

Dan Neufelder  
President and CEO  
Affinity Health System

- The burden of suffering by children with mental health needs and their families has created a health crisis in this country. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice estimates that 50 to 75 percent of teenagers in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental disorder and these numbers continue to grow.
- And while the problem here in the Fox Valley is not as acute, we are seeing increased numbers of children with behavioral health issues. It's estimated that one in four Fox Valley families is affected by mental illness.
- Since 1991, the Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health programs of Affinity Health System has been providing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to the assessment, initial treatment and disposition planning of children and adolescents with mental health and substance abuse issues.
- Right now, Affinity offers the only board-certified child psychiatrists in the Fox Cities and Oshkosh. Working with independent behavioral health specialists here in the Fox Cities, Affinity works with children who suffer from all types of behavioral and emotional problems, from depression and suicidal tendencies to hyperactivity, anxiety and psychosis.
- But the number of children needing care and treatment is growing beyond what Affinity can handle. Over the past 10 years, the severity in mental illness among children is becoming more acute. Not only are we seeing more children with more acute mental illness, we have witnessed that their families are more ill, insurance is reimbursing less, and there are not enough behavioral health resources to cover the need both here and nationally.
- Fox Valley residents are fortunate that there are so many quality health care organizations here that are willing to work together to solve community issues. At Affinity, we work closely with independent behavioral health specialists. And we're committed to working with ThedaCare and Children's Hospital—Fox Valley to bring additional behavioral health services that will promote the care of our children.