

Brightpoint, Fountain House team up to expand integrated care

Fountain House, a clubhouse for people with serious mental health conditions, is partnering with Brightpoint Health, a federally qualified health center, to help operate and expand services at its Midtown clinic.

Brightpoint's collaboration with Fountain House represents a model of integrated care that goes beyond clinical services, said Paul Vitale, president and chief executive of Brightpoint Health.

"With all the social disparities people have, we cannot heal people with a needle and a pill," Vitale said.

Fountain House pioneered the clubhouse model, in which people with such conditions as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder help run their own community centers while pursuing employment and educational opportunities. The approach has been replicated in more than 300 locations worldwide.

For high-needs Medicaid enrollees, membership in Fountain House helps cut back on hospitalizations and save money, according to a Medicaid claims analysis NYU's Health Evaluation and Analytics Lab released in May. A group of individuals whose Medicaid expenses topped \$18,000 in the year before they joined Fountain House incurred monthly medical expenses that were 21% lower than projected in their first year of membership, the study found.

With Brightpoint's help, its clinic, the Sidney R. Baer Jr. Center, will expand its primary care and mental health services and shift toward a more traditional funding stream, said Dr. Ralph Aquila, Fountain House's medical director.

Fountain House has long funded psychiatric services at Baer through a mix of private funds and contracts with supportive housing providers, Aquila said.

Fountain House previously operated the clinic in conjunction with St. Lukes-Roosevelt Hospital Center, which joined Mount Sinai Health System in 2013. Since ending its affiliation with Mount Sinai two years ago, primary care at the center has been funded through a grant from the Sidney R. Baer Jr. Foundation.

After partnering with Brightpoint and completing renovations needed to meet the requirements of an Article 28 clinic, the center will be able to bill insurance for all services offered.

"If this goes the way we hope, it could be a model that could be replicated and show how to work with people with serious mental illnesses and change the tide," Aquila said. —Caroline Lewis