

Historical Overview and Description of TCM **Counseling Ministry**

Prepared by Bob Kleinheksel as a research project for submission to the Grand Valley State University Social Work Department. This project is a part of the requirement for a Master in Social Work degree.

INTRODUCTION:

Tri-Cities Ministries (TCM) has been providing and coordinating human services within the Tri-Cities for almost three decades. Since its emergence in 1971, a vision springing from local churches, thousands of individuals and families have benefited from caring staff and volunteers. TCM is a multi-service ministry meeting emotional, physical, social and spiritual need of those within the community. Current programs of TCM include professional counseling services, LOVE, Inc., First Call For Help-Ottawa County and various other Community Activities. These program initiatives continue with the intent to improve people's lives and are based upon the model of care, compassion and inclusion demonstrated by and through the teaching and model of Jesus Christ. While there have been changes with policies, program and personnel over the years, TCM continues to be a vital community partner by providing a range of social services. The purpose of this writing is to provide a *general* glance back on the history and development of TCM and to turn the attention of the reader toward a *specific* look at the counseling ministry.

A BRIEF LOOK BACK

As churches grew in their understanding of each other and the social needs of the community during the 1960's, they began to join together in order to work collaboratively in meeting these needs. They desired to create a gathering, an intentional group that would be cognizant of the need for cooperation and partnership across denominational lines. They also recognized the need to provide affordable, quality counseling services to those within and outside the church. Despite additional programs and changes in personnel these principles continue today, including an ongoing emphasis on counseling as TCM approaches its 30th anniversary. Escalating community needs and the importance of remaining consistent with the original vision compel TCM to continue to strengthen and expand upon these existing counseling services as century twenty-one emerges.

A result from relationships and conversations in the late sixties between church leaders was the formation of a **Council of Churches**, representing six participating faith communities. Local church leaders, clergy and lay, joined together, envisioned and established a new organization, **Tri-Cities Cooperative Church Ministries**, which grew from the Council and included 21 member churches. This body became known as the **Forum**. This Forum became the vehicle through which ecumenism was realized and affirmed. Meeting every month over a meal, the members (pastor and two lay members as representatives from each church) of the Forum shared ideas, planned joint waterfront services, initiated hospital chaplaincy and formed a strong network in order to strengthen church collaboration. From early monthly gatherings and subsequent networking and collaborative programming efforts between the churches, a strong foundation of interest and support was realized. The Forum became more formalized in its approach and governance in the early seventies and eventually gave birth to TCM which became a legally incorporated entity (1977) with The First Presbyterian Church of Grand Haven

acting as Guarantor. TCM moved to its present location, a house owned by the Grand Haven Presbyterian Church, (120 S. 5th Street) in 1980.

Prior to incorporation, counseling services were conducted in local churches and homes by professional care providers on a volunteer basis. In 1973, with the financial help of individuals, counseling services were established and provided at 509 Franklin Street. A 13-member board of trustees was appointed to oversee the counseling ministry. The first bylaws were then drafted and the number of trustees increased to 21. Formalizing the counseling ministry, however, is credited to Bob Rosema, MSW. As counseling needs and services increased, the need for paid staff was evident. Peter Mist, MA, was brought in and served as the first part-time paid director between 1973-1976. In 1975, Bob Rosema asked the TCM/Forum Board to consider officially sponsoring and supporting a counseling ministry. The subsequent decision by church representatives to support this separate Christian counseling initiative led to it being formalized in December of 1977, having its own board governance and organizational name known as TCMCS-*Tri-Cities Ministries Counseling Services*.

In addition to collaborative and creative programming on part of TCM, a fund-raising Women's Auxiliary was established in 1975 to support the counseling services and other initiatives. In January 1978, after an interim time period and vacancy in the director position, the first full-time director and counselor of TCMCS was hired. Rich Brouwer, CSW, was appointed and supported by the churches to carry out Christian counseling and leadership in a manner consistent with Social Work standards and criteria established by supporting churches.

