



Christian Family Solutions

healing. helping.

Member Connect Newsletter

Fall 2013

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Crisis Counseling Services: Update on Services in Moore, OK

One of the services available to partnering organizations in the Member Assistance Program is **crisis counseling**. The services are available on an individual basis, such as when a fire destroys a home or after the sudden death of a loved one. In these individual circumstances, we can respond by consulting with the pastor or by meeting with the individual or family impacted via video. However, there are also times when larger-scale disaster events occur, such as a hurricane or a flood. When these events occur, WLCFS-Christian Family Solutions partners with Christian Aid and Relief and provides crisis counseling services.

This was the case over the summer when an EF5 tornado ripped through Moore, OK, devastating the community and impacting members of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Moore. WLCFS counselors Sheryl Cowling, MSW, LCSW, and Pastor John Schuetze, MS, MDiv, DMin, traveled to Moore to provide counseling support to those affected.

Reflecting on the experience, Sheryl reports, "There is so much I could write about the time spent in Moore, but maybe I can best summarize my experience with the children as an uplifting one. They displayed resilience under some of the most frightening circumstances one can imagine. Interestingly, every child I spoke with, when asked to identify feelings associated with the tornado and its aftermath, said that they felt 'brave' in addition to their initial fear and sadness. Their faith in action was a wonderful thing to hear about—as they cared for each other and praised God before, during, and after the storm."

Sheryl and John were on site in Moore for several days. With the help of Christian Aid and Relief, follow-up care for individuals in need will continue by video for



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three to six months so counselors can provide ongoing encouragement as members work through this crisis and transition.

When confronted by an unexpected crisis that involves tragic violence or disaster, individuals will respond in their own unique ways given their personality and prior life experiences. Even so, many people find that they share some common reactions, including shock, horror, sadness, anger, and anxiety. Counselors trained in disaster mental health are not only able to provide Christian support and encouragement, but they can also provide immediate traumatic stress management techniques and information for both adults and children.

Sheryl Cowling, John Schuetze, and many of the counselors at WLCFS have received extensive training in crisis management. WLCFS is frequently called upon to respond to various crisis situations in our WELS congregations or schools. Through our Member Assistance Program, we not only consult with the organization's leadership to help organize an appropriate response but also can provide direct crisis counseling on site or through a secure video connection.



Back to School— Remember to Introduce MAP!

It's time for another school year to begin! As you prepare for another year of Christian education, would you appreciate a short presentation by one of our Christian counselors at an upcoming faculty/staff meeting? We can join your meeting for a short time (as little as 15 minutes) and give you a quick update on an issue related to mental health challenges in a classroom setting. If your faculty would like information on symptoms and treatment of childhood depression, anxiety issues, ADHD, etc., or how your Member Assistance Program can be a resource of help to families, please let us know at **800.438.1772** or **assistance@wlcfs.org**.

Christian Counseling—What Are Members Hearing?

One of the main reasons the Member Assistance Program was developed was to provide access to Christian counselors who share our fellowship in WELS/ELS. It's not unusual for us to receive referrals from pastors whose members saw a local Christian counselor and were a bit disappointed with the approach used by the counselor. We know it is not unusual for secular or even Christian counselors to under-appreciate the sanctity of marriage or openly endorse divorce when a married couple supposedly "falls out of love." We also know that the definition of "family" is open to interpretation in our society, and the acceptance of alternative lifestyles is being advanced politically and in some Christian congregations. This unbiblical view of God's Word finds its way into the counseling offices of many Christian counselors as well.

The professional counselors who work for WLCFS are all WELS or ELS members. One thing you or your members will not have to be concerned about is the underlying appreciation of God's Word and the proper distinction and application of law and gospel. All of our counselors strive to work collaboratively and cooperatively with the members' pastor, principal, or dean.

If there is a need for a local in-person referral for counseling services, one place to start your search is by using the database of Christian counselors on www.aacc.net. This is the homepage for the American Association of Christian Counselors. You can search for Christian counselors in your area and review their areas of specialty, license, educational background, and philosophy of Christian counseling. (Please be aware that while the counselors listed on the site are Christian, they may not share our specific Christian belief system.)

Most counselors are open to meeting with pastors to further explore whether or not their counseling services would be a good fit for a member. The WELS Committee on Mental Health Needs created several helpful brochures such as *Ask a Therapist*. This brochure includes questions that can help determine if you will feel comfortable working with a particular counselor. These materials are available through the Commission on Special Ministries page by clicking [here](#), or you can contact Pastor Jim Behringer at jim.behringer@wels.net.



