

HELP & HOPE

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE GUIDE



**Riverwood
Center**

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**ADDICTION • ANGER
ANXIETY • CONFUSION
DEPRESSION • GRIEF
HUNGER • MENTAL HEALTH
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS • STRESS**

MAY 2025

MailMax
Your Good News Paper

Help & Hope

Memo From The Publisher

At *MailMax*, we are honored to once again partner with Riverwood Center to raise awareness about mental and behavioral health and to provide access to vital resources for those in need. The *Help & Hope* publication was created out of a deep concern for the alarming rise in suicide rates and the growing need for compassionate, community-driven support.

In 2024, the United States saw a troubling increase in suicide deaths, reaching levels not seen since 1941. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, the age-adjusted suicide rate rose to 14.7 deaths per 100,000 individuals—up from 14.2 in 2022. More than 49,300 lives were lost to suicide in 2024 alone, reflecting a steady and heartbreaking upward trend.

As a community, we have a responsibility to notice and respond to those who may be suffering—especially those who live in isolation or lack strong social connections. Often, it is a simple gesture, a conversation, or an

act of kindness that can begin to shift someone's path toward healing.

Please don't skip over this publication thinking it doesn't apply to you. Read it. Learn from it. You may be the person who helps save a life.

If even one life is spared among the 50,134 weekly readers of *MailMax*, then this *Help & Hope* initiative will have made a meaningful difference.

I am deeply grateful to Riverwood Center for their continued partnership in bringing this vital message to Southwest Michigan.



Glen Head,
MailMax Publisher

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Riverwood Center Proudly Supports

Help & Hope

Mental health impacts everyone in our community on various levels, both personally and through our connections at work, home, in social settings, at school, and via media and news. To reduce the stigma around mental health support, build stronger resilience, and improve the overall well-being of our residents, promoting mental health is essential. That's why we're pleased to continue our collaboration with *MailMax* for Mental Health Awareness Month, bringing you information about the many

resources available in Berrien County. As your community mental health provider, our role is to inform you about these resources, encourage you to seek support when you need it, and assure you that you are not alone. Our work in addressing mental health will continue to evolve. We encourage all Berrien County residents to explore the resources available, have open conversations about mental health, and support each other in reaching out for help.



Beth Aurand,
LMSW, CAADC
Riverwood Center
Director of Behavioral
Health Services

Self Care

We all have mental health. Since 2023, at times I have had symptoms of poor mental health due to significant losses in my life. My answer to any problem seems to be checking-in with my doctors, a lot of reading, therapy, and self-help. One article that I enjoyed and embraced was about self-care and the signs that you desperately need a mental health day. At times it can be challenging to figure out when your brain needs a break, but there are some obvious signs that your body and mind need to rest. If you find that your go-to coping mechanisms are not working; maybe working out, breathing, yoga, or just walking around the block... When all the things that usually work just aren't... when your emotions are out of sync; short tempers, angry outbursts, apathy, and disinterest may be a sign your perception is distorted. This lack of awareness can lead to damaged relationships and disruptive workplaces. Some physical problems associated with emotional issues may include increased headaches, backaches, gastrointestinal distress, dizziness, nausea, tightness in the chest, frequent colds and irregular sleep. Maybe you are having difficulty staying

focused. A day away could help clear the brain fog. When dealing with issues, try to involve the people who are closest to you, because they likely already see your full picture. If your emotional distress is manifesting physically, this is a big sign that you need a rest day to catch your breath. Your mental health day should include specific activities, including self-care, to achieve these goals. These can be reading/journaling, sleeping in or sleeping late, nature walks, or a hobby you enjoy. Going to lunch with a friend is good. You may have to set some ground rules to avoid politics, or work talks so that your conversations stay light and pleasant. Some activities to avoid during your mental health day include scrolling through social media, wallowing in negative emotions, bingeing on junk food or alcohol or controlled substances. This may sound simplistic, but positive thinking usually helps people out of a funk. If you think you're "broken," your thought patterns can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. So instead, focus on where you want to be, and kick start a plan to get there! If you feel a mental health day (or vacation) may not be enough to help restore your energy, mood, productivity, and so on, it may be time to seek out a mental health professional. Riverwood Center is within the "umbrella" of the Berrien County Mental Health Authority and could be a great option for you. If you would like to see a clinician, you can

call 269-925-0585 or 866-729-8716 and ask for a "request for services." An assessment will be completed to best identify your needs. Riverwood Center is open Monday-Friday 8:30am until 5:00pm. Riverwood Center can see you in a crisis during our open hours. As always, if you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide or experiencing a mental health crisis go to the nearest Emergency Room. You can also dial or text 988 and get connected to a trained crisis counselor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Leanne Adams
Riverwood Center
Customer Service
Representative



About Riverwood Center

Riverwood Center has been delivering quality mental health services and programs since 1975. We provide a wide variety of caring and confidential services to children, families and adults with mental illnesses, intellectual/developmental disabilities and substance use disorders. It is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic.

VISION

Every person has an exceptional experience... every time.

OUR HISTORY

Riverwood Center was founded in the early 1970s. In those early years, the State Department of Mental Health provided most of the mental health services to people in Michigan. Back then most of those services were provided in large state institutions, and more than 150 people in Berrien County were institutionalized. Gradually, the state gave the responsibility for meeting the mental health needs of its citizens to the local county mental health agencies. Over the years Riverwood Center has strengthened its belief that people are better served close to home. Today, less than 10 people from Berrien County require long-term care in state-run facilities.

MISSION

We provide personalized effective behavioral health services to build a stronger and healthier community.

INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE

Integrated healthcare means we believe your mental health is closely tied to your physical health. If you receive community mental health services, Riverwood Center will work with your primary care doctor to coordinate your physical and mental health services. If you do not have a primary care doctor, Riverwood will help you find one. Our goal is that together we will be able to meet your needs.

QUALITY

Riverwood Center is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). CARF is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes the quality, value and good results of mental health services. CARF does this by setting high standards for services that enhance people's lives. Accreditation shows that Riverwood is committed to high quality care. We believe Riverwood is a valuable resource, and our CARF accreditation proves our commitment to our community.



Riverwood Center

Services Include:

1. **Community Living Supports (CLS):** Individual or group services delivered in your own home or in the community. Services are designed to train or assist you or your loved ones with achieving goals such as living as independently as possible, learning new skills such as cooking or budgeting, participating in community activities and assuring health and safety.
2. **Outpatient Clinic Services:** Individual, family or group counseling.
3. **Psychiatric Services:** Medication management to reduce and control symptoms of mental illness.
4. **Respite Services:** Provides temporary relief for a family or unpaid caregiver so you can continue to live in your family home.
5. **Self-Determination:** Self-determination is an option to deliver services in a way that gives you or your loved one more choice and control over your services.

