

Cognitive behavioral therapy training supercharges social workers' support of adults and children

While it can be easy to see physical injuries, mental injuries are not always noticeable. But thanks to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) training supported by the Kevin J. Sexton Fund, our team of highly trained clinicians can better diagnose and treat uninsured patients for behavioral health conditions.

At the Holy Cross Health Centers, primary care providers screen patients for depression, anxiety, and other behavioral health issues. Patients may express during their visit that they are overwhelmed with problems at home or difficulties at their job. Some may share their financial stressors such as the threat of eviction, while others may share that they have difficulty performing everyday tasks. "If the provider identifies a concern, they refer the patient to us," says Silvia Fuentes, LCSW-C, social work care management clinical supervisor, Holy Cross Health Center Aspen Hill.

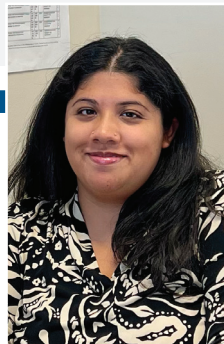
"When they come to us for help, we can put into practice what we have learned through our CBT training," says Pilar Flores, LMSW, social worker, Holy Cross Health Center Silver Spring.

A significant portion of the marginalized patient population who do not meet insurance requirements face seemingly

insurmountable challenges. "These are the patients," Flores says, "who have the most health complications, trauma, and anxiety."

Stefany Beza, LMSW, social worker, Holy Cross Health Center Gaithersburg, practices CBT with children and teenagers suffering from depression or anxiety under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker. She notes, "Some families face divorce or financial struggles. They may be struggling with experiences from their home countries, their journey here, or adjusting to a new country, a new school culture, and language. They are also dealing with cultural changes and often meeting family members in the U.S. for the first time."

Beza goes on to say that "the cognitive behavioral therapy course enhanced the CBT skills I use with children and adolescents. CBT is a gold standard behavioral health modality that is particularly valuable when working with teenagers who often have limited access to mental health services. I feel appreciated and valued as a professional at Holy Cross Health, especially having the course funded through the Kevin J. Sexton Fund."



"As a daughter of immigrants, I love Holy Cross Health's mission and core values to serve those who are most vulnerable. I love the work that I do and know it would be impossible without generous donations to the Kevin J. Sexton Fund."

- Pilar Flores, LMSW, social worker, Holy Cross Health Center Silver Spring

Bringing vision care to young children



Montgomery County provides access to ophthalmology care for children aged 7 and older. However, many families with younger children who have eye needs can't afford to pay out of pocket for these appointments, which can cost between \$150 and \$500. Thankfully, they can turn to the Kevin J. Sexton Fund.

"What I love is that it's all community based. We're not trying to do everything for everybody and make headlines in the newspaper. We're trying to help people we live with and see every day. With the Kevin J. Sexton Fund, we know that we can help patients and see the difference it makes."

- Anita Andrade, MSN, RN, clinical nurse manager, Holy Cross Health Center Gaithersburg



"Maybe they were born with amblyopia (commonly known as lazy eye), or perhaps they need glasses; possibly corrective surgery," says Anita Andrade, MSN, RN, clinical nurse manager, Holy Cross Health Center Gaithersburg. "As a mother, I can't imagine sending my child to school not being able to see the board."

Good eye health and corrective vision for children as soon as a problem arises help give them the best chance to meet important developmental milestones and succeed in school.



Fostering Community Health and Well-Being

Kevin J. Sexton Fund to Increase Access and Improve Community Health

About the Holy Cross Health Foundation

A 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization, the Holy Cross Health Foundation exists to improve the health of our community through the generosity of our patients, colleagues, community members, foundations, and corporations. Your partnership enables us to continue providing equitable care to our most vulnerable patients and their families.

For more information, please visit HolyCrossHealth.org/Donate, call us at 301-557-GIVE (4483) or email Foundation@holycrosshealth.org.



The Kevin J. Sexton Fund to Increase Access and Improve Community Health

supports the community's most vulnerable people by providing essential services when other resources are unavailable. This includes helping with medication, transportation, food, rental assistance, specialized care, and mental health services when needed.

The support is offered by a team of skilled providers at our Health Centers in Aspen Hill, Gaithersburg, and Silver Spring. We also offer services

at our obstetrics and gynecology clinics located at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring and Holy Cross Germantown Hospital.