In 1984, the Love, INC (In the Name of Christ) office was established in the present location. Love, INC, a ministry of World Vision, was envisioned and founded in the middle 1970's by Virgil Gulker who first established a Love, INC office at the Good Samaritan Ministries in Holland, MI. By 1991, TCM and Love, INC came to be known together as a joint legal entity while retaining their separate board governance groups. Rich Brouwer, CSW, serving as Director from 1978-1991, witnessed this unification of TCM and Love, INC which placed the latter as a major program initiative under the broader name of *Tri-Cities Ministries, Love, Inc*. Since 1993, the boards of Love, INC and TCM have been joined, creating a unified board of governance.

Love, INC continues to be an active ministry that seeks to involve church members in responding to individual and family needs. Love, INC is a community clearinghouse staffed by a paid coordinator and volunteers. It provides no direct services and does not duplicate existing helping services. Rather, it screens needs and organizes churches to work with agencies in meeting individual and family needs. Love, INC works with public and private helping service agencies to develop an inventory of community resources, referral policies and an overall policy statement for the provision of basic services including food, clothing, furniture, housing, transportation, utility and rental assistance and financial aid to people in need. These policies and procedures reduce unnecessary duplication of agency services, identify and teach self-help skills to those

who may have chronic needs or conditions and fashion a cooperative relationship between churches and agencies.

Since Rich Brouwer's departure in 1991 there have been three Executive Directors. Peg Fosnaugh served briefly (1991-1992) following Rich Brouwer's tenure and then was succeeded by Jan Ruvalcaba, who served between 1993-1998. In the months following Ms. Ruvalcaba's departure, the future of TCM was seriously in doubt. During this six-month vacancy in the directorship position, the Board of Directors and church and community leaders determined to realign TCM in a direction consistent with its original vision and purposes. Dan Qualls, MA, LPC was brought in during a significant time of transition and presently serves as Executive Director of TCM/Love, INC.

The contribution of Evelyn Bosman to the counseling service needs to be noted. Having served as a Certified Social Worker and Licensed Marriage and Family therapist at TCM since 1980, Evie Bosman, MSW continues her counseling services as a full-time private practice clinician and is part of the broader panel of care providers utilized by TCM. As a therapist and an AAMFT-approved supervisor, she has provided important continuity and consistent and professional care in and through transitions and changes. She continues to practice on site at TCM.

Today, TCM, Love, INC continues to be a Christian, non-profit ministry governed by a board of directors representing participating and supporting churches. Together, with support from The Tri-Cities Area United Way, local churches, individuals, foundations, businesses and corporations, TCM concerns itself with finding sustainable solutions to local needs. Since its beginnings, TCM has grown to a multi-service agency serving more than 2,000 clients per year. TCM provides a circle of care for anyone needing a variety of services including counseling and other forms of assistance.

THE COUNSELING MINISTRY:

An emphasis upon providing quality and timely counseling services has always been maintained and continues to be a hallmark service offered by TCM. From the beginning and up through 1999, TCM employed counselors in addition to utilizing other professionals working in volunteer roles. Effective January 1st, 2000, TCM changed the way it delivered counseling services to those in the community. TCM moved to a system, which utilized contracted providers instead of employing its own counseling staff.

This new system of care allows TCM to provide more counseling sessions, expanded provider choice and improved accessibility to care. A strong emphasis on quality measurements is evident with the use of quality indicators, including satisfaction surveys and outcome testing (see attached). By contracting with private practice practitioners and with cutbacks in non-program expenses TCM has accomplished an enhanced process of delivering care. In this new model, TCM retains overall responsibility for client intake, utilization management, the grievance process, quality monitoring and provider

payments. An outstanding panel of contracted providers has generously agreed to see TCM clients at significantly reduced rates.

