

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

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Waynoka Native Named Executive Director of Northwest Center for Behavioral Health

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) has named Autumn Nickelson, a native of Waynoka, as executive director of Northwest Center for Behavioral Health (NCBH) in Woodward.

Nickelson has an extensive background in mental health services, having been at NCBH more than 15 years. As a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, she has held a variety of clinical positions providing direct care, case management, therapy and clinical supervision.

Before being named executive director, she was clinical treatment director at NCBH for six years. She also has served as director of outpatient services at NCBH, director of the Lighthouse substance abuse residential treatment facility and coordinator for NCBH's satellite facility in Alva/Fairview.

Nickelson holds a master's degree in social work from University of Oklahoma, and received her bachelor's degree in social work from Northwestern Oklahoma State University.

ODMHSAS Commissioner Carrie Slatton-Hodges said Nickelson's background in the field of mental health, as well as her familiarity with northwest Oklahoma, are great attributes for this position.

"Autumn already understands the challenges facing northwest Oklahomans and her extensive experience in all facets of providing mental health services make her an excellent choice to lead NCBH," said Slatton-Hodges. "We're really excited and fortunate to have her as our new executive director."

Nickelson said she has always enjoyed helping others, but has a true passion to help those who need it most. "People in crisis or those seeking behavioral health service need an advocate, a voice and oftentimes, just someone to listen to them," she said. "I believe my career at NCBH has enabled me to do that, and I am excited for the opportunity to serve with the leadership team at NCBH as we strive to ensure the communities of northwest Oklahoma are receiving the highest quality of care."

As clinical treatment director, Nickelson oversaw a number of programs, including NCBH's acute care unit, Lighthouse Substance Abuse Services, outpatient services for drug court and child welfare, and the Region 1 Prevention Resource Center.

She also was instrumental in NCBH recently establishing a partnership with MyCare Technologies, along with area law enforcement agencies and local hospitals, to offer 24/7 immediate access to care for anyone in need of mental health or substance abuse services.

Through iPad tablets that NCBH has placed with these agencies, which often are the first responders for people in crisis, law enforcement can be immediately connected with a licensed mental health professional with the touch of a button.

Nickelson said NCBH is excited for the opportunity to provide “immediate access to care, 24/7 for all 12 counties in our catchment area.”

These counties include Cimarron, Texas, Beaver, Harper, Ellis, Woodward, Dewey, Woods, Alfalfa, Major, Grant and Garfield.

“Prior to the implementation of MyCare, law enforcement officers were often required to transport a person in need of services to the nearest emergency room, which can be over 45 miles away in our rural areas,” she said. “We are confident MyCare will save our area law enforcement agencies and local hospitals a significant amount of time and resources, in turn allowing them to protect our communities and respond to medical emergencies.”

In addition to MyCare, NCBH services include outpatient mental health and substance abuse treatment offices in Alva, Enid, Fairview, Guymon and Woodward; inpatient acute care services at Ft. Supply; residential substance abuse treatment for men at The Lighthouse in Woodward; and community prevention programs covering numerous counties in northwest Oklahoma.

For more information about NCBH services, visit www.ncbhok.org or call 580-571-3233 or 580-256-8615.

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