

Mental Health Services Take Cut

continued ▲ from Front

localize access for needy neighborhoods.

"I consider that to be the standard of care," said Peter Davidson, clinical director for Multnomah County's mental health and addiction services.

So with the seed money, the preexisting clinics extended their hours into the evening and weekends. Davidson said the goal was to keep police out of the mental health system, keep crisis clients out of the hospitals and reduce the volume of non-crisis calls to the mental crisis hotline. Before the walk-in clinics opened, he said it wasn't uncommon for people to call the crisis line or check into a hospital when they were not really suicidal.

"Why did people have to call the crisis line or go to a hospital just to get help after six p.m. in our \$85 million system? We need to get rid of this notion that mental health care is only provided during banking hours," Davidson said. "Mental illness doesn't go away at five p.m., but our mental health system did."

Then why after only a year of services is Multnomah County disbanding its local access philosophy? In October a private non-profit provider called Cascadia Behavioral Health Care was awarded a \$4 million contract from the county to run a 24-hour access clinic at 43rd and Division in addition to operating the crisis lines and a mobile outreach unit that can be dispatched to provide residential services.

Now the system has been streamlined again, but Davidson said the other clinics are still required by their contract to provide walk-in services even though they will no longer receive specialized funding. Clinics must continue to operate at their current capacity but must fund the costs out of their regular budgets. Davidson insists that CCMH will be in violation of their contract if they divert new clients to the Cascadia Center at 43rd and Division.

Becca Uherbelau, communications director for County Chair Dianne Linn, maintained that any diversion of clients would be a violation but agreed that the contract language may be confusing.



The Center for Community Mental Health.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

By doing this we lose our community connection and what was a walk-in clinic becomes a bus-to clinic.

—Joe Hromco, director of clinical operations for Tualatin Valley Centers

The contract reads, 'Contractor is required to include a no appointment necessary option for new clients and the contractor must also make available no appointment necessary for urgent care services for the contractor's authorized clients, however nothing within this agreement prevents the contractor from providing urgent services to unauthorized clients.'

"So the only difference is there is no funding stream," Uherbelau said.

Officials at Tualatin Valley Centers, the private non-profit provider who acquired CCMH in March of this year, disagree with the county on the contract language. And they are curious as to why the county would fund Cascadia's center at 43rd and Division to provide 24-hour services and still require other providers to offer crisis care without any funding.

"The way the funding is set up and the contract is worded, we have a responsibility to our clients when they are in crisis," said Joe Hromco, director of clinical operations for Tualatin Valley Centers. "But people who are not our clients are not our responsibility and we are supposed to send them to the southeast center. By doing this we lose our community connection and what was a walk-in clinic becomes a bus-to clinic."

Mary Monnat, CEO for Tualatin Valley Centers said she would do whatever she can to keep her clinics in compliance with the county contract. But she has her concerns with the new design configuration. Cascadia competes with Tualatin Valley Centers and Monnat wonders how patients will be assigned to outpatient treatment after their release from the Cascadia. Will crisis caseworkers refer clients to Cascadia clinics or will they distribute them evenly amongst other providers?

Marc Schorr, director of communications for Cascadia, said in his nine-years of clinical experience he has never seen any shortage of clients. He said Cascadia already handles 80 percent of all Oregon Health Plan clients and he would be glad to personally take down the names of any other providers who would be interested in receiving referrals from the crisis center.

"Public mental health care is not like private practice," Schorr said. "For us it's more about getting out resources than hogging clients."

At the heart of the matter, Monnat said her main concern is for the people of the north and northeast neighborhoods who have come to depend on CCMH for its services. She worries that instead of going to 43rd and Division, they may go to Legacy Emanuel Hospital instead. Monnat has plans to hire an employee to do outreach for CCMH. If the clinic must turn people away when they are in crisis, she hopes the outreach program will get them hooked into services before a crisis occurs. And if there is an emergency situation, Monnat hopes people will get to 43rd and Division.

"The county says they will provide bus tickets and transportation vouchers," Monnat said. "But the question remains, will they travel? We hope they will. We're all in it together. We just want to make sure nobody slips through the cracks."

EL OBSERVADOR



PHOTO BY DAVID PLECH/ THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Hispanic Actors Perform True West

Mark Espinoza, Rene Rivera and Ted Roisum star in Sam Shepherd's True West/El Verdadero Oeste, now playing downtown through Nov. 17 at the Newmark Theater. The Portland Center Stage production features a mostly Hispanic cast under the direction of Henry Godinez of Chicago's Goodman Theatre. The play is a comic re-telling of the Cain and Abel myth where Eden is a 70s era suburban kitchen 40 miles east of Los Angeles. For ticket information, call 503-274-6588.

Scam Warning

(AP) — A con artist has been visiting Spanish speakers in the Portland area and offering English classes at a library or community college for a small fee.

When people show up for the classes, they learn they have been fooled.

Police think at least 43 people have lost more than \$850 - and fear the numbers are much larger.

The man has charged \$20 for the nonexistent classes. The relatively small sum can prompt victims to skip the hassle of reporting the crime. It also makes detectives think it is not worth their time to investigate, police said.

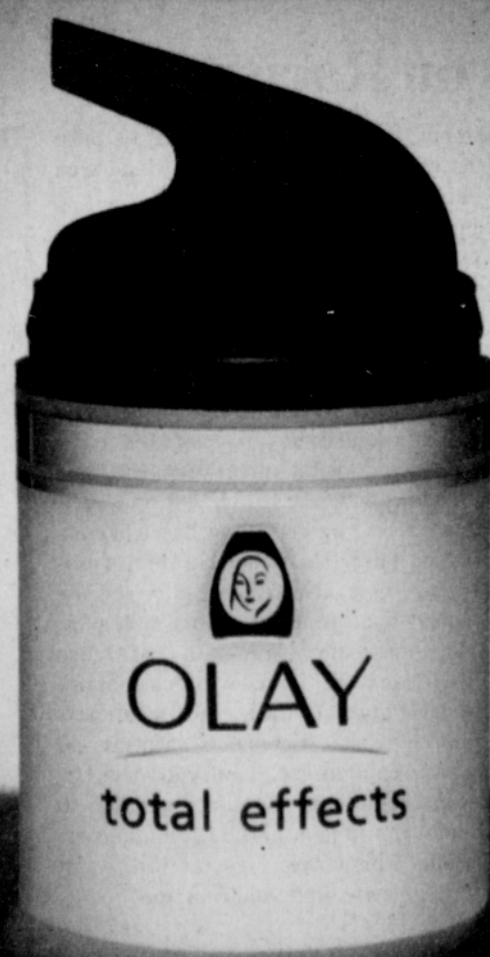
Witnesses have given similar descriptions of the man, who has given the names of Arturo, Armando and Pedro Gonzales to his victims, police said.

Generally, the con man is described as in his 30s, about 5-foot-10 and 170 pounds, police said.

In most cases, he asks the person to fill out a one-page form when he takes their money.

Police suspect the cons are committed by the same person or group of people, said Lt. Michael Rouches of the Hillsboro Police Department.

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