Donations to the Kevin J. Sexton Fund make a significant impact by providing hope and relief to those in need. Your generosity strengthens Holy Cross Health's mission of being a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

On behalf of those you have helped and the countless lives you have touched, we extend our heartfelt thanks.

HELPING PATIENTS ACCESS LIFESAVING MEDICATIONS WHEN NO ONE ELSE CAN

An abdominal bacterial infection put an unemployed, uninsured patient at Holy Cross Health Center in Aspen Hill in a dangerous position – the anti-parasitic treatment cost \$9,000 for a six-month supply.

Help from friends and family wasn't enough to cover even a single month's supply. Holy Cross Health Center social worker Stefany Beza, LMSW, unsuccessfully searched for resources from prescription organizations and local agencies, who could not help with the high cost. There were no affordable alternative prescriptions.

Beza turned to the Kevin J. Sexton Fund. The anti-parasitic medication was covered by the generosity of our supporters, and the patient received the full course of treatment. Today, the patient is grateful for the excellent care and unwavering support that Holy Cross provided.

Holy Cross Health social workers find assistance for many patients and their families through government programs and social service agencies, but not everyone is eligible for these resources. "And that's when access and equity become issues," says Anita Andrade, MSN, RN, clinical nurse manager, Holy Cross Health Center Gaithersburg.

"Maybe they're undocumented and new to the area, they don't speak English, or they're housing insecure with an extended family of 10 or 15," she says. "We're trying to help people get back on their feet, so they can become eligible for other programs. Navigating the system can be hard. We don't want them to be in that cycle forever."

Support from the Kevin J. Sexton Fund is not a long-term solution; rather, it helps sustain people until they qualify for Medicaid or other programs such as the county-subsidized Montgomery Cares Program.

Through Montgomery Cares, county residents who have an income at or below 137% of the Federal Poverty Level qualify for Pharmedix, a medication assistance program that provides free medication. However, many people in financial distress earn too much to qualify, but still not enough to support their basic needs. That is when our care team relies on the Kevin J. Sexton Fund to cover medication expenses.

"Medication costs can add up, especially for those suffering from one or more chronic conditions. Patients often face the difficult choice between buying their prescriptions or providing for their families," says Jessica Kelly, practice operations lead for the Holy Cross Health Network. "The mentality a lot of our patients have is—do I put food on the table or am I going to pay for medication?"

"Our goal is to ensure that patients have access to care," says Kelly. "When these patients already face barriers like transportation and childcare, just getting to the appointment is a hurdle. If they can leave our health center with medication in hand, without it coming at the expense of providing for their family, they are much more likely to adhere to their treatment plan."



Transformative Support: Donations and their Impact in Fiscal Year 2024

Through the generosity of our philanthropic partners, the Kevin J. Sexton Fund granted access to life-saving treatments, medications, transportation, and other necessities for our patients and their families, creating more sustainable pathways to good health.

\$50,060

in new donations and charitable commitments

29

philanthropic partners

\$355,401

in funds allocated

Social care team \$267,780

75%

Direct patient support \$51,835

15%

Community development and professional education \$35,786

10%

Funds Used

Patient regains sight with help from the Kevin J. Sexton Fund

In 2022 while walking home, a man was attacked by gang members who left him badly injured and blind in his right eye. Claudia Handal, community resource coordinator, Holy Cross Health Center Aspen Hill, worked with the patient and his primary care provider to secure eye care and access other community resources to help him recover. The Kevin J. Sexton Fund played an important role in that recovery.

Over time, a vision-threatening cataract developed in his left eye. Support from the ophthalmologist and the Kevin J. Sexton Fund allowed the patient to have a successful surgery in February 2024 that restored his sight. In addition to funds for surgery, the Kevin J. Sexton Fund provided Lyft rides, since he had difficulty

accessing public transportation, and a month's subscription to Hungry Harvest, a bi-weekly food delivery program for vulnerable patients who cannot easily access local food pantries.

Handal says the patient is grateful for the efforts of the social work team and health center staff in helping to meet his goals. He's also elated that he can see again and is able to work.

"I am proud of him because he went through so much and never gave up," says Handal. "As a patient, he has overcome his fears and difficult moments. Now he has the strength to change his life for good and have a better life."