Additional need-specific services including:

SERVICES FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT): A team approach to help adults in the community who are having trouble living independently due to ongoing symptoms of their mental illness. The team helps you manage your medications without supports and helps if you frequently use inpatient hospital emergency services or crisis residential services. Physicians, nurses, social workers, peers and other specialists work together to reduce unnecessary hospital stays and increase your well-being.

Behavior Management Review: Support to create a behavior management plan that helps you or others you work with to change behaviors caused by an illness or disability. The behavior management plan is developed during person-centered planning and then is approved and reviewed regularly by a team of specialists to make sure that it is effective and

dignified, and continues to meet your needs.

Case Management: Assistance with planning, linking and monitoring specialty services. For those who are vulnerable and/or have multiple service needs and are not able to arrange or access these services independently.

Community Inpatient Services: Hospital services used to stabilize someone experiencing a significant change in their symptoms, or in a mental health emergency. Community hospital services are provided in licensed psychiatric hospitals and in licensed psychiatric units of general hospitals.

Crisis Residential Services: Short-term alternatives to inpatient hospitalization provided in a licensed residential setting.

Supported Employment: Help overcoming the challenges that a mental illness or developmental disability can have when finding and retaining a job. The Employment Specialists build relationships that foster opportunities for people with disabilities to get hired. Employment Connections matches the employer's needs with your abilities. Job development and long-term, follow-along services are available. In follow-along services, a job coach works with you for as long as you need support to maintain your job.

Health Services: Includes assessment, treatment and professional monitoring of health conditions that are related to or impacted by your mental health condition. Your primary doctor will treat any other health conditions you may have.

Additional Riverwood Center Services

Nursing Home Mental Health Assessment and Monitoring: A review of a nursing home resident's need for and response to mental health treatment, along with consultations with nursing home staff.

Peer-Delivered and Peer Specialist Services: Services delivered by your peers, including drop-in centers, are entirely run by people like you who use community mental health services. They offer help with food, clothing, socialization, housing and support to begin or maintain mental health treatment. Peer Specialist services are activities designed to help those with serious mental illness in their individual recovery journey and are provided by others who are in recovery from serious mental illness.

Residential Care Services: Residential care options range from staff assistance so you can remain in your own home to total supports in a structured, group home facility. The type and level of residential supports is based on your needs. Riverwood Center Supports Coordinators will discuss options and assure you live in the most independent and least restrictive settings possible.

Mobile Crisis Response: Provides Mobile Crisis stabilization services to individuals residing in Berrien County. Mobile Crisis Services are designed to promptly address a crisis situation and maintain the individual in their home or present living arrangement.

Behavioral Health Urgent Care: Behavioral Health Urgent Care (BHUC) is a treatment model that is intended to offer a diversion from the use of emergency department or hospitals to address individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. This model offers an array of services that begins with initial triage and may include brief assessment, stabilization and intervention, psychiatric intervention, Peer Support Services, and transition services. Riverwood Center's Behavioral Health Urgent Care operates out of our Benton Harbor location Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:00pm

Substance Use SUD Services: A person's physical, psychological, social and spiritual life can be affected by substance abuse. Our goals are to help consumers:

- Maintain abstinence
- Learn healthy boundaries and improve interpersonal relationships
- Establish a sober support system
- Improve persons overall wellbeing
- Learn new healthy coping skills and relapse prevention
- Decrease the person's negative involvement with the legal justice system

SERVICES FOR INTELLECTUAL & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Applied Behavior Analysis: Behavioral services provided by a team consisting of a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and a Behavior Technician/Aide. A treatment plan is developed to focus on reducing challenging behaviors and teaching skills in the areas of communication, play, socialization and daily living skills.

Community Inpatient Services: Hospital services used to stabilize a mental health condition in the event of a significant change in symptoms, or in a mental health emergency. Community hospital services are provided in licensed psychiatric hospitals and in licensed psychiatric units of general hospitals.

Crisis Interventions: Unscheduled individual or group services aimed at reducing or eliminating the impact of unexpected events on mental health and well-being. Emergency mental health prescreens may be accessed at either Riverwood Center location during business hours or Lakeland Emergency Departments anytime.

Environmental Modifications: Physical changes to a person's home, car, or work environment that are of direct medical or remedial benefit to the person. Modifications ensure access, protect health and safety, or enable greater independence for a person with physical disabilities. Note that other sources of funding must be explored first, before using Medicaid funds for environmental modifications.

**Riverwood Center is available 24/7,
(269) 925-0585.**

Crisis Line (269) 934-0747

Monday – Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

Nights and weekends (269) 925-0585

**If you are in an emergency,
call 911 right away.**

Family Training Supports: Psychological services including consultation and training for family or staff members on how to improve quality of life by reducing maladaptive behaviors.

Nursing Home Mental Health Assessment and Monitoring: A review of a nursing home resident's need for and response to mental health treatment, along with consultations with nursing home staff.

Occupational Therapy: Evaluation by an occupational therapist of an individual's ability to do things in order to take care of themselves every day, and treatments to help increase these abilities.

Residential Care Services: Residential care options range from staff assistance so you can remain in your own home to total supports in a structured group home facility. The type and level of residential supports is based on individual needs. Riverwood Center Supports Coordinators will discuss options and assure individuals live in the most independent and least restrictive settings possible.

Skill Building Assistance: Vocational training to prepare for entering the general competitive workforce. Training is focused on areas such as increasing attention to task, interpersonal skills, accepting direction or constructive feedback, etc. Skill Building services must be related to a realistic goal of eventually entering the general competitive workforce.

Supported Employment: Assistance to search for, obtain and maintain meaningful paid employment in the community.

Case Management: Case Management can help you determine what is important for you and what services you may be eligible for. Case Management facilitates a support circle including family, friends and clinicians to develop a Person-Centered Plan. Other responsibilities include: linking with service providers, coordinating, advocating and monitoring services.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Case Management: Help for people who are vulnerable and/or have multiple service needs and can't arrange or access these services themselves. Includes help with service planning, linking and monitoring specialty services.

Community Inpatient Services: Hospital services used to stabilize someone experiencing a significant change in their symptoms, or in a mental health emergency. Community hospital services are provided in licensed psychiatric hospitals and in licensed psychiatric units of general hospitals.

Crisis Interventions: Unscheduled individual or group services aimed at helping people cope with unexpected events. Access emergency mental health prescreens at either Riverwood Center location during business hours or Lakeland Emergency Departments anytime.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT): An intensive, short-term, family-focused therapy program. A major goal of FFT is to improve family communication and supportiveness while decreasing the intense negativity. Other goals include helping family members adopt positive solutions to family problems, and developing positive behavior change and parenting strategies.

