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Trillium spends \$7 million in county during first six months managing behavioral health



Trillium

HEALTH RESOURCES

BY ALLEN TURNER allenturner@nrcolumbus.com

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In its first six months managing behavioral health care in Columbus County, Trillium Health Resources spent nearly \$7 million on care here, a representative told county commissioners during a recent update.

Trillium Southern Regional Director David Tart said during the May 6 commissioners' meeting that things have gone well since the county switched from former provider Eastpointe to Trillium effective July 1, 2018.

"I normally provide county commissioners with how our activities compare to the previous year," Tart told commissioners, "but since this was our first year, I'll focus on what we've done since July 1 and what you can expect from us down the road."

Trillium serves 26 counties in North Carolina, managing care for Medicaid and privately insured people in need of mental health, substance abuse and intellectual/developmental disability problems. Their service area has a population of 1,428,000 and 205,000 are eligible for Medicaid. They served nearly 54,000 people last year through 500 providers. In the fiscal year that ended June 30, Trillium spent \$355 million on services in the 26 counties. For the six months that ended in December, Trillium spent \$7 million in Columbus County alone.

One of the main reasons Columbus County decided to switch to Trillium instead of continuing to use Eastpointe as a managed care organization was Eastpointe's lack of a physical location in the county, a place where people could walk in to seek services.

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Trillium quickly filled that void, leasing the former Employment Security Commission building on East Jefferson Street. "We believe in the 'no wrong door' philosophy," Tart said. "If someone knows of a provider, they don't have to come to us first. They can go directly to that provider. For example, if they are covered by Medicaid or private insurance, they can walk into the health department and get referred without having to come through us first. Of course, they're also welcome to come to our office, and we'll refer them to the appropriate provider."

Commissioner James Prevatte, who served as the county's representative on the Eastpointe board of directors now fulfills the same role on Trillium's southern regional advisory board. "I have not had one complaint about mental health services here since Trillium came in," said Prevatte. "Last year, we had one or two complaints every week, but we've gotten no complaints after Trillium replaced Eastpointe. I'm especially pleased that Trillium has the walk-in office here, something Eastpointe said they had, but I could never find it."

During the first six months of Trillium's managing care in Columbus County, they served 1,450 local residents. Of those, 1,091 received mental health services, 239 got substance abuse services and 277 received intellectual/developmental disability services.

"We're not the 'boots on the ground,' for provision of services here," Tart said. "Our providers are the ones who actually serve our clients. What we do is help the client hook up with the right provider, and the providers are paid for their services through our organization."