



LAKEVIEW HEALTH FINALIZES TRANSITION TO GENDER-RESPONSIVE ADDICTION TREATMENT

In preparation for the upcoming opening of its new Women's Center, Lakeview Health in Jacksonville, Florida, announces that it is completing the transition to a gender-responsive model of treatment in order to better serve its clients.

Given the current opioid epidemic, the need for treatment is acute. Far from being an epidemic that

disproportionately affects one gender or the other, the current crisis is enveloping both men and women. Lakeview is positioned to provide the most effective treatment possible to both genders through an awareness of and responsiveness to the differing factors that drive addiction—and therefore recovery—in women and men.

For most of the history of substance abuse programs, treatment was designed for a predominantly male patient population, as the majority of addicts were men. When the problem of women's substance abuse began to emerge, treatment proceeded on the assumption that established practices would be equally applicable to and effective for women. In the recent years, drug and alcohol abuse treatment providers have begun to recognize the different factors that lead to substance abuse by each gender



and the way that approaches to treatment need to change to meet the needs of women. This movement has also led treatment centers to re-evaluate programs designed for men to determine whether they could be structured differently to meet the needs of men. Treatment has therefore begun to move from being “one size fits all” to being gender-responsive and individualized.

Lakeview is in the final stages of transitioning to gender-responsive treatment. The entire staff has been undergoing training in this comprehensive model of treatment. The whole program has been re-examined with gender-responsiveness in mind. As Dr. Philip Hemphill, chief clinical officer at Lakeview Health, explains, “We are examining everything relating to treatment—including the hiring of staff, the way the program is developed, and the content of the sessions—to ensure that they all address the reality women face when approaching treatment.”

This new Women’s Center and the renovated Men’s Center are designed to serve as active elements of the treatment so that the spaces and program work together in concert toward recovery. Every part of the program has been devised to meet the needs of men and women in recovery. Although the program will not be entirely gender-separate until the new Women’s Center opens, many other aspects of gender-responsiveness have already been incorporated into Lakeview’s treatment approach.

Lakeview Health will be opening its new Women’s Center in June 2016. This 54-bed, 35,600-square-foot facility will provide housing for women in treatment and serve as the location for their detox, medical care, and primary therapy. In turn, this frees existing

space to be transformed into a facility to serve men in treatment. From detox to the final therapy session, the program at Lakeview will be entirely gender-separate, with each facility having its own medical and clinical staff. This will allow the programs to focus on the specific needs of each gender and employ the practices that are most effective in treating each population.

An example of gender-specific differences can be seen in the causes of drug and alcohol abuse. Women with substance abuse problems are much more likely to have been the victims of abuse or to have experienced serious trauma. Addressing the emotional and mental issues resulting from abuse and trauma is therefore a key component of programs that are responsive to the needs of women in recovery.

In addition to the issues addressed in therapy, gender-responsive programs meet the different needs of men and women in other ways. Experts suggest that men may be more open to discussing uncomfortable issues when no women are present. By the same token, studies have shown that women stay in gender-separate treatment programs longer than they do in mixed-gender programs. Given the fact that longer treatment periods correlate to longer periods of remission, anything that can be done to encourage women to stay in treatment longer is a positive step. Women-only programs have been shown to lead to significantly less substance use posttreatment, and women are also more likely to enter treatment when a women-only program is an option.