Home-Based Services: Intensive services for youth and families, provided in your home and in the community. Services promote normal child development, healthy family functioning, and supporting and preserving families. Services help give you the strengths you need to succeed, emphasize parent involvement, parent and worker teamwork and partnering with other service providers as necessary.

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST): An intensive short-term treatment program that addresses all the factors in a child's environment that impact chronic and violent juvenile offenders -- their homes and families, schools and teachers, neighborhoods and friends. Each factor plays a critical role in a youth's world. And each factor requires attention when effective change is needed to improve the quality of life for youth and their families. MST works with high-risk and intensive cases, ages 9 through 17, who have a long history of arrests.

Recovery Gave Me My Life Back



Nikki Lee
SUD Peer Recovery Coach

A Peer Recovery Coach's Journey Through Addiction, Healing, and Hope

"When you ask what kind of recovery I'm talking about, for me, there's a lot more to it than quitting drugs and alcohol—it's a lifelong journey of self-discovery," says Nikki Lee, a Lead Peer Recovery Coach

Coordinator at Riverwood Center.

Before she ever stepped into a professional role helping others, Nikki was fighting for her own life. Her journey with addiction began early, and her story is a powerful reflection of how treatment, support, and second chances can lead to transformation.

Her drug of choice was heroin, but that didn't come out of nowhere. "I had dabbled in some other substances throughout the years, but heroin became my primary drug of choice. I started using substances at a very young age. I think I was 12 when I first used alcohol and marijuana."

Nikki describes her upbringing as troubled, filled with instability and a lack of support. "I came from a tough home environment and surrounded myself with other individuals coming from a similar background, some being several years older than me. Most of us were trying to cope with traumatic experiences we didn't yet understand. It started with drinking and smoking weed, then progressed to party drugs like ecstasy and cocaine."

By the time she was 16, she started hearing that friends were using heroin. "At first I was shocked. It was unfamiliar territory to me, and I had no interest in it. But then one night, after some drinking, a friend—who I now know wasn't really a friend—pressured me into trying it. I had no idea what I was getting myself into at the time. I wish I would've just left, but I didn't."

That night was the beginning of a long, painful battle. "I was terrified. I knew it was dangerous, but I didn't understand addiction. I

didn't even know what withdrawals were. Within minutes of using it, though, the intense panic faded and was replaced with a feeling of euphoria. For the first time in years, I was able to let go of all the anxiety and depressive thoughts. It allowed me to forget about the trauma and internal struggles I was trying to suppress, something I didn't think was possible."

Within six months, she was physically dependent. Nikki began experiencing withdrawals and sought inpatient treatment. "That first year, I went to residential treatment for the first time. I would end up going six times in total, in addition to other forms of treatment. It took a lot of trial and error to find what worked."

Part of what worked, she said, was finally seeking out the right support system, even when it meant letting go of stigma. "I had tried NA groups and other medically assisted treatments, but I kept relapsing. Despite many failed attempts, I was convinced that I could push through it on my own. But I couldn't."

At 21, after having her first daughter at 19 and facing legal issues and a custody battle, Nikki was at her breaking point. "I had said I'd never go to a methadone clinic because of the stigma, but by this time, I had burned many bridges and was out of options. I started going to Harbortown Treatment Center every morning at 6 a.m., attending individual and group therapy sessions. It was the first time in years I began to feel some sense of stability."

She took her medication as prescribed and began to rebuild. "I was working full-time, taking care of my daughter, and building a network of recovery support. Prior to this, I had always been told that taking methadone is just substituting one drug for another, and that it would be extremely difficult to get off of. In my experience, however, it gave me a chance to get back on my feet, regain self-respect, and above all, it saved my life. Once I felt ready to do so, I tapered off gradually and transitioned to the Sublocade injection, a once-monthly shot that was easier to manage."

The journey through recovery inspired Nikki to give back. After completing peer recovery coach training, she began working at Harbortown Treatment Center, where she had once been a client. "Even with two years of sobriety

under my belt, I still had a lot to learn. I was enthusiastic but unprepared for the emotional toll the work can take if you don't have the right support system."

After stepping away for a while to focus on her recovery and family, she returned to the field when a former colleague from Carol's Hope reached out with a job opportunity at Riverwood.

"I applied, and I got the job—and that was almost two years ago. While working in this field can be difficult, it's also very rewarding and I'm incredibly grateful to have such an amazing team working alongside me."

Now, as a Peer Recovery Coach at Riverwood, Nikki's role is dynamic and personal. "We do a little bit of everything. I meet with clients one-on-one, co-facilitate groups, and help with transportation to appointments, job interviews, even places like food pantries or furniture warehouses. We fill in the gaps."

She emphasizes the unique role of Peer Recovery Coaches. "I think it's important to have staff members with personal experience in addiction to bridge the gap between clients and clinicians. As Recovery Coaches, we can bring a new perspective to the table while also showing clients that recovery is possible. We know what it's like to feel hopeless. We also know what it takes to move forward."

Working in recovery full-time does come with emotional weight. "In the beginning, I felt overwhelmed and out-of-place, struggling to find balance between fulfilling the responsibilities of my position while also setting boundaries to protect my own mental health and sobriety. Initially, I thought I had to be the poster child for recovery and was concerned I might not be a good fit for this role. But with time and experience, I realized that it's more about personal growth than perfection. I still have areas of my life that I need to improve, but I was surprised to find that in some ways, my flaws can be an asset. It helps people see that life in recovery is not some unattainable thing, and that recovery is not defined by the expectation of others. Every path to recovery is valid; there is no one-size-fits-all approach."

Nikki believes strongly in addressing addiction and mental health together. "Addiction is

Nikki Lee's Story of Help & Hope

not the problem, it's a symptom of the problem. Trauma, mental illness, or years of emotional neglect often go hand-in-hand with addiction. At Riverwood, we try to use a holistic approach through integrated care when needed."

When asked what people misunderstand most about addiction, Nikki's answer is clear: "They think it's a choice. That people can just quit if they want to. But addiction is a disease, and nobody wants to live in chaos. We are just humans trying to find a way to cope."

Her advice to families and friends? "Educate yourself. Learn how addiction works before confronting a loved one. Compassion and understanding go a lot further than shame or threats."

And for anyone reading who might be struggling themselves?

"You have value, and you are not alone. Give yourself grace and understand that mistakes are part of the process. Recovery is not linear, it takes time and patience. Take it one

day at a time, be kind to yourself, and seek professional support."

These days, success looks different for everyone Nikki meets.