Career Counseling Services for Members

Throughout our work lives, we encounter many situations when we could benefit from the unbiased advice of a fellow Christian. Especially during these challenging economic times, career-related issues can leave many people feeling anxious. Whether one is in the process of re-entering the workforce, exploring other career options, job hunting, recovering from a job loss, or choosing a career for the first time, many individuals feel overwhelmed by the process and could benefit from the assistance of a caring and competent Christian advisor.



Thad Jahns, MS

Partnering organizations in the Member Assistance Program can refer members for career counseling. Thad Jahns, MS, is our specialist on staff who works with members with career counseling needs. Thad is the Director of Career Services at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee and has nearly 20 years of personal and career counseling experience. When a member is referred for career counseling, Thad begins with a thorough and personalized initial interview to assess the member's needs. The goal is to partner with each individual to tailor a plan that will help

to meet their unique circumstances. Career services may include the administration of an online career assessment, networking and job search strategies, resumé writing assistance, and interview skill building.

As an example of how career counseling can be beneficial, one member who went through his congregation's Member Assistance Program and received career counseling found the process extremely helpful. He felt very prepared and confident as he began his job search and networking process. It did not take long before an offer of employment came. Out of thankful appreciation to his congregation for providing this service for him, he recently gave a gift to the Lord and designated that gift to be used for MAP services so others in the congregation could receive the same assistance.

If you have a member in your organization in need of career counseling, please do not hesitate to make a referral through your Member Assistance Program.

Available MAP Services

- Emotional counseling (individual, couple, family)
- Career counseling
- Premarital counseling
- General substance abuse counseling
- Consultation
- Educational presentations
- Senior care consultation
- Online support groups
- Crisis response

To make referrals for any of these services, please call 800.438.1772.

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MAP/WLCFS Contact Info:

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FAQs—Frequently Asked Questions about MAP

Here are a few questions we frequently receive about MAP:

Can members connect to the counselors by phone or video from their own homes?

Yes, the ability to connect with a MAP counselor is not limited to a room in your organization. We will provide connectivity by phone or video directly from a member's home. We do require a landline phone, and there are certain technical specifications required for a video session. It is important that members are as comfortable as possible and are connecting from a secure, private location.

As a pastor, at times I work with members and I just need help with identifying main problem areas and options for treatment. Can you help with that?

You can refer a member to the program for simply one session to provide a thorough assessment and receive treatment options. There is no need to commit to ongoing counseling. The counselors are available to assist the pastor and the members in the most beneficial way.

Does the hourly fee billed to congregations/organizations cover the expenses at WLCFS?

The fee for each hour does not cover all the expenses for a typical hour of counseling. However, we are blessed to receive donations and sometimes grants that cover the difference. Our goal is to make counseling services as affordable as possible for our congregations. Fees have not changed since 2008.

As we grow the program, the need for additional income to supplement costs also grows. **In 2014, congregations that do not participate in a district-wide Member Assistance Program (i.e., MI, NA, SA, or SC) could see an increase in fees.** Entire districts that participate in the Member Assistance Program take on some of the accounting tasks and save WLCFS a considerable amount of time.



Welcome, New Member Organizations!

Christ the Lord Lutheran Church, Brookfield, WI
Risen Savior Lutheran Church, Pooler, GA
Deer Valley Lutheran Church, Phoenix, AZ
Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Boise, ID
St. Peter Lutheran Church, Schofield, WI
Redeemer Lutheran Church, Ann Arbor, MI
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Rapid City, SD
WELS Arizona-California District
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, NC
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, College Station, TX
St. Mark Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI
Abiding Grace Lutheran Church, Covington, GA
St. Mark Lutheran Church, Leesburg, FL

St. John Lutheran Church, Riga, MI
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wonewoc, WI
Mount Olive Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN
Hope Lutheran Church, West Chicago, IL
Resurrection Lutheran Church, Centerville, OH
Hope Lutheran Church, Oconomowoc, WI
Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Morton Grove, IL
Peace Lutheran Church, Sun Prairie, WI
Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN
Emanuel Redeemer Lutheran Church, Yale, MI
Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, WI
Bethany Lutheran Church, North Fort Myers, FL
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Rapids, WI