2019
ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY
BESTSELF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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Since its inception in June of 2017, BestSelf Behavioral Health has been committed to meeting the behavioral health needs of children, adolescents, adults and families in Western New York. Our promise to our diverse community is to provide high quality, evidence-based and accessible treatment and rehabilitation services to individuals and families. Far too often, people suffer needlessly from mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Our goal is to assure people that behavioral health treatment is effective and readily available in our community.

In 2019, BestSelf took a significant step toward ensuring the quality of our services by pursuing and achieving national accreditation by the highly respected Council on Accreditation (COA). Organizations accredited by COA must comply with numerous, stringent quality metrics and engage in a process of continuous quality improvement. BestSelf is very proud of this achievement and sees it as an important part of our ongoing efforts to offer high quality behavioral healthcare.

This year also marked the beginning of an initiative to relocate and expand the capacity of the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) at BestSelf. The CAC provides evaluation, treatment and support to children who have been victims of physical or sexual abuse and their families. BestSelf launched a capital campaign, the proceeds of which will be used to establish a new, state-of-the-art CAC in Erie County. In collaboration with our partner organizations, our ultimate goal is to end child abuse in our community.

In response to community needs, BestSelf implemented several new programs in 2019 including an opiate (methadone) treatment program, OTP, in the Town of Hamburg and ClubWest, a program offering social activities and supports for people with mental illnesses on the West Side of Buffalo. The methadone program was created in response to a need in our South Towns communities for this highly regarded treatment for people suffering from an opiate use disorder. ClubWest was founded based on the realization that often, people recovering from a mental illness need not only treatment services but also access to social, educational and vocational supports. ClubWest provides those services through the use of peer workers in a warm, supportive environment. 2019 also saw a total remodeling of our North Collins location, thereby increasing its service capacity and offering a more pleasant and welcoming environment for people seeking services in that community. BestSelf also began offering gambling and eating disorder treatment services this past year in response to community need.

BestSelf’s growth and success in 2019 were the result of considerable effort on the part of our dedicated and talented staff along with the steadfast support of our Board of Directors. Together, they are committed to improving the physical and emotional health of our community. We look forward to the challenges and opportunities that 2020 will bring and will continue in our efforts to create a healthier Western New York community.
Agency & Individual Awards in 2019:

BestSelf was honored at the 2019 Deaf Access Services Award dinner. The agency received an award for being an inclusive and accessible provider. BestSelf also received the WNY Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Regional Network’s 2019 Outstanding Dedication to Trauma Informed Care in the Community.

SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS ALSO RECEIVED AWARDS IN 2019

Kelly Dumas, Vice President of Specialty Substance Use Disorders Services & Housing who received the Iconic Service Award from the Buffalo Association of Black Social Worker’s Inc.

Tylica Pope, Director of Specialty SUD & Housing who was awarded a $1,000 scholarship to further her education in chemical dependency treatment and prevention from The Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Providers of New York State (ASAP) and the Julio A. Martinez Scholarship Committee.

Nadia Pizarro Program Director, Homeless Services who was selected by the Oishei Foundation and Rockwood Leadership Institute to participate in the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color (Inaugural cohort); Nadia was also a Girl Scouts of Western New York - 2019 Women of Distinction awardee.

Yudanny Garcia, Team Leader, Homeless Services who received the Unsung Hero Award at the 2019 HAWNY Annual Award Luncheon.
BestSelf opens new opioid treatment program in the Southtowns, providing medication-assisted treatment services for people struggling with addiction.

After 16 years as a tenant, BestSelf Behavioral Health has completed the purchase and renovation of its offices in North Collins.

BestSelf holds ribbon-cutting for new program, "Clubwest at BestSelf". In attendance was Rep. Brian Higgins, D-Buffalo, Erie County Executive, Mark Poloncarz, Commissioner of Mental Health, Michael Ranney and BestSelf CEO, Howard Hitzel. This federal grant gives individuals receiving behavioral health and addiction services a place to socialize comfortably, take a cooking class or get assistance with nutrition or medication adherence.
BestSelf’s 2nd Anniversary & Staff Appreciation Picnic

Dancing the night away at the BestSelf BASH

BestSelf was a Finalist in the Buffalo Business First, “Best Places to Work”
BestSelf Behavioral Health participated in this year’s United Way Day of Caring by its first ever child and family picnic for clients. Guests were treated to lunch, and the kids were able to participate in arts and crafts and mindfulness activities, get an airbrush tattoo, learn to salsa dance, let loose in the bounce house, or play basketball. Thank you to our volunteers from The Bonadio Group, BestSelf, and students from Building Brighter Futures for doing such an incredible job helping us put on this fun event!
FUNDRAISING 2019

HITTING THE LINKS TO SUPPORT BESTSELF

BestSelf’s Annual Golf Outing, sponsored by Northwest Bank, and chaired by Ed Celia, Jr., the event was held on June 8, 2019 at Brookfield Country Club. After a day on the course, 108 golfers were treated to a cocktail hour, steak dinner, auction, and raffle. We are excited to announce this year’s event raised nearly $26,000! Proceeds from the 2019 BestSelf Golf Outing will be restricted to the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf.

