

Insights



THE INSIDE STORY

West Bergen's Mobilized Crisis Response Program

The recent pandemic brought a deeper recognition and respect for healthcare first responders and the essential services they provide to communities in crisis. But did you know that there is a growing awareness of the need for emergency response and intervention services for families and communities who have experienced unexpected death or collective trauma? West Bergen Mental Healthcare has been quietly developing and expanding such a program over the past two decades.

Born in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the program began as a way for Bergen County community members to unpack the myriad of emotions surrounding an unfathomable tragedy and begin a healing process. Supported by the Village of Ridgewood, Michael Tozzoli, Lee Shaeffer and a team of clinicians set up a mobile "drop-in" mental health clinic alongside other support resources at the Ridgewood Library where community members were invited to stop by and talk.

Fast forward 23 years, and West Bergen's Mobilized Crisis Response Program is now a necessary support system for communities struggling with unexpected and tragic incidents. Because of the agency's competency as a full service psycho therapeutic facility, team members have the capacity to immediately respond to a variety of situations that confront families and communities. Sudden death of a family member by accident or suicide, the death of a beloved school faculty member, student suicide or overdose, and organizations experiencing the sudden death of a team member are all real life examples of the agency's traumatic deployments.

West Bergen's response is immediate, and in some cases within 90 minutes of notification. The trauma response team is carefully selected and usually comprises two or more staff members who are comfortable and trained in potentially upsetting situations, and the deployments

rarely occur at the agency but rather at the place of incident (family home, school or business). It is important to note that response is not dependent upon any prior affiliation with West Bergen, and those treated including families, organizations and school districts do not pay for services.

West Bergen's mission is and always has been to provide hope and healing to our communities, and our Mobilized Crisis Response Program is an example of our commitment to our mission. Your support of unfunded programs such as this is critical and necessary and allows us to continue to provide these much needed services.

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MENTAL HEALTH MOMENT

How to Do a Social Media Reset With Teens

The Surgeon General, educators and policymakers have become increasingly concerned about the potential effects of social media on the mental health of teens. Here are some tips to help your kids cut down on screen time.

GET PHONES OUT OF THE BEDROOM

Have your teens put devices elsewhere overnight. And set an example for them by designating a communal charging station for the family.

BE UPFRONT ABOUT YOUR RULES

When it comes to limiting kids' social media use, tell your children exactly how much screen time they have each day and put limits on apps. While there are not clear guidelines about how much social media time is too much, it may help to look for signs of problematic use, such as children becoming irritable when they stop using a device, or their social media use interfering with other activities.

FOCUS ON IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES

While busy schedules and school can sometimes make this a challenge, having your kids make time for unstructured play with friends or having regularly planned family time on weekends is a great way to have them put the phones down. Not only will this help them learn how to relieve boredom on their own, it can bring you closer as a family.

HELP YOUR TEENS TUNE IN TO HOW SOCIAL MEDIA MAKES THEM FEEL

Experts suggest that parents help their kids develop skills to use social media mindfully and in moderation. For example, work with kids to identify how certain content is making them feel. You could ask them to do an experiment where instead of mindlessly scrolling through TikTok, they pay attention to how it makes them feel. Do they feel sad or uncomfortable or frustrated after scrolling? Encourage them to jot down how they feel, and find some time to talk about it with them later.

Message from our CEO

It's hard to underestimate the role community plays in supportive mental health services and resources. In times of crisis, it's important for families and individuals to have trusted people they can turn to. We are indeed fortunate to live in an area where leaders are deeply invested in bringing awareness and education to the issue of mental illness. That kind of community connectedness makes it easier for those who struggle to seek help.

Our role at West Bergen Mental Healthcare is not only to provide programs and services to

those who struggle, but also to work with leaders to respond to crises and foster safe environments for people to openly talk about mental health, stress, trauma and related issues.

Your support, through volunteerism, donations and attending fundraisers such as our upcoming Murder Mystery evening, plays a critical role in helping us provide essential services to our communities. Together, we are making a difference.



A Unique Way to Support West Bergen

Are you interested in transporting yourself to parts unknown while transforming lives? West Bergen Mental Healthcare is partnering with renowned tour operator Collette Tours to offer a unique way to support our mission of hope and healing.

Travel the French Riviera on a guided and immersive nine day, first class tour with Collette experts and experience Nice, Monaco, Monte Carlo, Cannes and more. Travel dates are **November 6 – November 14, 2025**.

Best of all, West Bergen Mental Healthcare will earn \$600 per person for every full paying land/air exclusive booking! And your tour price has not been increased to cover this donation. Prices have been negotiated by Collette as a unique opportunity for nonprofit organizations to receive support through donor travel.

For a complete itinerary and trip information, visit westbergen.org! And join us for a special Zoom travel presentation on Thursday, November 14th at 2PM where Collette representatives will walk us through the tour and answer all your questions!

To register for the Zoom, contact Barbara Hand (bhand@westbergen.org).



VOLUNTEER CORNER

Meet our newest Community Partner, The Knights of Columbus, St. Therese R.C. of Cresskill. Inspired by a presentation from our CEO, Michael Tozzoli, the Knights decided to extend their support to our Mahwah and Ramsey group homes last fall.

Since adopting these homes, the Knights have shown unwavering dedication to our residents. They have provided meals, holiday gifts, and handmade birthday cards, bringing joy and comfort to our residents. Their commitment didn't stop there. They organized a delightful barbecue at our Mahwah group home, treating both residents and staff to a feast that included homemade salads, side dishes, and grilled favorites like hot dogs, chicken, and hamburgers. The Knights' selfless acts of kindness have made a significant impact on our community, and we are deeply grateful for their continuous support and compassion. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Chrissie at cljoi@westbergen.org



West Bergen Mental Healthcare will earn \$600 per person for every full paying land/air exclusive booking!

Cuisine, Crime and Community



Register at westbergen.org

Join us for a dinner **TO DIE FOR!** An immersive experience where **YOU** become part of the story!

Our theme is Midnight at the Masquerade, and everyone gets involved!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 6:30 PM
SHOW BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 7 PM

THE HERMITAGE

355 FRANKLIN TURNPIKE, HO-HO-KUS, NJ

TICKETS - \$125 PP RESERVED TABLES FOR 8 AVAILABLE

CATERED DINNER BY:



West Bergen's free "Warmline" provides support to anyone in the community who is experiencing stress and anxiety. Available Monday through Friday from 9am – 5pm, calls will be received by a West Bergen clinician and a trained West Bergen licensed therapist will return your call within 30 minutes. 201-688-7098