices, and more.”

The goal of Share Facts Save Lives is to lower the mortality and morbidity of substance use disorder in Aroostook County by improving the public’s understanding of the science behind addiction, empowering youth to make healthy choices, connecting families to resources through 2-1-1 and OPTIONS, recognizing the signs and symptoms of overdose, sharing the benefits of naloxone, medication-assisted treatment, and the Good Samaritan Law, and providing inspiring stories of individuals in recovery, for more information visit www.sharefactssavelives.org.

Share Facts Save Lives was developed with funding through a federal grant from the Department of Health Resources and Services Administration. It was supported by the Aroostook Communities Opioid Response Program (ACORP), which includes AMHC, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital, Houlton Regional Hospital, Cary Medical Center, Northern Maine Medical Center, The Aroostook County Sheriff’s Office, Mi’kmaq Behavioral Health Center, and our local recovery community.

About AMHC

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AMHC Expands Residential Treatment Services in Presque Isle

November 7, 2023
News

Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) is pleased to announce that it has opened an expanded residential treatment facility (RTF) at 176 Academy Street in Presque Isle, adjacent to AMHC's Presque Isle Outpatient, Adult Crisis Stabilization Unit, and administrative offices and situated along Presque Isle's "healthcare corridor," where numerous healthcare providers are located.

"For nearly 50 years, AMHC residential treatment has been delivered in Limestone at a location known affectionately as 'The Farm', and it has served us well," said Ellen Bemis, CEO. "The move to Presque Isle was prompted by a need to serve more clients and offer additional services; we are extremely grateful for the significant funding AMHC received through both federal and State of Maine grants."

The new facility will allow bed capacity to increase from 12 to 18 beds. This project was made possible with a \$1,000,000 award through the 2022 Congressionally Delegated Services funding request supported by Senator Susan Collins, a \$600,000 award through the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services, which contributed 34% of the funding, and a \$150,000 allocation from an award through the Health Resources Services Administration Rural Communities Opioid Response Program*. An open house will be held December 1, 2023.

The RTF is a structured, intensive treatment facility offering 28-day/24/7 care. Individual and group treatment is required throughout each day; family treatment on Sundays; weekly case coordination meetings with community treatment providers; and skill building for successful daily recovery functioning.

AMHC Call Center Moving

November 15, 2023

News

The AMHC Call Center will be moving locations on Thursday November 16, 2023. The Call Center lines (phone and fax) will be down at 10am and could last for several hours. During this time, if you have a non-urgent need, please contact the **AMHC Outpatient Office** located near you. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 988 or the Maine Crisis Line at 1-888-568-1112. A notice will be sent when the Call Center lines have re-opened. We apologize for the inconvenience. Thank you for your patience.

AMHC Call Center Move Complete

November 16, 2023
News

The Call Center lines have re-opened. We apologize for the inconvenience. Thank you for your patience.

AMHC Relocates Ellsworth Outpatient and Downeast Treatment Center to 70 Kingsland Crossing

December 4, 2023
News



Aroostook Mental Health Services, Inc. (AMHC) is pleased to announce that it is relocating to 70 Kingsland Crossing, Ellsworth, combining its outpatient services and Downeast Treatment Center (DTC) in one location. The new facility will open on Monday, December 11, 2023. To prepare for the move, offices will be closed Thursday and Friday, December 7 and 8.

“We are excited to offer AMHC services from a central location,” said Ellen Bemis, CEO. “Our offices will be close to city amenities, including other healthcare providers, retail stores, and more. In addition, by placing the Downeast Treatment Facility and outpatient services under one roof, we make it easier for our clients to access a full range of behavioral health services, with an opportunity to expand and grow programming.” An open house is planned for Spring, 2024.

AMHC has been offering mental health, substance use, crisis, and sexual assault services in Hancock County since 2009. Thanks to a partnership with Downeast Treatment Substance Network (DSTN), a partnership of organizations and community members in Downeast, Maine, the Downeast Treatment Center opened in 2018, providing a “hub and spoke” model of care for individuals with substance use disorder.