



Medina County ADAMH board Executive Director Phillip Titterington discusses workforce shortages that are making it hard to find behavioral health professionals.

ADAMH board facing workforce shortages



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MEDINA — As demand for services through the Medina County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Board remains consistent, the ability to meet those needs is being affected by workforce shortages, according to officials.

Board Executive Director Phillip Titterington laid out those struggles for Medina County Commissioners Tuesday, pointing to a shortage of

behavioral health professionals that's been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We're seeing more individuals who need a higher level of treatment and, unfortunately, there's a big workforce shortage," he said. "You see a lot of signs for hiring, especially in the behavioral health field. For the last couple years we've seen a large decline in people even going into the field let alone those who are getting certified. We're also seeing more people step out of the field."

"It could be COVID, trauma," Titterington added. "It's a tough field. We're creating a coalition at my office to figure out how we can locally instill students and people interested in going into behavioral health."

Titterington showed that in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021, the ADAMH board oversaw treatment going to 5,617 Medina County residents through entities including Ohio Guidestone and Catholic Charities USA.

Of that total, adult and children patients were respectively split by 88 and 12 percent.

More than 900 calls were received by ADAMH's crisis hotline in the first quarter including 71 that verbalized suicidal thoughts and 40 involving active rescue response, Titterington said.

"We're getting creative to meet capacity and look for ways to help the clinicians and not burn them out," he said. "We have mandates coming down from the state with youth services and we're doing what we can to meet them and put out a lot of fires. Despite the shortage in workforce and working at capacity, we've still done a lot."

Sixty-four referrals to the hotline came from Medina County police agencies.

County Commissioner Bill Hutson asked Titterington how overall demand for service during the pandemic has compared to preceding years.

"I'd say at this point the need is pretty consistent," Titterington said. "The need could be up but the capacity isn't. We're juggling the workforce and the capacity and the clinicians. If we're not

able to serve someone in our system of care we may refer them to a behavior health agency that has that capacity."

Commissioner Colleen Swedyk paid emphatic thanks to Titterington, ADAMH staff, and counselors for their continued work in atypical times.

"Phillip and I have a meeting every month and his department continues to do extraordinary things," she said. "We're all very thankful for that."

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