

Week 3: Individual and Family Pathways to Diagnosis, Treatment, and Support (September 22, 2020; 2:00 p.m.)

Summary

A discussion of the experiences of individuals and families navigating pathways to diagnosis, treatment, and support as told by an occupational therapist with specialized training in working with children with autism, navigators who work in various parts of the state, and the co-director of a clinic providing innovative approaches to autism services in Milwaukee.

Bios

Ida Winters, parent

I am a parent of three young men, one of whom lives with Autism. I work with Mental Health America of WI (MHA) as a Family Navigator~Next Step Clinic; Co-Chair Community Health Worker's Strategy/Steering committee~Milwaukee's Coalition for Children's Mental Health (CCMH); Co-Chair Next Step Clinic's Community Advisory Board~Next Step Clinic; Workforce Development and Parent Leader Learning Strategy Member~Milwaukee's Coalition for Children's Mental Health (CCMH); and I am currently a Wisconsin LEND Fellow. My goal is to dedicate my life until my very last breath to ensure that people are recognized as human beings and "Justice" isn't just "us", but justice for everyone! I believe, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness!" (The Declaration of Independence: The Want, Will, and Hopes of the People)

Laura Nagel, Occupational Therapist, Director of Operations, CI Pediatric Therapy Centers

Laura Nagel is an occupational therapist and Director of Operations for CI Pediatric Therapy Centers. Laura completed both her undergraduate in rehabilitation psychology and her master's in occupational therapy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has over 15 years of clinical experience working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder diagnoses, across both applied behavioral analysis and occupational therapy services. In her clinical role, Laura conducts evaluations, develops treatment plans, and engages clients from infancy through young adulthood in occupation-based interventions to maximize their functional potential, both in person and via telehealth. She believes that communication and transdisciplinary collaboration are central to quality care. Laura has presented on a variety of topics at state and national conferences to support the autism community, including executive functioning, self-care, sexuality education, and adapting goal-directed activities through use of toys and games. Laura serves as a liaison to state and local professional organizations, and currently serves as the South Central District Chair and Past Co-President of the Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA). Laura is passionate about making high-quality services accessible to individuals with ASD diagnoses and their families.

Amy Van Hecke, Professor of Psychology, Marquette University, Executive Co-Director, Next Step Autism and Trauma Clinic

Amy Van Hecke is a developmental neuroscientist at Marquette University, where she is a Professor of Psychology. She is also the Executive Co-Director of the Next Step Autism and Trauma Clinic in Milwaukee. Dr. Van Hecke received her undergraduate degree from Smith College and her PhD in Developmental Psychology from the University of Miami. Her research focuses on 1) the effects of relationship-based therapies on brain development in children and adults on the autism spectrum, and 2) improving systems and enacting family-centered models of care for underserved children with developmental delays. She has published over 45 scholarly articles on autism, has collaborated and presented her work locally, nationally, and internationally, and enjoys training graduate and undergraduate students in psychology, nursing, speech pathology, biomedical sciences, and education to be the next generation of autism professionals. Dr. Van Hecke is also President of the Board of Directors of the Autism Society of Southeastern Wisconsin and a member of the Treatment and Intervention Advisory Committee for the WI Department of Health, Children's Services Division.

Troney Small, Family Navigator, Next Step Autism and Trauma Clinic

For the past three years, Troney C. Small, Jr., has been providing Family Navigation services to families with children who have a suspected developmental delay or mental health concern. He is a Family Navigator with the Next Step Clinic in Milwaukee. Troney has been an active member of the Milwaukee Coalition for Children's Mental Health for several years. Troney recently received his Parent Peer Specialist certification from the State of Wisconsin and is a certified Comprehensive Community Services provider through Mental Health America of WI, helping individuals who are recovering from addiction by helping them navigate housing, job placement, another support and services.

Troney also is a long-time actor in the play "Pieces: In My Own Voice," a production that addresses stigmatizing attitudes about mental illness, and helps the audience work through identifying and deconstructing these damaging beliefs. He develops content and runs support groups for fathers and other caregivers to address mental health and parenting issues. Troney plans to implement the Compassion and Resilience Training Model with a group of Next Step Clinic parents later this fall.

Troney and his wife recently started an initiative, Riding Over Stigma, to support mental health awareness for boys and men of color in Milwaukee. The ride is an effort to encourage health and well-being by bringing awareness while reducing stigma on the issues surrounding mental and developmental health in black and brown communities. Troney has led over 10 presentations to the Milwaukee and Wisconsin community about the importance of accessing and providing support for families and children with developmental and mental health challenges.

John Jahnke, IRIS Consultant, Lutheran Social Services, Youth Facilitator, Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment

John Janke serves on the Governor's Council on Autism and is the parent of an elementary-school-aged son who was diagnosed at a young age. He also served as a PROMISE Family Navigator, connecting youth and families with disabilities who are eligible for SSI to supports and opportunities in efforts to improve employment outcomes for both youth and their families