"Some clients come in with no job, no home, no support. To some, success might be finding stable living arrangements, staying sober for 30 days, or just reducing their consumption of drugs and alcohol. To others, it may be complete abstinence from substances and attending AA/NA meetings regularly. Recovery is personal, and we try to meet people where they're at."

Though clients eventually graduate from services, she stays connected. "I always tell people to reach out or come by the office. Sometimes, I might even visit them in the community. It's important to maintain that connection, and to make sure they know we're always rooting for their success."

Despite the challenges, Nikki remains deeply committed to her work.

"I love people. I'm passionate about the

community, and I know if we challenge our biases and seek understanding in people, we can work towards a brighter future. Addiction thrives in isolation, but recovery grows in community."

As fentanyl and other synthetic drugs continue to flood communities, she says education and connection are more important than ever.

"We're facing new challenges, but we're also better equipped than ever. Harm reduction, Narcan training, community partnerships—they all make a difference. We just have to keep showing up for each other."

For Nikki, recovery isn't just a job. It's a way of life.

"It's not about perfection. It's about progress. And about overcoming adversity, one day at a time."

If you or someone you love is struggling with addiction, help is available. Contact Riverwood Center or a local treatment provider to take the first step. Recovery is real. And it starts with reaching out.



8 WARNING SIGNS of ADDICTION

1. Hiding your substance use

Drinking secretly or lying about your drug use when confronted by a loved one indicates feelings of shame, which means it's becoming a problem.

2. Using as a coping mechanism

Many addictions begin with drinking alcohol or smoking a joint after a stressful day. If you feel like you can't truly relax without taking a substance, you might be using alcohol or drugs as an emotional crutch.

3. Failing to use in moderation

If you can't open a bottle of wine without finishing it, or you regularly have so much to drink that you black out, this indicates that you may have an addiction.

4. Continuing to use, despite the negative consequences

Your alcohol or drug use may be interfering with your work, causing trouble at home, or affecting your physical or mental health, yet you continue to use despite these problems.

5. Experiencing withdrawal symptoms

If you feel shaky, sweaty, tired, nauseous, or depressed when not using, you are exhibiting physical withdrawal symptoms resulting from addiction.

6. Needing more and more

This is known as building a tolerance. It means your body is exposed to a harmful substance so regularly that it has adapted to cope with it better.

7. Losing interest in activities

When all you want to do is drink or use drugs, life can become very one-dimensional. You may trade healthy pursuits you once enjoyed for the comfortable feeling of being drunk or high.

8. Trying to quit without success

Perhaps you realize your substance abuse has become a problem, so you decide to quit. However, the drugs or alcohol have taken their hold, and attempting to quit alone is extremely difficult. You get down on yourself for your perceived "weakness" and start using again to cope. The vicious cycle continues, and you feel trapped.

Community Mental Health History and Riverwood Center



Ric Compton
CEO, Riverwood Center

Dear Berrien Community,

Riverwood Center is proud to team up with MailMax to provide this Mental Health Resource Guide for Berrien County in celebration of Riverwood's Golden Anniversary! Our Mission is to provide services that improve quality of care thereby improving the quality of life for consumers we serve each day!

The Berrien County Commissioners passed a resolution in July of 1975, based on Public Act 258, establishing Riverwood Center as the Community Mental Health Center of Berrien County effective 8/6/1975. Over the past 50 years Riverwood has served tens of thousands of Berrien County residents and the priority populations of People with Serious Mental Illness, Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances, People with Substance Use Disorders, and People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The Riverwood Annual Report for 2024 (found at Riverwoodcenter.org) reflects the services and outcomes for those services that Riverwood Staff and our Provider Partners helped provide to 5,746 people in 2024 through over 270,000 encounters! Riverwood Center follows a Public Policy or Carver form of Governance with our 12 member Riverwood Board. Carver Governance attempts to answer: What good (outcome)? For what people? At what cost?

These questions are addressed through Board Ends (Goals) and Means to attain those goals. Riverwood Ends include quality measures to build a stronger and healthier community!

Riverwood is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic or CCBHC both at the State of Michigan level in 2023; and Federal levels since 2021. CCBHC's were started at the Federal Level in 2017 to expand Behavioral Health Services through a set of universal core services and different funding mechanisms! Today, CCBHCs are found at over 500 locations nationwide and 34 in Michigan! CCBHC's aim is to improve the behavioral health for people through increasing access to care, coordinating integrated behavioral and physical health care, promoting the use of evidence-based practices, and establishing standardization and consistency for care through all CCBHC's. Riverwood provided 45,878 visits for people under the CCBHC in 2024 through 9 different core services including outpatient therapy, psychiatric services, substance use therapy, case management, screening and assessments, and crisis intervention services! The CCBHC has expanded programming at Riverwood to include Urgent Care Services at our Benton Township location, and the expansion of Mobile Crisis Services available 24/7. Riverwood believes that the additional services through our CCBHC will help meet the growing needs of the Berrien Community for Behavioral Health Care.

The connection between good health and good mental health has never been clearer. Simply stated, good mental health can positively affect your physical health, and poor mental health can negatively affect your

physical health! Chronic diseases have been linked to poor mental health including cardiovascular disease, cancer, asthma, diabetes, and arthritis! **It has never been more important to advocate for adequate funding and resources for behavioral health care.** According to Becker's, Behavioral Health, a quarter of Americans will need to have behavioral health treatment by the year 2026. That's a 1.2% increase in demand based on 2021's data. Data from the National Health Interview Survey shows that in 2021, more than 23% of adults between the ages of 18 and 44 had received mental health treatment in the past 12 months, marking the highest share among age groups in the analysis. Moreover, according to a survey by the Kaiser Foundation a full 90% of the public believe there is a mental health crisis in the United States today! Everyone needs help sometimes. It is encouraging that stigma has decreased with increased awareness. Give yourself the gift of self-care that can make a difference in your life!

Riverwood looks forward to providing Behavioral Health services to Berrien County for the next 50 years just as we have for the past 50 years!

Thanks,
Ric Compton
CEO
Riverwood Center



Stress: Addressing Your Stress and Beyond

What is it:

Stress is a fact of life and a feeling that we experience on a regular basis. We feel it and the effects of it, but how much do we really understand about stress and the deep effects it can have on us. Stress is the human response to happenings (good or bad) that seem to be too overwhelming or daunting to get through. However, when stress is unaddressed for too long, stress can trigger mental and physical health issues, leading it to interfere with our daily lives.

