

### Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan serves as Provident Behavioral Health’s commitment to thoughtfully and intentionally expand access to care for those in need of behavioral health services. Since 2018, expanding access to care has been a key focus of Provident’s vision and strategy. The strategic planning process for our current plan reinforced our focus and determination to impact our community through expanded access to quality behavioral health services, especially for those who need services most and currently have limited access to care. While the scope of Provident’s services reaches clients of all ages, the areas where we will emphasize intentional expansion of access are youth and older adults.

#### Priority Population: Older Adults

Currently, older adults (ages 65+) represent 15% (40,770) of St. Louis City residents and 19% (187,471) of St. Louis County residents. Within the next few years, the number of older adults living in our community is expected to increase rapidly. Social isolation constitutes a major risk factor for morbidity and mortality, especially in older adults. Loneliness is also a risk factor for symptoms of depression, and loneliness and depression have an adverse effect on well-being in middle-aged and older adults. Seniors are often at a higher risk of suicide than the general populace. According to the CDC, in 2019, people age 65+ had a suicide rate of 17.0 per 100,000, and people age 85+ had a suicide rate of 20.1 per 100,000, the highest of all age groups. In Missouri, suicide rates for older adults are even higher than national rates, with a rate of 17.9 per 100,000 for people age 65+ and a rate of 22.5 per 100,000 for people aged 85+.

Despite the notable behavioral health issues and suicide risk experienced by older adults, there are few local providers specializing in older adult behavioral health. Provident is seeking to position ourselves as a leading provider in older adult behavioral health, significantly growing the number of older adults who are able to access timely, specialized care. As we look to expand the scope of behavioral health programming available to aging adults, there are many specific and increasing needs of this population. The number of Americans age 65+ increased by 25% from 2003 to 2013. The next 25 years promises another 50% increase. From 2018 to 2038, the number of Americans age 85+ is expected to more than double from 6 million to 14.6 million. By 2050, it is estimated that over 20% of the population in the United States will be 65 years or older, compared to 15.6% today. Assessing for suicide is an important component to care in aging adults, as suicide rates are higher among older adults than in the general population. Even though older Americans make up 15% of the population, they account for 20% of people who die by suicide. Older adults have needs that may increase risk for depression and suicide, such as social isolation, decreased mobility and physical health, and increased logistical barriers such as transportation and fixed income.

#### Priority Population: Youth

In the decade leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, youth behavioral health issues such as sadness, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation, had increased by 40%. Since the pandemic, youth behavioral health issues – including challenges accessing care – have been labeled a “mental health crisis”. Long wait times to access outpatient services lead youth and their families to utilize emergency rooms. Provident aims to build capacity to better support the mental health and wellness of the youth in our community through

expansion of transitional programming as well as development and expansion of innovative program models that attend to the behavioral health needs of youth and their families.

Our operational tactics address strategies for approaching the vast access issues that the community is facing, such as the shortage of qualified behavioral health professionals in the workforce available to meet the growing demand for help, the need to partner with other providers in the community to make a state-wide difference in improving access, and evolving our current service menu to meet the needs of youth and older adults in age-appropriate care models.

The Strategic Planning Committee noted the important issue of needing to evaluate if our current real estate arrangements are optimal for the organization and the appropriate use of resources. An increasing percentage of our work is done virtually, the Mary Ryder Home is much larger than is needed or can be used for residential purposes and a set of market changes have likely increased the value of our Olive Street headquarters. We recommend that an ad hoc committee of the Board, made up of those with particular expertise in real estate and space planning, be established to work with management to consider these issues.

While this report is about growth for Provident, we also recognize that achieving that Provident alone cannot achieve our goal of universal access to high quality behavioral health services for all in the St Louis region. We simply do not have the capacity. Moreover, there are structural factors, including workforce and reimbursement, that must be solved before universal access can be a reality. We strongly encourage the CEO and Senior Staff at Provident to engage seriously, along with others, in helping make universal access to high quality behavioral health care a reality in our region. This should include participation in public education and advocacy efforts. We are a lead agency in this space; we will be leaders in the public discussion.

## Identity Statements

**Our Vision:** *Mentally healthy communities through quality behavioral health services accessible to all.*

**Our Mission:** *Building brighter futures through exceptional behavioral health services, especially for those with the greatest need.*

**Our Values:** *Accessibility, Integrity, & Inclusivity*

## Statement of Strategic Intent

Provident Behavioral Health aims to create universal access to high quality behavioral health services, especially for those most in need. As our nation faces a mental health crisis, we aspire to expand the exceptional services Provident currently provides to make quality, inclusive care accessible for even more youth, adults, and older adults needing behavioral health supports. To do so, we must position ourselves as committed to this initiative to the community, participate in advocacy efforts to remove barriers to accessing care, and be a leading provider of expanded behavioral health services in our region.

