Arukah, area wins major mental health grant

Princeton institute brings together partners from community to help others

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Pictured are Network Partners at the C4-Rural inaugural meeting held at the Arukah Institute in Princeton. L-to-R: Dr. Sarah B Scruggs (Project Director of C4-Rural), Stephanie Gustafson (Project Manager), Diana Rawlings, MPH (Project Coordinator), Linda Burt, MSN (St. Margaret's Health), Sara N Scruggs, LCSW (Clinical Coordinator), Ashley Holcman, LCPS (Gateway Services), Dawn Conerton (Northcentral Behavioral Health Systems), Michael Miroux, LPC (Gateway Services), Kerri Donahue, RN (St. Margaret's Health), and Angella Hughes, LCPC (Perry Memorial Hospital).

Submitted Photo

PRINCETON — Arukah Institute of Healing Inc. recently was chosen as one of 25 rural healthcare organizations across the nation, and the only organization in the State of Illinois, to receive a Rural Health Network Development Planning grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The grant will be used to develop a plan to enhance the capacity and sustainability of the delivery of behavioral health services in rural Illinois, with an emphasis on underserved populations. The initiative is a collaborative effort involving 13 healthcare partners from Arukah Institute, Gateway Health System, Northcentral Behavioral Health Systems, St. Margaret’s, and St. Elizabeth’s.

The grant aims to improve access to mental health and substance abuse treatment services by strengthening existing partnerships and developing new collaborations. It will also support the coordination of care and the integration of behavioral health services into primary care. This approach is expected to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of healthcare in rural areas, particularly for those facing mental health challenges.

The Arukah Institute, located in Princeton, is dedicated to providing comprehensive mental health and wellness services to the community. With this grant, the institute seeks to expand its reach and impact, ensuring that residents in rural Illinois have access to the care they need to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. 

The funding will cover the costs of planning and implementing strategies that address the unique needs of rural communities, including the development of policies and programs that support mental health services, workforce development, and technology integration. The initiative is anticipated to have long-term benefits, contributing to the sustainability of mental health services and improved outcomes for rural residents.
The purpose of the grant is to promote the planning and development of integrated healthcare networks; to expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of essential health care services; and to strengthen the rural health care system as a whole.

Joining Arukah in this effort, named C-4 Rural, (Collaborative Complementary and Conventional Care for Rural Populations) are Perry Memorial Hospital, St. Margaret’s Health, North Central Behavioral Health System and Open Doors Counseling/Gateway Services. An advisory Committee consisting of Dr. Helen Lavretsky and Dr. Peipei Ping both from UCLA School of Medicine, and Patricia Schou from Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network will aid in the strategic process.

Together partners will be working on strategies to increase access to mental health services by integrating evidence-based complementary healthcare services, in an effort to expand treatment options, improve outcomes, increase patient satisfaction and buy-in, and reduce costs.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for innovating behavioral healthcare in our area,” said Dr. Sarah B. Scruggs, Executive Director of Arukah and Project Director for C4-Rural. “The purpose of this effort is to bring all providers to the same table to discuss how we can integrate our services, develop patient-centered care plans, and best see patients all the way through to wellness.”

Scruggs continued: “Accessing mental health services in rural areas such as ours is often difficult. We want to streamline the process of getting help for patients; they should be able to receive services when they need them, without glaring barriers standing in their way. I am incredibly grateful for our Network Partners — current and future — for bringing this vision to the table; I look forward to breaking new ground.”

The Arukah Institute of Healing Inc., is located in Princeton and serves the Bureau, Putnam and Marshall County areas. Learn more about C4-Rural at https://arukahinstitute.org/c4-rural.
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