Stress is governed by the automatic nervous system (ANS). The automatic nervous system includes the sympathetic (prepares body for stress, activates “fight or flight”) and parasympathetic nervous systems (activates the “rest and digest” response). So, when we sense a stressor, the brain signals the automatic nervous system and individuals react to a stressor by either accelerating into the stressor (sympathetic) or use brakes to slow down stressor (parasympathetic).

Stress is how you're feeling when you have: a lot of things happening at one time, in important decision to make, unexpected changes in life or big events that may be coming up. Some common triggers that can cause stress are: relational issues, financial problems, life changes, emotional pressures, physical struggles, environmental and general life changes.

Signs of Stress:

If individuals lack resiliency or effective ways of dealing with stressors, stress can affect individuals in a variety of areas: cognitively, physically, emotionally, socially, and behaviorally. Let's look at each of these areas:

- *Cognitively*: Memory issues, difficulty concentrating, poor judgment, anxious thoughts, constant worry, indecisions
- *Physically*: Chest pains/rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, over/under eating, headaches, tension in neck/shoulders, suppressed immunity, diarrhea/constipation, aches & pains, trouble breathing, low energy, skin/allergy issues, inflammation
- *Emotionally*: Moodiness, short tempered/irritable, agitation/unable to relax, anxiety, depression/unhappiness, feeling overwhelmed, crying, low self-esteem, apathy, lack of motivation
- *Socially*: Sense of loneliness and isolation, distrustful, irresponsible, personality changes,
- *Behaviorally*: Eating more/less, sleeping too much/too little, low sex drive, neglecting responsibilities, using alcohol/cigarettes/drugs, nervous habits (biting nails), yelling, swearing, cynicism.

What can we do?

The ultimate goal is to reduce the negative effects that the stressors incurred can have. The way to do this is to build resiliency through various coping strategies.

- Focus on the things you can control- do what you need to do to lessen the stress.

- Manage your time- find time to relax.
- Take care of your body- eat healthy foods, exercise, get enough sleep.
- Positive self-talk- challenge negative thinking
- Have positive supports- Sometimes just letting the stress out can make you feel better.
- Mindfulness- Stop and be present just in the moment!!
- Slow deep breaths- this can be done anytime and anyplace. This can lower heart rate, slowing thought process which allows one to be in the moment easier.
- Self-Care: Find out what self-care looks like for you and do it daily.

Benefits of managing your stress:

Finding ways to reduce and manage stress is a commitment to yourself and it can be challenging at times. Once you become aware of your own strengths, weaknesses and needs, you can begin to build resiliency.

Acknowledging, understanding, and accepting that stress is a natural part of the human experience provides a way to help regulate your reactions to stressful events. Inability to learn healthy coping skills and not listening to or avoiding what your body is telling you ultimately leads to additional mental, emotional, and/or physical health challenges. As change is ever-present and adaptability is an integral part of our lives, finding where stress can fit into that space without overwhelming us is a key to developing a healthy balance of self-empowerment.



Michelle Olson,
LMSW, LCSW, LCAC, CADACII
Practice Manager, Niles

Finding Hope Again: Sara Lingle's Journey Through Recovery With Riverwood Center

For many, the road to mental and emotional healing is long, winding, and full of moments that test the soul. For Sara Lingle, that road led her to Riverwood Center, where she not only found help but a sense of purpose and a community of support that continues to change her life.

In April 2023, Sara walked through the doors of Riverwood at one of the lowest points in her life. "I felt like I was crumbling. I didn't want to exist anymore," she recalls. The loss of her mother in 2019, followed by the deaths of two other people close to her, had left Sara drowning in grief. She had reached a breaking point. A referral from her doctor led her to Riverwood, a decision that became the catalyst for a powerful transformation.

Sara began with counseling and psychiatric services, meeting with therapist Heather Sorensen and a medication review with Rebecca Burnau. It quickly became apparent that more comprehensive support would be beneficial.

Heather connected Sara with a wide range of services, including employment support, transportation assistance through Community Living Support (CLS), and peer support services. "Every program played a part in helping me breathe again," Sara says.

CLS support worker Iris Anglero was pivotal. At a time when Sara rarely left the house, Iris helped her take small but meaningful steps. "I didn't want to go anywhere. But Iris held that hope for me until I could see it for myself."

One of the key milestones in Sara's journey was becoming involved at the MI-Journey Drop-In Center in Benton Harbor. What began as a place to ease her anxiety and connect with others evolved into a job. "We all have a mental health diagnosis at MI-Journey, so we understand and support each other," she explains. In a short time, Sara applied for a peer support position and is now a certified Peer Support Specialist.

The Drop-In Center offers more than just social opportunities. Members participate in community outings, skill-building classes on topics like anger management and financial

wellness, and group support that fosters healing and growth. "It helped me learn to be around people again. It made me realize I wanted to work with people every day," she says.

Through Riverwood's employment program and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), Sara was able to get a car, which eliminated a major barrier to sustaining employment. "They helped remove the obstacles. For me, that was having transportation," she explains.

Sara has since graduated from several services including CLS, employment support, and peer services, but she continues to receive medication management, and case management with Alyssa Alsup, her current Case Manager. "Alyssa sticks around to make sure things continue to go smoothly," Sara says gratefully. "Just last week, she helped me set up my phone."

When asked what surprised her most about Riverwood, Sara says, "I didn't expect to feel so supported. I came from a place where I felt like I had no one. They helped me focus on recovery and supported me through getting the house in my name after my mom passed away."

For Alyssa, seeing Sara's growth has been deeply rewarding. "She's touched almost every service Riverwood offers," Alyssa says with a smile. "But what matters most is that she's living independently, staying connected, and building her future."

Sara credits her faith as a major source of motivation. "I know God created me for a purpose. Even when I don't feel like I can go on, I remember that I am loved and created with intention," she says. "That stops me from doing harmful things."

She also finds fulfillment in helping others. Many members at MI-Journey have connected with Sara on a spiritual level, even asking about her church. "We focus too much on ourselves and our pain. When we step outside of that and help others, that's when healing really happens."

Reflecting on her journey, Sara says she feels stronger and more open to growth than she ever imagined. "I used to isolate. Now I

push myself to face challenges, because I know that's how I grow. I'm proud of where I am, and of the struggles that brought me here."

She hopes others dealing with mental health challenges understand they're not alone. "Just being there for someone, even silently, can mean everything. You don't have to fix it. Just don't let them feel forgotten."

As for the stigma surrounding mental illness, Sara hopes to break it. "We are more than our diagnoses. We're not dangerous, we're human. We have struggles like anyone else. We just want to be heard."

When asked to define success, Sara offers this: "Success is not letting life defeat you. It's okay to stumble. But if you keep going, keep learning, keep growing — that's what recovery looks like."

