



**NORTHWEST
COMMUNITY
HEALTH
INNOVATION
REGION**

**NORTHWEST MICHIGAN
Behavioral
Health
Initiative**



IMPROVING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WITH COLLECTIVE ACTIONS

October 26, 2022 – On September 29, over 125 residents and cross-sector stakeholders convened to celebrate the accomplishments of 10 action teams working to improve behavioral health in the region. These teams are part of the Northwest Michigan Community Health Innovation Region (CHIR)'s Behavioral Health Initiative (BHI) which aims to spark quick strategic actions by mobilizing local talents and leveraging knowledge and best practices to address pressing behavioral health needs. In the past year, over 200 diverse stakeholders from across the region have supported these collective action efforts, working to improve access to behavioral health services and enhance wellbeing and resiliency in the region.

“We are so impressed with all of the action teams and the incredible progress they have made in such a short period of time,” said Jane Sundmacher, Executive Director for the Northwest CHIR. “We were excited to celebrate all of their accomplishments and to support them in planning next steps during the recent Behavioral Health Initiative Celebration and Action Summit.”

At the Summit on September 29, action teams presented their achievements and planned their next work sprints to accomplish by the May 2023 Summit. Sundmacher added the Behavioral Health Initiative [action team projects](#) align with priority action areas described in the [Blueprint for Action: Strengthening Behavioral Health Systems and Promoting Well-Being and Resiliency in the Northwest CHIR](#), including:

- Recruit and retain behavioral health providers
- Promote easier access to services
- Enhance willingness to seek services
- Promote positive healthy experiences
- Reduce risk of behavioral health challenges
- Strengthen community

The [action teams](#) are tackling an array of critical needs in the region, such as expanding the number of behavioral health internships, creating a crisis wellness center in Traverse City, reducing stigma towards individuals with a mental illness or substance use disorder, promoting parity in behavioral health, expanding community health workers in schools, creating healthier workplaces, and promoting social emotional competencies across the lifespan. If you are interested in learning about or joining one of the current action teams, contact behavioralhealth@northernmichiganchir.org.

Data from the 2021 MiThrive assessment, the regional community health needs assessment lead by the CHIR in partnership with local health departments, hospitals, and other community partners, showed a behavioral health crisis in Northwest Michigan. Behavioral health was ranked among the top three priorities in Northwest Michigan in the MiThrive assessment. Sundmacher stressed that addressing the behavioral health crisis is even more urgent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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The CHIR's Behavioral Health Initiative is funded through the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, National Association of City and County Health Officials, and Rotary Charities of Traverse City.

About the Northwest CHIR:

The Northwest Michigan CHIR's vision is healthy people in equitable communities with a mission to improve population health, increase health equity, and reduce unnecessary medical expenses through partnerships and system change. The CHIR focuses on removing barriers to health at the individual, sector, and systems level. For more information about the CHIR, visit www.northernmichiganchir.org.

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