

## ACA to encourage linking physical, behavioral health

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Joe Dziobek, president and CEO of Fellowship Health Resources, has, in his nearly 40-year career there, helped the nonprofit behavioral health care agency grow from \$1 million to \$33 million in annual revenue, and established several departments, including the Office of Peer Recovery Services, and Studio 35, a healing arts and recovery program.

His most recent work has focused on expanding children's mental health services and integrating physical and behavioral health care services.

In early March, the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare awarded Dziobek one of its Awards of Excellence to acknowledge his leadership and innovative and inspirational efforts.

**PBN:** Why did you enter and then stay in the behavioral health care field?

**DZIOBEK:** There had been some mental illness in my extended family. I remember visiting my aunt at a state hospital and just feeling kind of drawn to the idea. My game plan when I was thinking of a vocation was to do something that would make a difference. That was kind of my compass.

**PBN:** What is the state's behavioral health care system's greatest asset?

**DZIOBEK:** I think you've got a pool of very dedicated people working in Rhode Island. You've got a resource pool that has worked with people with severe mental illness and a long-term history of mental illness for a long time. By and large it's not people who are leaving for a more lucrative field, but who are



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**PROVIDED FOR?** Joe Dziobek, president and CEO of Fellowship Health Resources, says the No. 1 issue affecting the provider community is underfunding.

dedicated to working with people who present some challenging situations.

**PBN:** What is the field's biggest challenge here?

**DZIOBEK:** There are several. I think No. 1 is the provider community is underfunded. We've seen a reduction in rates, and budgets, and amounts of dollars allocated. [Next], Rhode Island has prided itself as being one of the first in the nation to go down the road of health homes and that also presents problems from the perspective that there's no experimental history to fall back on. We're kind of going ahead and doing what we think is right, but making mistakes along the way. ... I think with the Affordable Care Act kicking in, you're going to have a groundswell almost of people who become eligible for health services who haven't before.

**PBN:** How will blending physical and behavioral health care help navigate the Affordable Care Act?

**DZIOBEK:** Insurers are going to be required to offer parity when it comes to behavioral health care. That's a good thing. There is definitely a connection between the mind and the body. When you start to integrate behavioral health into primary health care, you're addressing the whole problem as opposed to part of the problem. When I went for my annual physical, there was a questionnaire and two questions were trying to get at whether I had any depression.

**PBN:** Fellowship Health Resources runs a peer-recovery program. How effective is this?

**DZIOBEK:** It's extremely effective. We refer to it as people with lived experience. The person who runs the services, Bob Russo, is a graduate of Notre Dame and is extremely intelligent and capable. He's an extremely effective leader and administrator. He also happens to have a diagnosis of mental illness.

**PBN:** You once lost funding for programs in Massachusetts and to keep the organization going, bid on services in other states. How important is it to think outside the box in executive leadership?

**DZIOBEK:** We didn't stand around wringing our hands and saying "that's not fair." We said we needed to find new markets and reduce our dependence on Massachusetts. Today we're twice the size we were back then but we have less risk associated with those contracts. It was a

wake-up call.

**PBN:** What other qualities are necessary for nonprofit leadership?

**DZIOBEK:** In a CEO position, you have the opportunity to work with a number of people over the years. My philosophy has always been to attract the best and the brightest to work in whatever position the organization has, especially at the senior level. Once you have them onboard, you have to listen to them. ... I believe honesty and integrity go a long way. I'm honest and straightforward. If I give my word, I keep my word.

**PBN:** There's an identified need for more child behavioral health care workers. How can Rhode Island attract them?

**DZIOBEK:** Pay rates in the field are not competitive, to be honest with you. What's really driving service delivery now is how much money is there. I don't think that yields the same kind of beneficial results [as before]. I think people who enter this field today do so with the best of in-

There's a lot of tension in the [behavioral health care] system.

tentions but I think Rhode Island has to create a better [environment] to make it more attractive for organizations to do the work that we do. I think people need to feel there is a real partnership between all parties involved. There's a lot of tension in the system and I think that can create some difficulty in attracting people. There's so much change right now. ■

### INTERVIEW

#### Joe Dziobek

**POSITION:** President and CEO of Fellowship Health Resources

**BACKGROUND:** Dziobek has been at Fellowship Health Resources since 1975, beginning as a mental health counselor at Westwick House, a residential group home. He became director of programs in 1983, and president/CEO in 1984.

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor of Science, psychology, Northeastern University, 1974; Master's of Science, social work, Rhode Island College, 1993

**FIRST JOB:** Caddy at a Seekonk country club

**RESIDENCE:** Lincoln  
**AGE:** 61