

Michigan

# OnPoint's mobile crisis team brings help to Allegan County residents with urgent mental health needs

KELSEY SANDERS | TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2023



*OnPoint provides care at its facility and via its mobile crisis team.*

*This article is part of MI Mental Health, a new series highlighting the opportunities that Michigan's children, teens, and adults of all ages have to find the mental health help they need, when and where they need it. It is made possible with funding from the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan and its community mental health (CMH) agency members.*

Janet\* is an Allegan County mother and she just received another call from her young son's school that his aggression has gotten him into trouble. Big trouble this time – he was aggressive toward his classmates and teachers. She leaves work early to head to the school again, something her boss reminds her of multiple times, she takes her emotional child home.



What should Janet do now?

Janet called OnPoint's Crisis Hotline. OnPoint is Allegan County's community mental health agency (CMH). Two certified mental health professionals from OnPoint's mobile crisis team met Janet and her son at their house to see how they could help. When the young boy calmed down and talked to the OnPoint crisis team about things going on at home, he shared that he hadn't been getting along with Janet's new boyfriend, and he was struggling with his parents' divorce.

The OnPoint crisis team helped Janet and her son to figure out ways for him to express those big feelings. They also helped Janet find her son a local counselor so he could talk about his feelings on a regular basis and learn more coping skills to prevent him from becoming aggressive.

By the time the crisis team left, the boy was smiling and telling stories.



**Melissa Potvin, manager of OnPoint High-intensity Services**

"It's an act of trust on the part of people to reach out to us," says Melissa Potvin, manager of OnPoint High-intensity Services. "We understand that inviting us into your home and your personal situations can be scary because it makes you very vulnerable. People get worried about what we'll do based on what we see and hear. But we have very clear parameters when it comes to bringing in law enforcement and/or child protective services. That's a last resort."

OnPoint's Community Mental Health Mobile Crisis Intervention Program is available 24/7/365 with a supervisor and two clinicians on-call at all times. The purpose and goal of this service is to help ease the burden on local law enforcement by taking more cases related to mental and behavioral health (when it's applicable and safe) and to eliminate emergency department visits for mental or behavioral health situations that won't be well-treated at a hospital.

"Our goal is to address the situations that are serious but not imminently life-threatening," Potvin says. "This is for individuals who feel like they have an immediate emotional or behavioral need and need that support for themselves or their child."

OnPoint is an organization that offers many different services to those living in Allegan County, and not all fall under the mental health category.

"We also assist those with substance use disorders, emotional difficulties, and homelessness," says Mark Witte, OnPoint CEO. "We always aim to be sharp and good for those we serve and ready to meet the needs of those in the community."

OnPoint's staff prides themselves on providing services that are simple to use. An individual in the Allegan community calls the number and shares that they would like mental health help. That person will speak directly with an OnPoint staff member who will ask basic questions regarding what that person is looking for as well as perform a short risk assessment to identify what they need. From there, the staff member will help the person schedule an intake appointment based on their needs to help them access the support they need to move forward – or send out mobile crisis intervention. The most common types of calls that OnPoint receives are adults who express struggles with depression or overwhelming anxiety – they don't know what to do but they know they need help.



**Mark Witte, CEO OnPoint**

“Most of the people we speak with are struggling with hopelessness,” says Witte. “It doesn’t matter if it’s mild or severe, we help them find services to address that.”

Now, OnPoint is growing their services by expanding their Community Mental Health Mobile Crisis Intervention Program with grant funds from the federal government that have also allowed OnPoint to become a certified community behavioral health clinic. This will allow them to work more closely with schools and children as well as with those in the community who have mild or moderate mental health needs.

“This grant money will expand our services and the number of people we can employ to offer them,” says Witte. “It gives us the opportunity to help more people within the community for a variety of mental and behavioral needs.”



When someone calls the crisis hotline, the OnPoint call-line team answers that hotline. They attend to the caller’s needs according to the severity of the situation. Callers speak with an OnPoint supervisor or clinician first. If their need would be best met in-person, the mobile crisis intervention team will travel to them.

In addition to promoting the crisis hotline, the OnPoint team works with the community to host local workshops on Mental Health First Aid to spread the word on the resources available.

For those who live in Allegan County and need help, OnPoint is completely free and does not require health insurance or financial information. More information is available on OnPoint’s website. The 24/7 Crisis Hotline numbers are 1-888-354-0596 or 1-269-673-0202.

\*Name changed to protect privacy.

**Kelsey Sanders is a wellness professional and freelance writer and editor. She has lived in West Michigan her whole life and loves learning and writing about the many great things her area continues to do. When she’s not working, she’s staying home with her baby girl and enjoying the Lakeshore with her husband.**

*Photos courtesy OnPoint.*

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