



## BERGEN NEW BRIDGE MEDICAL CENTER: ROLE MODEL FOR INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center (BNBMC) is the former Bergen Regional Medical Center, which has always been a NJAMHAA member.

BNBMC is the largest hospital in New Jersey and fourth largest public hospital in the nation with 1,070 licensed beds. It also has one of the largest behavioral health programs with 323 dedicated beds and a variety of outpatient programs, according to Deborah Visconi, President and CEO.

Through partnerships established in 2017 with fellow NJAMHAA members CarePlus NJ and Integrity House, BNBMC has enhanced its behavioral health and substance use disorder (SUD) service lines. The medical center's clinical affiliation with Rutgers Medical School has greatly expanded and strengthened its Ambulatory Care Center with more physicians and specialty areas.

The BNBMC staff also partners with the local community in innovative ways. "We view ourselves as a real

resource and a partner with our community. Our focus is on access, integration of care, and innovation of care. It's as simple as having patients involved in their care plans and ensuring access to their information," Visconi said, noting that BNBMC is the first hospital to be part of the New Jersey Health Information Network.

"We're here to support our community in any manner it takes," Visconi stressed.

### **Partnership Enables Provision of a Full Continuum of Services**

Visconi explained that there is now a partnership with CarePlus New Jersey; Integrity House, which offers a broad range of SUD treatment services; and Rutgers, which is the clinical affiliate. "This partnership positions us to provide a broader scope of services and identify gaps in the community that we can fill," she said. "It's truly a collaboration offering a continuum of care and it enables us to be a tremendous community resource."

"It allows for CarePlus NJ and

Integrity House to be on site at the hospital as part of our treatment teams in both our inpatient and outpatient programs. It provides a seamless way of taking the next steps in an individual's care and it's in the best interest of patients for follow-up," said Kristine Pendy, Chief Clinical Officer for Behavioral Health Services at BNBMC. "We are bringing in evidence-based practices to enhance clinical care – including integration of medical, substance use and behavioral health care on our units – and to improve discharge planning," she added.

Providing all services in-house is a unique component of BNBMC's interdisciplinary approach in behavioral health and SUD services, according to Pendy. She explained that most patients have comorbidities, which could be overlooked if care were not integrated. The treatment team, including Integrity House and CarePlus NJ, ensures that complications of medical conditions are addressed along with behavioral health issues and SUDs. Pendy shared an example

of a young woman who previously had two psychiatric emergency room visits and had a rare condition identified during a medical assessment. "She had surgery to remove the tumor. While her medical prognosis is complicated, she is on the road to recovery and likely will thrive," Pendency said.

"We're providing people with a comprehensive roadmap to care," Pendency emphasized.

### Partnerships Extend to Schools and the Community

"We are very

connected with our school system in looking at the quality of our care and follow-up care. We have presented to student assistance counselors and we are working with superintendents of school systems," Visconi said. "CarePlus NJ has many school contracts and we utilize their resources to get students back to their schools quickly with succinct plans for ongoing care."

19 schools that have students attending the Teen T.H.R.I.V.E. Program. BNBMC provides transportation to ensure the teens are in a safe environment, which further underscores their innovation and partnership with local communities.

BNBMC's proactive role immediately following a school bus crash in Paramus last year is a testament to their dedication to the community.

"We see ourselves as a vital and integral part of the community and as a resource. So, when the crash occurred, we were available to our community at that time of need. We provided 24-hour phone access for support and counseling as school staff, parents and others were under such duress," Pendency said. "We immediately connected people with resources. We also held sharing sessions through the summer to provide an outlet for teachers. They were so focused on students and parents at the time of the accident. This session helped them recover as they headed into the next school year."

Donnalee Corrieri, BNBMC's Vice President for Marketing and Public Relations, summed it up well, saying, "We go beyond merely providing programs. We have become a central and vital component to our communities and continue to focus on understanding and meeting their needs."

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"For every child admitted, we track the town they live in and the school

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Deborah Visconi  
President and CEO  
Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

system. They don't always attend the schools in their hometowns. We get the school systems involved in students' care to ensure there's no interruption to their academic life," Visconi said.

One of BNBMC's newer offerings is the Teen T.H.R.I.V.E. Recovery program. "We go to the community and identify teens early on. Groups are tailored to different levels of risk and involvement regarding substance use," Visconi said. Currently, BNBMC has



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## BNBMC's Innovation Is in Clinical and Training Programs

Another innovative program that BNBMC offers is the Common-Ground program, which incorporates the approach and software developed by Patricia E. Deegan, PhD, a renowned presenter on recovery and empowerment of individuals with mental illnesses. Each patient in BNBMC's outpatient program completes a self-assessment that is shared with the provider before each appointment indicating the consumer's experience with his/her health, medication and focus for his/her current appointment.

"This is unique because it involves patients in their care planning and helps them have their own voice, which leads to better outcomes. We've seen quality results, including better adherence and fewer emergency room visits," Visconi said. Another positive result is patient satisfaction, which is consistently 4.8 on a 5 point scale.

BNBMC is a teaching hospital in New Jersey and has the largest residency program for psychiatry on the East Coast. The hospital's broad array of services makes this program unique.

Residents rotate through all specialties – children/

adolescents, emergency room, medical, behavioral health, geriatric psychiatry, long-term care and substance use – at BNBMC. The only exception is neurology, which BNBMC partners with St. Joseph's Health to provide. After residents complete this rotation at St. Joseph's, they return to BNBMC.

BNBMC graduates eight residents each year. In the most recent graduating class, seven of the eight went on to prestigious fellowships, continuing training in children, geriatrics or SUD treatment. In addition, the residents have presented more than 60 poster projects to the American Psychiatric Association.

"That's four to five posters each, compared to the average of one to two per resident. We earned top honors at these conferences," Pendy said.



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– Kristine Pendy, Chief Clinical Officer for Behavioral Health Services