Counseling Services are guided by a commitment to provide accessible, timely, compassionate, competent and confidential care. Services are provided by a variety of therapists and counselors who are qualified, certified and/or licensed clinicians. Since TCM does not employ counseling staff, it can, under the determination of the board and director, add care providers to the panel as needed. This ability and prerogative increasingly enhances the number of options clients have in experiencing timely, appropriate, quality care.

THE COUNSELING PROCESS:

When a call comes in for counseling (842-9160) the receptionist asks the caller for their name and phone number. If the director is available, the call will be transferred. If the director is not available, the message is recorded and forwarded. This director immediately initiates phone conversation in order to discern the nature of needed or wanted services. Creating positive first impressions are important, including how the potential client is regarded and received over the phone. If counseling services are needed or warranted, the director then arranges an *intake session* with the prospective client.

The intake session is a face-to-face opportunity to graciously receive and meet the client, assess and record the presenting issue (s), determine the need for counseling and to discern which therapist would be most likely to provide the needed care and address the client's issues. During this intake session, the director collects demographic data, administers the health survey (outcome measure), explains how the counseling ministry works, determines a co-pay to be paid to TCM and indicates next steps regarding the referral. Typically 6-8 sessions are authorized based upon the nature of issues or problems presented. Sensitivity is also given to client's preferences regarding the gender of the therapist. If the client has insurance coverage, TCM assists in locating a covered provider within the panel or in the broader community. Therapists on the panel can often work with the client's insurance provider, if desired. Determining fees or co-pays due to TCM are based upon a generous sliding-fee starting at \$12.00 per session and are decided upon between intake counselor and client. At the end of the session the client is provided a satisfaction survey focused on the TCM intake process.

A mid-point outcome measure evaluation is routinely administered by the therapist. This provides the therapist and TCM with any information needed in order to continue providing for the well being of the client. An end-point evaluation (counselor satisfaction survey) is also recorded by TCM in order to discern how clients are perceiving the quality of care they received.

It is a goal of TCM to maintain a panel of qualified professional care providers. These providers apply to the panel and provide evidence of their credentials. Once approved

they agree to accept a contracted rate paid by TCM. This arrangement (agreement) mirrors those used in the managed care arena and allows financial resources to go further in meeting counseling needs as well as establishing positive relationships with care providers. Clinicians holding different specialty interests are retained which gives the intake counselor a variety of referral choices. A diverse panel of providers within the helping profession continuum helps ensure the delivery of high quality, ethical care, with high client satisfaction. Below is the current list of providers TCM utilizes as its referral network as of 3/1/01:

- Collette Beighly, MS, LMFT
- Dr. David Beighly, Ph. D., LMFT
- Evelyn Bosman, MSW, LMFT
- Deborah Cargo, MSW, ACSW
- Jan Esh, MSW, ACSW
- Andrew Gorter, BA, Psychology, M. Div., D. Min (pending)
- Dr. Peter Newhouse, Ph. D., MSW
- Dan Qualls, MA, LPC, CAC-II, CCS
- Dr. Allen Winebarger, Ph. D.
- Dr. Walker Parmelee, Ed. D.
- Nancy Morritt, MA, LPC, LLP
- Scott Courey, MSW
- Sally Seith, M. Div.

TCM TODAY

TCM, Love, INC intends to continue, as a significant community resource in the area of needs assessment and fulfillment. It hopes to remain consistent with the simple yet demanding purpose established thirty years ago: *Putting faith into practice to serve those in need.*

TCM, Love, INC hopes to expand the accessibility of care providers and to identify and overcome barriers that keep people from accessing counseling services needed.

TCM, Love, INC also hopes to build upon renewed vision and excitement developed over the past two years. Member of the Board and other community leaders are committed to assessing the effectiveness of present structures, bylaws and policies in order to be in a better position to meet the challenges many non-profit ministries face.

TCM, Love, INC will retain a fluid (flexible) model in order to maximize funding monies and build additional relationships with care providers, churches, para-church organizations and social service agencies.