To those who may be struggling, Sara has a simple message: "You are not alone. There is help out there. And someone is willing to hold the hope for you, until you can hold it yourself."



Sara Lingle

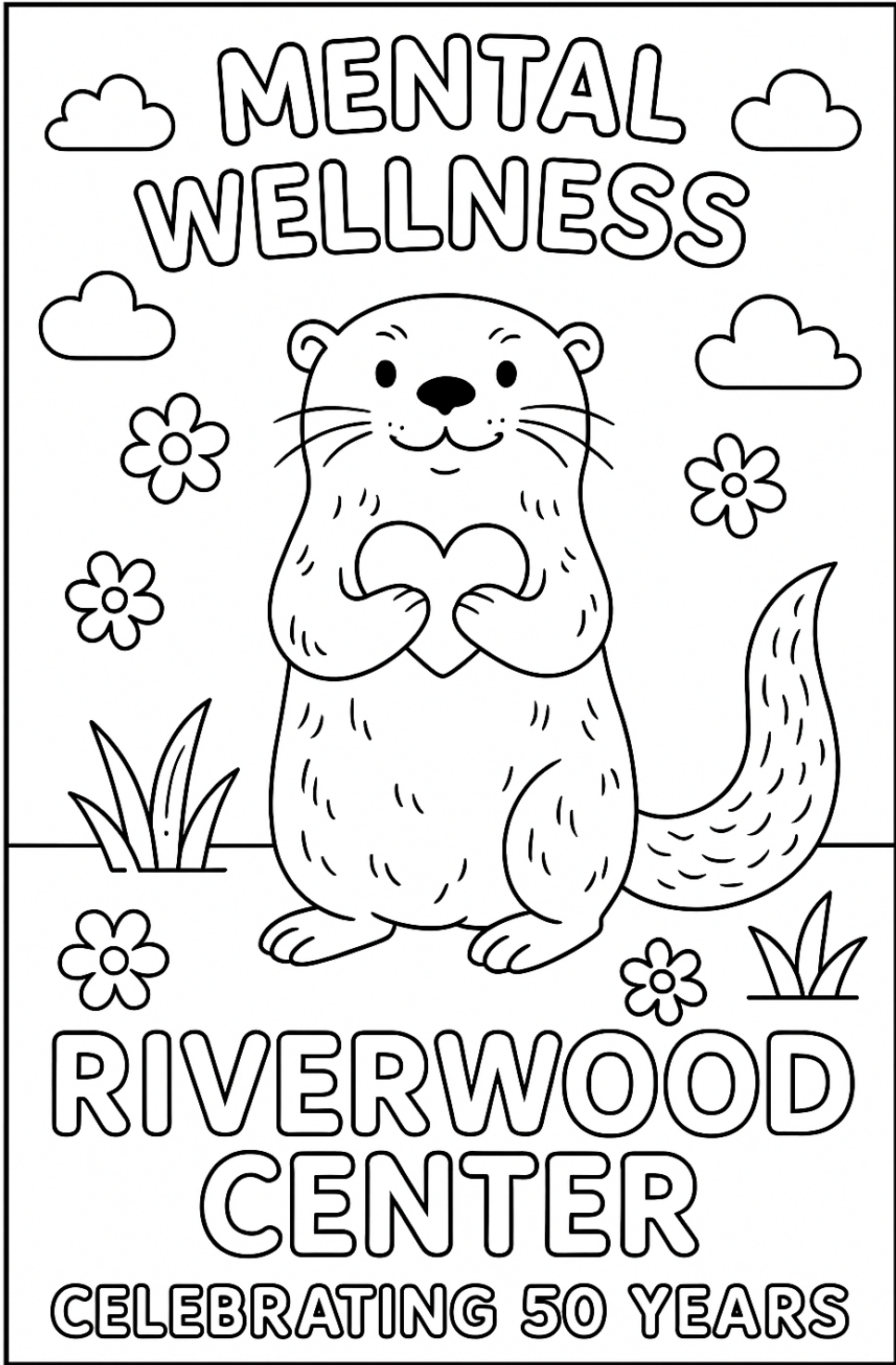
Kids Fun



Start Your Summer with Wellness!

May						
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C T H M E H E A R T I N C L U S I V E N

- 1 Balance

2 Brave

3 Breathe

4 Calm

5 Care

6 Center

7 Chill

8 Connect

9 Content

10 Energy

11 Feel

12 Focus

13 Forgive

14 Friends

15 Grateful
- 31 Love

32 Mind

33 Mindful

34 Mindful

35 Mood

36 Music

37 Nap

38 Nature

39 Peace

40 Quiet

41 Relax

42 Rest

43 Routine

44 Safe

45 Serene
- 16 Grow

17 Guide

18 Happy

19 Heal

20 Heart

21 Help

22 Hope

23 Inclusive

24 Inside

25 Journal

26 Kind

27 Kindness

28 Laugh

29 Listen

30 Listen
- 46 Share

47 Sleep

48 Smile

49 Stretch

50 Strong

51 Support

52 Support

53 Talk

54 Thanks

55 Think

56 Thoughtful

57 Trust

58 Uplifting

59 Walk

I Made It: Angelina's Journey to Independence With Riverwood Center

When Angelina Boatner talks about her life today, her joy is contagious.

"I made it," she says with a big smile. "I got my own place."

Angelina used to live with her family, but with help from Riverwood Center, she now has her own apartment with a beautiful view of the St. Joseph River. "It's the best," she says.

Through Riverwood Center, Angelina receives case management, and a service called Community Living Support, or CLS. These services help her learn important life skills like cooking, paying bills, using public transportation, and making friends. "I like to help people. I like to be around people," she says.

Angelina receives support through self-determination case work, which lets her choose who she wants to work with. She chose Kimberley Hollis to help her with her daily living goals. "She's my boss," Kimberley says with a smile. "She tells me what she wants to work on, and we go after it."

One of Angelina's biggest goals was getting her own place. When she first applied, she was number 49 on the waiting list. But with patience and persistence—filling out applications, following up, and staying focused—Angelina got the keys to her apartment just six months later.

She also attends a day program called Harbor House, where she helps others and connects with her friends. "I clean tables. I help my friends eat. I sit with people if they're alone," she says. Her team says she makes sure no one is left out. "She includes everyone," says her case manager, Emily Abraham. "Even people who can't talk or see—Angelina brings them over to the table."

Transportation was one of the hardest things for her to learn, but she's now able to use Dial-a-Ride by herself. "I call them. I tell them where I want to go," she says proudly. "I got my medicine and went to my appointment." Kimberley adds, "She made the calls, set everything up, and followed through. It was awesome."

