



HOPE RESILIENCE RECOVERY

## Thrive offers expanded youth services to meet urgent need

*Improved access to care, at times that fit family schedules*



A generous grant has enabled Thrive Counseling Center to double the number of staff clinicians who treat children and adolescents, significantly expanding access to care for vulnerable children.

The recent addition of Dr. Thomas E. Byrne (pictured left), a board certified child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist, to the clinical staff will further improve Thrive services for children and youth. Dr. Byrne has more than 25 years of experience and is a graduate of the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Chicago. He completed his residency in adult psychiatry at Northwestern University and a fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Chicago.

In addition, Daisy Rios, LCPC (pictured right), was named Thrive Manager of Youth Services in July. She supervises a team of 6 Thrive therapists who specialize in care for kids, up from 3 youth therapists in 2018.



The organization that provided grant funding seeks to ensure that all children and teens in need receive high quality mental health care, regardless of ability to pay.

“We are fulfilling a promise to serve youth, especially low-income youth,” said Thrive Executive Director John Meister. “The biggest obstacle to access to care is affordability. We received a grant that has allowed Thrive to hire clinical staff and to build youth services capacity. There is a great need in the community and beyond, for access to mental health care for youth.”

Thrive’s expanded staff is significant because there is a severe shortage of psychiatrists who are expert in care for children and youth, and a limited number of clinicians who care for those with Medicaid or with no health insurance. Psychiatry access for youth is expected to bring additional children and teens to Thrive for therapy services.

Thrive service hours for children and teens leaped 43 percent in the fiscal year ending June 30 compared to the previous year, and the number of individual youth receiving care increased more than 25 percent. The increase results from adding youth therapists and expansion of evening and weekend appointments that are more convenient for children and families.

Therapy can help children learn emotional and behavioral regulation skills essential in a world that bombards them with stimuli, Rios said. Thrive clinicians are expert in addressing the needs of children and youth at their developmental age and social environment, and within the context of their families.

“Middle school and high school can be really tough,” Rios said. “The pressures of the internet and social media are constant. Kids feel they have to prove their worth on social platforms. Working with youth and bringing in family helps the parents understand what is going on for their child. A family focus is really important.”

"I am excited to be in this role because I want to learn what we can do for them," Rios said. "We want to better serve the community, not just the clients who come in for services."

## Stress-busting strategies to build resilience for the Covid long haul

### COVID coping tips for adults:

- Slow down and make a plan for today
- Calm and center yourself with meditation, prayer, deep breathing or exercise
- Get outside, take a walk in nature
- Self-preoccupation creates anxiety
- Taking care of others reduces stress hormones
- Turn off news and social media
- Stay connected by phone or video, listening deeply

### Coping tips to help children:

- Assess what they already know, and don't dismiss their fears
- Speak in an age-appropriate way
- Keep your own anxieties in check  
Your demeanor is important
- Emphasize careful hand washing, compete for the cleanest hands
- Frame school closures as a positive--more time to have fun at home!



Imagine that your smart phone inexplicably loses power. You discover that an app has been open all day, sucking power from the battery. That is what the background thrum of Coronavirus stress does to our emotional and physical reserves.

Focusing on what we can control, instead of all that we cannot, can help to ease stress and build resilience. The Thrive staff has connected with clients by phone and video in recent months, an experience that has required adaptation and fostered growth.

"This is a good time to re-frame your reality," said Thrive Therapist Daniel Talley, MSW. "I try to get people to be more in the moment instead of projecting too much in the future. I ask, 'Right now, what can you do to make your day better?' Daily self-care and creating a routine has been very important for me and for my clients. I also stress how important physical health is to mental health. There are a lot of activities and exercises we can do around the house."

Taking a negative situation and looking for positives can be helpful, Talley, added. Limiting news and social media also can help people avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Anu Spain, MA, LCSW, has provided home-based therapy for older adults in the Oak Park and River Forest area. The coronavirus has made home visits impossible, so Spain and her clients have adjusted to phone and video connection.

"For some clients, I am the one person they will talk with today or even this week," she said. "I am checking in consistently, I am listening. It is important to recognize and validate their sense of vulnerability and humanity. We talk about, how do we adjust?"

Some of Spain's clients have jumped on the Zoom bandwagon, and others have reconnected with old friends by phone. "Older adults maybe more adaptable. They have lived through World War II, they know they can get through tough times," she said.

One client pulled out an old phone book and each day called one person he hadn't spoken to in awhile. "He said, 'If I'm lonely, other people are too.'"

# Guidance for parents to help kids cope



Use link below to join the webinar:  
<https://zoom.us/j/93567350158>

Please join our panel of experts on 7pm on Sept. 24 for a virtual conversation titled ***Calm the Chaos! Tools to Help your Child (and You) Not Just Survive but Thrive this School Year.*** This interactive webinar will provide parents with practical tools to help your family not just survive but thrive this year.

Local therapist Steven Parker, LMFT will facilitate this **Thrive TALK** with child psychologist Heidi Hamernik, PhD; OPRFHS Special Education teacher Douglas Hill; District 97 school social worker Lori Janu-Chossek, LCSW; and PCC Wellness pediatrician Brooke Turnock, MD. The presentation will be free and open to all.

## ***Thrive briefs***

**Thrive's Free Check-In Line** offers the support of an experienced counselor to individuals struggling with disruption, stress, and anxiety. Community members can call **708-383-7500, ext. 8**, to talk to a therapist or to leave a message that will be returned within the next business day. Calls with a Thrive counselor typically last between 30 and 40 minutes and are free to all. Funds for Thrive Counseling Center were received from the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation.

## **Thrive is THE Oak Park and River Forest Community Mental Health Center**

Your gift to Thrive helps ensure that the support of a mental health professional is within reach of all members of our community.

***Please make a gift today***

Thrive Counseling Center offers crisis intervention, psychiatric treatment, individual and group therapy, and an array of wellness programs

Contact Thrive at 708-383-7500 or visit [www.thrivecc.org](http://www.thrivecc.org)