A NIGHT OF STORYTELLING

In an effort to raise awareness about the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf (CAC), the CAC hosted “An Evening of Storytelling on September 25, 2019 to inform community stakeholders. Over 100 community and business leaders joined us to hear stories of courage from individuals whose lives were directly impacted by childhood sexual abuse. Julie, our featured speaker shared the story of her four year old granddaughter who while baking one evening began sharing the details of her sexual abuse at the hands of her father and his girlfriend. Julie and her husband immediately reached out for help and were referred to the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf. Julie’s granddaughter and her family began receiving services the next day. Julie’s hope is that her granddaughter’s abuse will one day be just one thing that happened to her and that her life will also be filled with many positive experiences. Each speaker held a candle symbolizing their journey through the darkness into the light and guests viewed a video highlighting the Child Advocacy Center expansion project.
“Sexual abuse means having domain and power over someone, and children who are abused often can’t speak for themselves.

If we turn away from the abuse and pretend it doesn’t happen to us, our families, our neighbors, then we are perpetuating this evil.”

- JULIE
Spring It On is WNY’s 24-hour online day of online giving fueled by the power of generous donors, creative nonprofits, social media, collaboration, and our community! The goal of Spring It On is to support our local nonprofits that are committed to making Western New York a great place to live, work, and play.

This year, there were over 100 deserving non-profit organizations participating in the Spring It On. This campaign is a wonderful way to financially support the non-profits that are doing good things in Buffalo.

On March 19th, 2019, BestSelf received over $4,000 in donations for individuals and companies all over Buffalo, NY. That money will be used to toward BestSelf’s client activity fund that will help fund field trips and annual picnics!

The Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf was chosen as a recipient of proceeds from the 3rd Annual Cobblestone Live Arts & Music Festival held August 2 - 4, 2019 in the Cobblestone District in downtown Buffalo. Over the last decade, the Historic Cobblestone District has become an epicenter of live music and entertainment. Cobblestone Live is a single neighborhood of bars, restaurants, and venues which came together to put on a two-day festival, featuring headliners Aqueous, Sloan, Joywave, Billy Strings and Langorne Slim.
BestSelf Behavioral Health is pleased to announce that they achieved accreditation by Council on Accreditation (COA). COA is an accrediting body that looks at agency's policies and procedures as well as their practices and ensures the agency meets best practice standards set forth by COA and regulatory bodies. Being accredited provides a framework to manage resources, offer best practices, and strive for continuous improvement. Having an accreditation shows the commitment BestSelf has for excellence. The best practice standards BestSelf continuously strives to achieve shows the dedication the agency has to the consumers BestSelf serves and the Western New York community. The process of accreditation for BestSelf was an eighteen-month quality improvement project, spearheaded by Rebecca Steffen, the Vice President of Quality Improvement and Accreditation. Throughout those eighteen months, members of BestSelf’s Quality Improvement Department looked thoroughly at policies and procedures and compared them to the standards set by COA. This gap analysis caused revisions of BestSelf’s policies and procedures written by the Quality Improvement department in conjunction with the agency's Vice Presidents and Program Directors.

A second portion of the project was gathering over four hundred pieces of evidence to prove agency practices meet the standards COA set for administrative and service delivery programs. In September 2019, COA site reviewers visited BestSelf to review policies and procedures, a collection of on-site evidence, and visit programs to observe practices and talk to staff and consumers. The site reviewers were truly impressed with the array of services BestSelf provides, as well as the passion and commitment the staff have for the clients. Due to the diligence and passion of staff, BestSelf achieved expedited accreditation and did not require any corrective action. BestSelf has a commitment for continuous improvement and will be consistently maintaining the policy and procedure manual and monitor practices to ensure the agency continues to meet best practice standards. Part of the accreditation requires BestSelf to report annual benchmarks to COA for review. This maintenance will ensure that BestSelf continues to provide the best service possible to consumers and that the agency is prepared for reaccreditation in 2022.
**NEW PROGRAMS**

**PROBLEM GAMBLING**

BestSelf’s Problem Gambling Treatment Program is an integrated treatment site located at 254 Franklin Street, treating gambling, mental health and substance use disorders. They offer support for individuals and couples struggling with substance abuse or gambling addiction through behavioral couples therapy. Financial counseling is also offered.

