



HISTORY & SERVICES

HARVEST

Outreach Center

History, Mission & Purpose



Original Harvest House

The Harvest Outreach Center (HOC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that was born out of the need for youth mental health services in Campbell County. In 2004, a 5th grade teacher and a Licensed Professional Counselor began counseling and mentoring two students at the original 'Harvest House' in Gladys. Today, HOC's school-based model of Multi-Tier System of Supports provides daily mental health services to the most students per school division capita in Virginia.

One cofounder saw firsthand the struggles of children in the classroom with social and emotional deficits. These families were often dealing with the effects of trauma and poverty daily. The other cofounder could relate with the 'uneven playing field' of these children, having grown up with a physical disability. Thus conveys the impetus behind HOC's mission to "empower children and families to realize their personal dignity by working to eliminate obstacles that impede the realization of one's full potential". Their dream was to merge the therapeutic milieu with caring and inclusive places in which children with disabilities and social-emotional disturbance could play, grow, and thrive.

Carrington Connelly, co-founder



Martha Houck, LPC, co-founder



Over the past 20 years, HOC has grown from 2 employees and 2 children to now offering a variety of programs with over 140 mental health professionals, paraprofessionals, and educators. Currently HOC serves over 400 students on any given day throughout Campbell and Lynchburg schools and Beacon Academy. Step by step, the dream of a teacher and a counselor manifested into reality, guided by the core values of Honesty, Humility, Humanity, and Healing.

Service Model & Initiatives

HOC is licensed by the VA Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. LMHP and QMHP staff hold certificates issued by the Department of Health Professions. All programs serve school aged youth, including children as young as 3 years (at Hutcherson Early Learning Center). Beacon Academy is licensed by the VA Department of Education serving students with disabilities K-12th grade.



IN-SCHOOL THERAPEUTIC DAY TREATMENT & SUMMER PROGRAMMING

HOC is licensed by the VDBHDS to provide Therapeutic Day Treatment (TDT) to children and adolescents in the public-school setting. The focus of the program includes therapeutic interventions paired with education and mental health treatment. Students in the program receive services to include: group and individual counseling, psycho-educational groups, social skills guidance, medication education, and skill-building. The daily summer program offers all of the therapeutic interventions in addition to community involvement and recreation.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT (SEBS)

This program aligns with Virginia's vision for social emotional learning. Staff work with students who might have deficits in the five SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making. This program is for those students that require extra support throughout the day for a variety of reasons (peer conflict, relationship with authority figures, problem solving, impulse control, hyperactivity, physical and verbal aggression, anxiety, depression, trauma responses, etc.)

SCHOOL-BASED OUTPATIENT INDIVIDUAL/GROUP THERAPY

Outpatient Therapy provides clinical counseling to children, adolescents, and adults with identified mental health or substance abuse diagnoses in office, in-school or other approved/appropriate community setting. Services are provided by licensed professional counselors with client-centered and family-centered approaches and are delivered through intensive interventions including Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral, Filial and Play Therapy.

RESTORATIVE ACADEMY COUNSELORS

HOC collaborates with Lynchburg City Schools to provide mental health staff for their LCS Restore restorative academy. Mental health professionals provide interventions, social-emotional support, and skill-building in a proactive and on-demand manner. This alternative program builds on the model of restorative justice and serves a specific niche of LCS students.

SUBSTANCE/ADDICTION SERVICES, GANG PREVENTION/INTERVENTION, ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT, BEHAVIORAL/EMOTIONAL; LIFE/SOCIAL SKILLS, BASIC/GENERAL STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES



HOC's service model includes goal setting around attendance improvement, behavioral and emotional support, life skills, social skills and general student support services as well as gang prevention and substance use and addiction. A continuum of staff from LMHP to QMHP to support staff are available to deliver services within a variety of settings including in-school suspension and alternative programming. Harvest staff attend Gang Awareness Training created by the Lynchburg Police Department in conjunction with Virginia Gang Investigation Association (VGIA), is extremely pertinent given the fact that it focuses specifically on the most updated gang information and prevention strategies.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STAFF AND TEACHERS

Professional development training sessions are available to School personnel. Sessions are provided online and on location. Training modules address areas in the context of supporting teachers professionally and personally and include the following: Staff Wellness and Health, Student Mental Health, and Family System Supports.

COMMUNITY CRISIS RESPONSE

Pro-bono work in response to community need is an important role of HOC staff. Last year several tragedies occurred in our area resulting in death of children either by gun violence or accident. HOC responded with next day free counseling and supports for the family, teachers, and students, some of which (grief counseling) continued for months.

TRANSITION SERVICES

Staff provide services to students whose Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) determines the need for support to transition to a lesser restrictive placement. This may include: 1:1 counseling, door to door-transportation to and from school, doctor visits, etc.-- anything they need to be successful, academic support, community involvement, extracurricular activities.



TRANSPORTATION

From day one HOC has provided transportation. While transportation offers little return in terms of the resources involved, families simply could not get the help they need without it. This aligns with our mission statement in working to eliminate obstacles. When spur of the moment situations arise, we provide support: a homeless guardian needs transportation to pick up their child’s medicine, or in the case of the pandemic, food delivery, parent transport to intake appointments. In cases such as these, Harvest rises to meet the need as much as possible. In addition, free food and transportation is a provision of Harvest’s unique summer program.

BEACON ACADEMY



Beacon Academy is a private day school designed for students whose needs cannot be met in the public day school setting. Beacon Academy was created to support students with specific disabilities, psychiatric impairment, emotional dysregulation, or behavioral disturbances. Students from Beacon Academy include those in need of a private special education alternative placement from the area, including Lynchburg, Amherst, Appomattox, Campbell, and Bedford counties. All staff at Beacon are committed to each student’s academic, physical, emotional, and social success to ensure students become self-directed, lifelong learners who function as responsible, productive citizens. At Beacon, we Believe Every Adolescent [and child] Can Overcome Negativity. Classroom ratio is 8 students to 3 adults (teacher, aide, and mental health staff).



VA DMAS STAKEHOLDER

Director of Programs, Maria Wood serves as private provider representative in the Right Help, Right Now redesign of Medicaid funded youth mental health services. Maria serves on the Behavioral Health Advisory Committee working with VA DMAS Behavioral Health division to improve all youth mental health services funded by Medicaid. The initiative is to propose a model of multi-tiered system of mental health services to be implemented by 2026. Our hope is the new services will bring back providers like HOC to ALL areas in Virginia to provide adequate treatment for youth with serious mental health issues.

“Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” -Margaret Mead