Angelina's had a tough couple of weeks. Her brother, who was a big support in her life, recently passed away. Then, another family member passed just weeks later. Still, she keeps moving forward. "My family helps me. My friends help me. I try to stay strong," she says.

"She's been through a lot," Kimberley says, "but she still shows up with a smile. She's amazing."

Angelina understands what it's like to face challenges. She also understands that not everyone knows how to treat people with disabilities. "Some people don't give us a chance," she says. "You have to be patient. People make mistakes. That's okay."

Her advice to others going through tough times is simple and powerful. "Don't give up. Hold your head high. We can do anything," she says. "Riverwood helped me. Kim didn't give up. Emily didn't give up. I didn't give up."

Now that she's living independently, Angelina is thinking about what's next. "I want to work," she says. "I like to clean and cook. I want to help more people. I want to make more friends, too."

Emily says Angelina is a great example of how the right support system can make all the difference. "She's received case management off and on for years," Emily says. "That helped her

get connected with other services like CLS and Harbor House."

Kimberley adds, "When we first started together last August, her biggest goal was getting her own place. And she made it happen."

Angelina's apartment is in the high rise in downtown St. Joseph. From her kitchen, she can see the lighthouse. From her bedroom, she sees the bridge where the boats go by. "It's beautiful," she says.

"And tonight, she's hosting dinner!" Kimberley smiled.



Angelina Boatner

Visit Riverwood's Booth at



We Are Looking For You!

Are you looking for an exciting new opportunity within the Mental Health field? Want to make a difference while working for a great place with excellent benefits? We have a place for you at Riverwood Center.



We are looking for compassionate, driven, and dedicated individuals to come join our team. For more information, please view our open positions.

Apply at www.riverwoodcenter.org/employment



RESOURCE DIRECTORY

ADDICTIONS

Alano House/Al-Anon
4162 Red Arrow Hwy, Stevensville
(269) 428-3310

Alcoholics Anonymous Southwest MI
(269) 281-4939
www.southwestmichiganaa.org

Carol's Hope Engagement Center
4032 M-1349, St. Joseph, MI.
(269) 556-1526
www.communityhealingcenter.org

Celebrate Recovery Groups
<https://locator.crgroups.info>

Families Against Narcotics
910 E John Beers Rd. St. Joseph
(269) 580-8290
www.familiesagainstnarcotics.org

Gamblers Anonymous
(855) 222-5542
www.gamblersanonymous.org

Narcotics Anonymous
(818) 773-9999
www.na.org

**Porn Addiction -
Hinman Counseling Services**
640 St. Joseph Ave, Berrien Springs
(269) 558-4002
www.hinmancounselingservices.com

Riverwood Center
1485 M139, Benton Harbor
115 S St Joseph Ave, Niles
(269) 925-0585
www.riverwoodcenter.org

Harbor Town Treatment Center
1022 E Main St, Benton Harbor
(269) 926-0015

Nairad Health
3134 Niles Rd, St. Joseph
(269) 408-8235

Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center
641 Deans Hill Rd, Berrien Center
(269) 815-5500

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Men in Crisis
P.O. 105, Baroda
(269) 422-2120

BENEFITS COUNSELING

Disability Network
(269) 345-1516

CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS

Boys and Girls Club
600 Nate Wells Sr Dr, Benton Harbor
(269) 926-8766
www.bgcbh.org



RESOURCE DIRECTORY

CASA of Southwest Michigan, INC.

38 W. Wall St, Benton Harbor
(269) 934-3707
www.casaswmi.org

Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Michigan

4938 S Niles Rd, St Joseph
(269) 556-9640
<https://swmichiganccac.org>

Family Solutions

185 E Main St, Benton Harbor
(269) 757-7433
www.bestfamilysolutions.com

YMCA - Benton Harbor/St. Joseph

3665 Hollywood Rd, St. Joseph
(269) 429-9727
www.bhsjymca.org

YMCA - Niles

905 N Front St , Niles
(269) 683-1552

COMMUNITY LIVING SUPPORTS

The Center for Growth and Independence

1440 E Empire Ave, Benton Harbor
(269) 487-9820

Living Alternatives for the Developmentally Disabled (LADD)

300 Whitney St, Dowagiac
(269) 782-0654
www.laddinc.net

Help At Home

1221 S Eleventh St, Niles
(269) 684-7380

DAY PROGRAM SERVICE

The Avenue

2450 S M139, Benton Harbor
(269) 925-1725
www.theavenue.ngo

DENTAL (MEDICAID)

Niles Community Health Center Dental

122 Grant St, Niles
(269) 262-4364

InterCare

800 M139, Benton Harbor
(269) 927-5300
Brite Dental
401 Ferry St, Berrien Springs
(269) 471-7970

Harbor Dental

143 E Main St, Benton Harbor
(269) 927-1313

DIVORCE SUPPORT

Cooperative Parenting and Divorce Berrien County Council for Children

4938 Niles Rd, St. Joseph
(269) 556-9640

Citizens Mediation Service, Inc.

811 Ship St., #302, St. Joseph
(269) 982-7898

Friend of the Court

(269) 983-7111 ext. 8332

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Avenue Family Network, INC.

2450 M139 #A, Benton Harbor
269-925-1725
www.theavenue.ngo

Battered Women's Justice Project, Civil and Criminal Justice Resource

(800) 903-0111

Cora Lamping Center

24 Hour Domestic Violence Hotline
(269) 925-9500

24 Hour Sexual Assault Hotline

(855) 779-6495

Department of Human Services, Adult Services

401 Eighth St, Benton Harbor
(269) 934-2000
Hotline: (269) 934-2300

Domestic Assault Shelter Coalition

PO Box 402, Three Rivers
(269) 273-6154
Hotline: (800) 828-2023
www.dasasmi.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Hotline: (800) 799-7233
www.ndvh.org

ELDERLY

Area on Agency on Aging

2900 Lakeview Ave, St. Joseph
(269) 983-0177

Senior Center

3271 Lincoln Ave, St. Joseph
(269) 429-7768

Senior Nutrition Services

1708 Colfax Ave, Benton Harbor
(269) 925-0137
www.snsmeals.org

Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors

221 North Pine, Lansing
(517) 372-5959
Hotline: (800) 347-5297
www.michbar.org

EMPLOYMENT

The Center for Growth and Independence

1400 E Empire Ave, Benton Harbor
(269) 487-9820
<http://gatewayvro.com>

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Michigan Department of Career Development

