

Groundbreaking Pediatric Healthcare



Fulfilling a Vision

After reading Sterling's book on managing private foundations, a wealthy family sought out Sterling to help them fulfill their vision to improve children's lives in their community, particularly the underprivileged.

In the US, 1 out of every 5 children aged 3 to 17 years has a diagnosed mental health disorder, yet only 21% of affected children receive needed treatment. Suicide, which can result from the interaction of mental disorders and other medical factors, was the second leading cause of death among adolescents aged 12–17 years in 2010.

Sterling worked with the family to create a foundation and develop a strategy that included consulting with national pediatric mental health experts, working with leading children's hospitals, and identifying obstacles to mental health care for children.

With Sterling's assistance, the family partnered with their community children's hospital to develop groundbreaking pediatric healthcare programs that have saved children's lives and improved both medical and mental health outcomes.

Pediatric Healthcare Approaches

Addressing challenges in providing comprehensive care to children, Sterling worked with the family to strategically apply their resources, which resulted in the development of innovative pediatric care approaches that integrate mental and medical care and improve overall outcomes.

Closing Significant Gaps in Pediatric Care

Prior to developing these programs that integrate mental health care into medical treatment plans, no children in this hospital received ongoing mental health care.

Created Chronic Disease Program

The Chronic Disease Program provides psychological evaluations and evidence-based treatments for caregivers and patients with significant medical complexity, functional limitations, and increased need for medical services. The program has alleviated suffering for children and families affected by chronic diseases by reducing symptoms on average by two standard deviations. Moreover, program participant suicides have decreased.

Developed New School Advocacy Program

The School Advocacy Program provides a broad range of services to families to meet the educational needs of children undergoing long-term care. Families receive assistance in developing individual education plans; general liaison services working among schools, families, and the hospital to ensure patients continue their education throughout treatment; and school reintegration support. As a result of meeting patients' educational needs and minimizing delays in return to school, academic outcomes have improved, absenteeism has decreased, and parents have better satisfaction rates.

Founded First of its Kind Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) Program

The PICU Program provides psychological health interventions and care to children and their families undergoing traumatic or intensive care. In addition, the program provides mental health services to PICU staff to increase resilience and caregiver wellness. The program has dramatically enhanced the lives of children and their families through improved medical outcomes, preventing exacerbating behavior, and protecting children from abuse.

Established Pioneering School Nurse Program

The School Nurse Program provides school nurses continuing education on mental illness including mental health screening, school-based interventions, suicide prevention, substance abuse, and school reintegration post-hospitalization. The program also provides individualized in and out patient tutoring. Over 98% of nurses completing the training intended to change/improve their professional practices based on the training.

Promulgating the Programs and Impact

All the programs are models for service delivery and have been published and presented at national mental health professional organization conferences so that other children's lives can be saved and improved.