**For more information:** 716-551-7894
254 Franklin Street, Buffalo NY 14202

**EATING DISORDER TREATMENT**

Eating Disorder treatment will focus on individuals experiencing conditions such as, Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder or other specified feeding or eating disorders such as Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder.

We can also assess individuals who may feel they would like to improve their relationship with food. Our innovative treatment team includes therapists, psychiatry, physicians, and a consulting dietitian.

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**DID YOU KNOW**

**BESTSELF STARTED A PODCAST?**
Persons served by Best Self Behavioral Health 2019

- Mental Health Clinics (CCBHC) 18,482
- Personalized Recovery Oriented Services 702
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) 238
- Homeless Outreach, Supportive Housing, Harambee House 400
- The Lighthouse Women’s Residence for Pregnant and Parenting Women/ Maternal Wraparound (MWRAP) 83
- Building Brighter Futures 3,815
- Health Home 3,359
- Child Advocacy Center 905
- Recovery Community 471
- Vocational 41
2019 was a successful year for grants! BestSelf was awarded over eight million dollars to implement new programs, expand existing services, and sustain vital programs. New programs include the BestSelf Maternal Wraparound Program (MWRAP), which was awarded by the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS). The MWRAP program will provide comprehensive care coordination to alleviate the existing barriers to treatment and support for pregnant and post-partum women with opioid use disorder.

BestSelf’s school-based programs, Building Brighter Futures, was awarded the Advantage After-School Program, a five-year grant from the New York State Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) to provide after school programming at Elmwood Village Charter School_Hertel Campus.

The Primary Behavioral Health Care Integration program received funding from the Patrick P. Lee Foundation and the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation to sustain services and expand to serve an expanded immigrant population. The BestSelf Primary and Behavioral Health Integration (PBHCI) Program is an interdisciplinary, collaborative, integrated clinic designed to engage individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) in care that is person-centered and addresses both medical and behavioral health care needs.

The Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf was awarded continued funding from the New York State Office of Victim Services under their Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance Program to support direct services that meet the immediate and long-term needs of child victims of sexual and physical abuse.

Supportive housing services at BestSelf continued to grow in 2019. The Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) awarded BestSelf 40 supportive housing units for individuals with serious mental illness and substance use disorder.

Several of BestSelf’s programs are able to continue providing high-quality behavioral health care services thanks to generous support from United Way of Buffalo and Erie County (UWBE). In 2019, UWBE provided programmatic support to Building Brighter Futures, the Lighthouse, the Child Advocacy Center, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Parent Child Interaction Therapy. BestSelf was awarded a planning grant from the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York (HFWCNY) to develop a full proposal in response to their Health Fellows CALL to Action funding opportunity. BestSelf is developing a proposal to address the preventable public health issue of infant death due to unsafe sleeping practices.
OVERVIEW OF GRANTS AWARDED IN 2019:

New York State Office of Victim Services - **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance Program** – $1,240,834 - CAC funding to support direct services that meet the immediate and long-term needs of crime victims under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim and Witness Assistance Grant Program.

New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) - **Maternal Wraparound Program (MWRAP)** - $350,000 - The BestSelf Maternal Wraparound Program (M-WRAP) will provide comprehensive care coordination to alleviate the existing barriers to treatment and support for pregnant and postpartum women with opioid use disorder.

New York State Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) - **Advantage After School Program** – $1,097,745 - Funding to provide Building Brighter Futures After School Programming at Elmwood Village Charter School_Hertel Campus.

Health Foundation for Western & Central New York - **The Health Leadership CALL to Action Planning Grant** - $10,000 - Funding to support the planning of a proposal for a $200,000 demonstration project to reduce the number of infant deaths due to unsafe sleep in Erie County.

Mother Cabrini Health Foundation - **Primary and Behavioral Health Integration (PBHCI) Project Expansion** - $200,000 - Funding to sustain and expand our Primary and Behavioral Health Care Integration program to serve an expanded immigrant population.

Patrick P. Lee Foundation - **BestSelf Integrated Clinic 2019** - $250,000
To sustain the current Primary and Behavioral Health Care Integration (PBHCI) program until BestSelf develops and implements a sustainable model.

Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) - **Supportive Housing in Partnership with PUSH Buffalo** - $3,000,000 - Funds to provide 24 supportive housing units for individuals with serious mental illness and substance use disorder.

Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) - **Supportive Housing** - $2,000,000
Funds to provide 16 supportive housing units for individuals with serious mental illness and substance use disorder.

United Way of Buffalo and Erie County - **Programmatic Support** - $321,970
Funding to support Building Brighter Futures, the Lighthouse, the Child Advocacy Center, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Parent Child Interaction Therapy.