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# Center working to help children with mental health issues

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BY LEA RIZZO, DAILY MOUNTAIN EAGLE

The Adam Bishop Center, located in Jasper, is a comprehensive mental health treatment facility for children.

Johnny Sudberry, outpatient coordinator for children's services in Walker County for the Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center, addressed the East Walker County Chamber of Commerce at the chamber's monthly meeting on Tuesday about services offered by ABC.

ABC serves all of Walker County, parts of Winston and Marion counties as well as some of Jefferson County. It is named in honor of Jerry Bishop's son, Adam Bishop, who has Down Syndrome.

Sudberry said the facility has grown from approximately 20 initial clients in the early days of the center to 414 open cases of children and adolescents as of July 26, 2016.

He explained, "Our goal is to try to help these kids not be dependent on mental health services all their life"

ABC offers a variety of services, including outpatient, day treatment, case management and psychiatric services. The center employs a full-time psychiatrist and a nurse practitioner as well as a part-time psychiatrist.

"Our office is one of the busiest in the state. It's probably second to JBS [Mental Health Authority] in Birmingham, as far as services are concerned," Sudberry said.

The center's preschool day treatment program helps children who are not prepared to go to kindergarten due to emotional behavior problems.

"They've tried other preschool programs and they just couldn't make it [due to] emotional problems, behavior problems," Sudberry said. "Our day treatment program will see those kids and they will spend several hours a day ... [learning] behavior skills. It's a behavior management program, working with their needs, to try to help prepare them for kindergarten and school."

Children spend a varying number of hours in the day treatment program, which starts at 7 a.m. and runs until 4 p.m.

After-school treatment is also offered for children who have problems at home or at school.

“They come to us after school and do the same type of things we do with the preschoolers on a more graduated level to help them deal with family, emotional or behavior problems to help them be successful in their life,” Sudberry explained.

He added that the center tries to be involved in as many aspects of the child’s life as possible.

Sudberry said that the rise in children who utilize ABC’s services is in part due to increased awareness of mental health issues as well as an increase in people seeking out help today.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, “one in five children will have a mental disorder at some point during their lifetime.”

Sudberry added that he’s glad ABC is here to serve needs of children in Walker County and summed up the work done at ABC as “sometimes frightening, sometimes exhausting but a lot of times rewarding.”

The Adam Bishop Center is located at 1105 7th Avenue in Jasper and can be reached by phone at 205-302-9066.



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