To achieve expanded access to behavioral health care, we must first expand the behavioral health provider workforce so that residents of St. Louis and beyond have enough qualified professionals to address their needs in a timely manner. We intend to increase specialized services for youth and older adults in order to provide age

and developmentally appropriate care to these prioritized populations that are currently experiencing a shortage of providers. Provident Behavioral Health will be instrumental in changing the landscape of what it means to access care through innovative programming and workforce models aimed at addressing the current mental health services crisis. We intend to meet the ever-growing need for behavioral health services in underserved populations to create mentally healthy, suicide free communities.

### Strategic Priorities

In addition to continuing operations of services that support clients of all ages, Provident's strategy will focus on deliberately expanding access to the underserved populations of older adults and youth, while continuing to serve individuals of all ages. Both of these prioritized populations are currently experiencing a notable shortage of qualified providers and growing demand for services.

#### 1. Expand Access to Behavioral Health Care for Older Adults (ages 55+)

With the older adult population expanding exponentially in the coming years, compounded by the issue that there are not currently many local behavioral health providers that have a core competency in serving this population, Provident will position ourselves as a leading provider in older adult behavioral health, both for the aging population and their caregivers.

- a. **Goal:** To be a leading provider of older adult behavioral health services in the St. Louis region.
- b. **Community Impact Aspiration:** All older adults in the St. Louis area will have access to behavioral health supports focused on the unique needs of this population, closing the gap of the percentage of older adults experiencing or at risk of a mental health issues that are connected with care.

#### 2. Expand Access to Behavioral Health Care for Youth (ages 19 & under)

The national youth mental health crisis has highlighted the depth of behavioral health problems currently experienced by children and adolescents, and shed light on the shortage of appropriate resources available to meet the demand. A combination of office based, telehealth, community based/colocation, and school based programming continue to be an approach to reaching additional youth, as youth and their families will be most receptive to service formats and locations that fit their needs. While many schools indicating a need for behavioral health providers on-site during the school day, there are many challenges faced in serving youth in schools. Provident serves a large population of youth in Counseling and Psychiatric Services already, with additional referrals seeking services that we will be better able to accommodate with a larger team of licensed providers, as well as through innovative programs that utilize Bachelor's level positions to support this population. Provident is committed to supporting youth and their caregivers to address this growing problem.

- a. **Goal:** Address the current youth mental health crisis by providing an expanded menu of preventative services, timely screening, and access to behavioral health treatments for youth and their families.

- b. Community Impact Aspiration:** Youth and their families in the St. Louis region will have more timely access to screening, preventative services, and behavioral health treatments from qualified providers. We will build innovative program models and an expanded behavioral health workforce to sufficiently meet the needs of Missouri residents, including the growth of providers equipped to support underserved, high need populations such as youth. We will effectively grow the number of behavioral health providers in the state of Missouri so that it is no longer a provider shortage area.

## Operational Tactical Priorities

### 1. Employee Recruitment, Retention, and Expansion:

- To address the current behavioral health workforce shortage through creation of meaningful personnel strategies via recruitment, training opportunities, community partnerships, innovative staffing models, and advocacy efforts that will allow Provident to reduce the barriers to hiring and retaining qualified staff to expand our ability to reach underserved populations. For example, each therapist serves an average of 74 clients per year, 46 of which are youth. Each Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner serves 360 clients on average, 122 of which are youth. Those who work predominately with youth serve as many as 61 (Counseling) and 162 (Psychiatric Services) per year. For each additional clinician Provident adds and retains, access to care for a significant number of individuals increases. Further, adding clinicians who specialize in older adult populations will prepare for the ability to accommodate additional referrals from community partnerships Provident has formed partnerships with other agencies and providers who work with older adults in need of behavioral health care.
- Evaluate therapist salary and benefits packages to ensure Provident's compensation model is current with the trend of increasing therapist salaries across the nation. Ensure that compensation model is also effective in retaining current clinical staff and client service providers.
- Enhance Human Resources support of new and existing staff through better communication of benefits, routine updates and education on the employee handbook, and investment in training and development for staff at all levels.
- Increase training and support for supervisor-level staff, as employee's experiences with their direct supervisor are directly related to their engagement with the agency.