499 West Main, Benton Harbor
(269) 926-6168

Michigan Works

499 W Main St, Benton Harbor
(269) 927-1064
www.miworks.org

FOOD/FURNITURE/CLOTHES

211 Help line

www.211.org

Fairplain Seventh Day Adventist Church Food Pantry

140 Seneca Rd., Benton Harbor
(269) 926-8891

Feeding America West Michigan

1488 E Empire Ave, Benton Harbor
(269) 927-7195

Harbor Country Emergency Food

301 N Elm St, Three Oaks
(269) 756-7444

Living Water Food Pantry at Watervliet Free Methodist

7734 Paw Paw Ave, Watervliet
(269) 463-8280
www.wfmchurch.org

Neighbor to Neighbor

9147 US 31, Berrien Springs
(269) 471-7411
www.NeighborToNeighborOnline.org
Oakridge Community Church Food Pantry
766 Oakridge Rd, St. Joseph
(269) 429-7141
www.oakridgebc.org/food-pantry

Our Lady Queen of Peace Food Pantry

3903 Lake St, Bridgman
(269) 465-6252

Soup Kitchen Inc

174W Main St, Benton Harbor
(269) 925-8204
www.soupk.org

St. Augustine's Church – Food Distribution Center

1753 Union Ave., Benton Harbor
(269) 925-2670



Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency

185 E Main St, Ste 200, Benton Harbor
(269) 925-9077

Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Berrien County Health Department

2149 E Napier Ave, Benton Harbor
(269) 926-7121

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

GED/LITERACY

Andrew's University GED Counseling and Testing Center

123 Bell Hall, N US-31, Berrien Springs
(269) 471-3470

Benton Harbor Street Ministries

(269) 925-4333

GED-ON-LINE

www.GEDonline.org

Michigan Works

Benton Harbor Service Center

499 W Main St Benton Harbor

GRIEF

Lory's Place, Edgewater Center

445 Upton Dr, Ste 9, St. Joseph
(269) 983-2707

www.lorysplace.org

GUARDIANSHIP

Guardianship & Alternatives

(269) 782-2953

Michiana Guardianship

(269) 683-0408

West Michigan Guardianship

(269) 934-9333

HOMELESS

The Ark Community Services

990 W Kilgore Rd, Kalamazoo
(800) 873-TEEN

www.arkforyouth.org

Emergency Shelter

645 Pipestone, Benton Harbor
(269) 925-1131

Salvation Army

232 Michigan St, Benton Harbor
(269) 927-1353

HOUSING

Community Management Associates

(877) 796-8883

MSHDA Housing Locator

<http://www.michigan.gov/mshda>

Section 8 Housing

Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency

185 E Main St, Ste. 200, Benton Harbor
(269) 925-9077

MENTAL HEALTH AND COUNSELING

Behavioral Health Inpatient Services

1234 W. Napier Ave, St. Joseph
Lakeland Medical Center
(269) 983-8316
www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org/medical-services/mental-health

Berrien County Suicide Prevention Coalition

4750 Beechnut Dr, St. Joseph
(269) 588-1133

www.berriencares.org

Bright Hope Counseling Center, PLLC

1101 Broad St, St. Joseph
(269) 944-7331

www.brighthopecounseling.com

The Center for Growth and Independence

1440 E Empire Ave, Benton Harbor
(269) 487-9820

www.thecentergi.org

Family Solutions

185 E. Main St. Suite 502. Benton Harbor
(269) 757-7433

www.bestfamilysolutions.com

Freedom Counseling Center

1901 Niles Ave, St. Joseph
(269) 982-7200

www.freedomcounselingusa.com

Hinman Counseling Services

640 St. Joseph Ave. Berrien Springs
(269) 558-4002

www.hinmancounselingservices.com

Lighthouse Behavioral Health

811 Ship Street Suite 4B. St. Joseph
(269) 985-3618

www.drhackworth.com

Light House Counseling

521 State St. St. Joseph
(269) 408-6031

www.lighthousecounselingandmediation.com

MI-JOURNEY Mental Health Recovery Center

1286 Pipestone Rd. Benton Harbor
(269) 363-4271

www.mijourneybh.weebly.com

Peace of Mind Counseling

3573 Hollywood Rd. St. Joseph
(269) 428-4789

www.peaceofmindcounselingsj.com

Pine Rest Lakeland Clinic

3950 Hollywood Rd. Suite 200. St. Joseph
(269) 408-9156

www.pinerest.org/locations/lakeland-st-joseph

Psychiatric & Psychological Specialties

1030 Miners Rd. Suite D. St. Joseph
(269) 408-1688

www.psychspecialties.com

Riverwood Center

1485 M139, Benton Harbor
115 S St Joseph Ave, Niles
(269) 925-0585

www.riverwoodcenter.org

Southwestern Medical Clinic Counseling

5675 Fairview St. Stevensville
(269) 429-7727

www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org/southwestern-medical-clinic

Thrive Psychology Group

1030 Miners Rd. Suite A. St. Joseph
(269) 408-8474

www.thrivepsychgroup.com

Trilogy Counseling Center

3408 Niles Rd. St. Joseph
(269) 429-3324

www.trilogycounselingmi.com

PREGNANCY

Birthright

2700 Niles Ave, St. Joseph
(269) 983-0700

LifePlan

204 W. Main St, Benton Harbor
(269) 757-7342

527 E. Main St., Niles
(269) 684-6200

Women's Care Center

621 E Main St, Niles
(269) 684-4040

SEXUAL ABUSE

Children's Advocacy Center

4938 S Niles Rd, St. Joseph
(269) 556-9640

National Sexual Assault Hotline

(800) 656-HOPE

SUICIDE PREVENTION

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Dial 988 24/7

Berrien County Suicide Prevention Coalition

National Hotline (800) 273-TALK (8255)
(269) 588-1133

www.berriencares.org

Link Crisis Intervention Center

2450 M-139, Benton Harbor
(269) 927-1422

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-8255

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

TRANSPORTATION

Dial-A-Ride

(269) 927-4461

Berrien Bus

(269) 471-1100

VETERANS SERVICES

Benton Harbor VA Clinic

1275 Mall Dr, Benton Harbor
(269) 934-9123

www.va.gov

Berrien County Veterans Services

701 Main St. St. Joseph
(269) 983-7111 ext 8224

www.berriencounty.org/874/Veterans-Services



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WE ARE AVAILABLE 24/7!

If you need to speak with a mental health professional, please dial 269-925-0585, or contact us at 1-800-336-0341



Riverwood Center

**Certified Community
Behavioral Health Clinic**

BENTON HARBOR

Main Offices: 1485 M139, Benton Harbor, MI 49022
Local Calls: (269) 925-0585 Or: (800) 336-0341

NILES OFFICE

115 S. St. Joseph Ave., Niles, MI 49120
Local: (269) 684-4270 Or: (888) 686-3670

NORTHSTAR CENTER

Lakeland Outpatient Center
www.northstarcenter.org

