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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2020



Baker Center completes new facility

By Paul Halloran
FOR THE ITEM

WALTHAM – Construction has been completed on the Baker Center for Children and Families, a multi-service behavioral health center designed to meet the mental-health needs of children and families in the MetroWest region.

The Baker Center for Children and Families is located in 4,000 square feet of space in a newly designed office building on South Street, less than a mile from Brandeis University and easily accessible from Route 128 and the Mass Pike.

While the majority of services continue to be delivered through telehealth during the pandemic, there will be some in-person evaluations done in the new facility as necessary. Referrals are being accepted.

“I am so pleased to be able to bring our services to the MetroWest region through our new state-of-the-art satellite clinic,” said Robert Franks, president and CEO of Judge Baker Children’s Center. “We will offer families the highest quality, evidence-based services and look forward to partnering with the community to improve access to care.”

“There is a real demand for services in that area,” said Rick Breed of Marblehead, chair of the JBCC board of trustees, who added that a consultant charged with identifying areas of expansion determined that JBCC should establish a presence in the MetroWest region. “We know there’s a need.”

The Judge Baker Center for Children and Families provides scientifically proven specialty treatments to children and families struggling with ADHD, anxiety, depression, school and behavior problems, PTSD, high-functioning ASD and other mental health challenges.

The Waltham location includes: Outpatient treatment rooms equipped for delivering evidence-based practices; group/family treatment rooms; neuropsychological testing and assessment unit with testing materials; early childhood treatment rooms with special configuration and video monitoring and training space/conference rooms equipped with video confer-

encing capabilities.

The Baker Center for Children and Families is an expansion of the Boston-based Judge Baker Children’s Center, which has been providing the highest quality mental health care for more than 100 years.

Waltham was chosen as a second site in order to address a critical need in the MetroWest region for the services offered.

The Baker Center for Children and Families will serve residents of communities including Arlington, Belmont, Brookline, Cambridge, Dedham, Dover, Lincoln, Lexington, Needham, Newton, Somerville, Waltham, Watertown, Wayland, Wellesley, Weston, and Westwood.

“Mental health services are even more important now as rates of anxiety, depression and suicidality among children, teens and young adults have been increasing during the pandemic,” said Nancy Gajee, clinical director. “The Baker Center for Children and Families has highly skilled psychologists, social workers and counselors who can help right away. And while most neuropsychological or neurodevelopmental evaluations in the area have been suspended since March, families can get one for their child at The Baker Center with a much shorter wait time than is typical for the Boston area.”

Franks said that research indicates that if children with mental-health issues are not treated, they can have lifelong problems, including school and family issues, unemployment and underemployment, chronic diseases and problems with the criminal-justice system. Studies have shown that less than five percent of children who need mental-health services are receiving evidence-based services, he added.

Even families that have the resources to help their children often cannot find effective treatment that works. Judge Baker Children’s Center and the Baker Center for Children and Families provide highly effective, evidence-based care that can be an answer for families during their most challenging and desperate times.

Once fully operational, the Baker Center for Children and Families expects to provide services to accommodate more than 15,000 outpa-

tient visits per year.

Other Judge Baker programs include:

- **The Manville School**, a therapeutic day school for students in grades K-10 who experience emotional, behavioral, and learning difficulties;
- **The Center for Effective Child Therapy**, which provides evidence-based mental health treatments for children ages 2-19;
- **The Quality Care Initiative** works at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of mental health care by providing training and implementation support for evidence-based practices and programs.
- **The Evidence-Based Policy Institute** works with national, state, and community partners to explore pressing issues impacting children’s development and mental health and identify actionable solutions.
- **Camp Baker**, a fun six-week outdoor summer experience at Hale Reservation in Westwood for children ages 6-12 with ADHD; and
- **Next Step**, a unique college-preparatory program for youth ages 16-20 with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

An affiliate of Harvard Medical School, Judge Baker Children’s Center is a nationally recognized children’s mental health organization dedicated to improving the quality of mental health care for children and families. Named in honor of Harvey Humphrey Baker, the first judge appointed to the Boston Juvenile Court, Judge Baker opened its doors in 1917 and has been serving the children and families of greater Boston for more than 100 years.

The multi-faceted organization provides the best in evidence-based practices for children and families struggling with a range of behavioral, emotional, educational, and mental health issues. JBCC is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families by bridging the gap between science and practice to improve access to the highest quality care in community-based settings.