### 2. Innovative & Current Service Delivery Models:

- To evaluate emerging and innovating service platforms to ensure services stay current with population needs and trends, such as telehealth, video chat, and apps.
- Research best practices and program models used in other states to evaluate feasibility of implementing locally.
- Continue to pilot Behavioral Health Intervention Specialist (BHIS) in 2 partner schools to determine successful service model, including what an ideal school based partnership entails, to set the stage for future expansion into additional schools, including St. Louis City Schools.
- Collaborate with key community stakeholders in the Youth and Older Adult space to identify community needs that will shape future service design and delivery.

- Evaluate Telehope telephonic supportive contact model and explore expansion of the program to other focus areas – both geographically (ex. older adults in St. Louis County and rural Missouri) and other populations (ex. parents and caregivers of youth and older adults).

### 3. Marketing and Branding Provident’s “Accessible” Identity:

- To bring visibility to Provident’s services, priority populations, and areas of emerging and existing core competencies.
- Continue to strengthen relationships with area agencies, providers, and religious institutions that serve our priority populations to create referral pipelines and collaborative care models.

### 4. Advocacy, Community Partnerships, & Provident Ambassadors:

- Continue to cultivate and strengthen partnerships with providers and agencies who serve youth and older adults, including those we have worked with during the Older Adult Task Force efforts.
- Facilitate a network of community-wide resources that will increase Provident’s success in achieving our strategic goals of growing services, expanding the workforce, and improving access to care.
- Participate in local and state-wide advocacy efforts that focus on increased access to behavioral health care and workforce expansion.

### 5. Real Estate Evaluation:

- Evaluate current properties and develop real estate strategies for the three owned Provident locations (Mary Ryder Home, Creve Coeur, and St. Louis City) to plan for current and future program needs.
- Develop board task force to assess Provident’s current real estate.

## Serving the Underserved

This strategic plan focuses on the ability to continue Provident’s legacy of serving the underserved, which includes ensuring our programs support the following underserved populations:

- **Mental Illness & Suicide:** Youth, adults, and older adults at risk of or experiencing mental health issues or risk of suicide.
- **Access Issues:** Individuals with challenges accessing mental health services, for reasons such as geographical location, stigma, transportation, and limited mental health resources.
- **Financial Barriers:** Individuals with financial barriers, including inability to afford mental health services due to limited financial resources or insufficient insurance.

## Implementation & Accountability

Provident leadership has the organizational imperative of improving access to behavioral healthcare for the St. Louis region and beyond. The Vice President-level positions that have been created in Programs, Advancement, and Operations, as well as restructuring and addition of new positions that report to the VP positions has expanded the capacity of the executive leadership team to focus on strategic progress and delegate day-to-day

management tasks to their teams. Annual operational plans and performance tracking measures will be utilized to evaluate and communicate progress to the Board, including quarterly agency Scorecards and department specific dashboards that highlight strategic goals and progress toward targets. Board member support in strategic planning efforts through mentorship and sharing of expertise, fundraising, networking, and other efforts to support staff's implementation of strategic initiatives will be instrumental in Provident's ability to spread our mission, grow partnerships, and create a meaningful impact on our community. Examples include: assisting with people connections, assisting with idea connections, serving as a board for opportunities that staff generate, and ensuring concrete tactics are articulated and achievements reported at regular intervals.

### Strategy Task Force

Special thanks go to Provident's Strategy Task Force, who developed the strategic plan from September 2023 through February 2024. The Task Force was led Board members Hank Webber and Peter Ambrose, and included participation from the following Board members: Marianne Fournie, Board Chair, Barb Abbett, Anne Elliott, Adam Fournie, Michael Girsh, Eddie Lawlor, Theresa Menk, Robert Wagner, and Ted Williamson. Staff participating in the strategic planning process included: Kevin Drollinger, Executive Director; Bailey Wahlquist, VP of Operations; Julie McDowell, VP of Advancement; Lindsay Jeffries, VP of Programs; Jamie Ilko, Senior Director of Finance; and Xinyue Zhang, Analytical Strategist.

### References

- Abrams, Zara. 1/1/2023, American Psychological Association, 2023 Trends Report: Kids' mental health is in crisis. Here's what psychologists are doing to help. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/01/trends-improving-youth-mental-health>
- CDC WONDER Database, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/> (provisional data as of 2/2024)
- Eldercare Alliance. The Importance of Socialization in Aging. May 26, 2017
- <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-data-statistics.html> (provisional data as of 2/2024)