A. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AGENCY SETTING

Western Montana Mental Health Center's (WMMHC) PATH Program is a grant-funded program administered by the Center for Mental Health Services, a component of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). PATH stands for Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness. WMMHC’s PATH Program consists of one full-time employee and one part-time employee. The program is supervised by a licensed clinical social worker and has been in existence for almost 15 years at WMMHC.

PATH Program services include community-based outreach and inreach, screening/assessment, case management and other support services. Most of the services are provided off-site (Poverello Center, Inc., Union Gospel Mission, Missoula County Detention Facility, Office of Public Assistance, etc.) and our goal is to help individuals overcome homelessness and achieve mental health recovery and stability.

B. DESCRIPTION OF CLIENT GROUP

In order to be eligible for the PATH Program, individuals must be:

1. Homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development definition;
2. Suffering from serious mental illness (or suffering from serious mental illness and from substance abuse) according to Montana’s definition of SDMI, which is based on diagnosis, duration of illness and level of functioning; and
3. Not enrolled in case management services from a community mental health agency or other provider.

Due to the fact that we are screening people for eligibility, we do meet with individuals that do not meet our program criteria either through face-to-face encounters during outreach or through community-based referrals. Because the PATH Program is committed to helping any person that is struggling to meet their needs, we will therefore provide a minimal service and provide linkage to another service, provide basic necessity items (i.e., water, hygiene items, warm clothing) and/or provide information and resources about programs/service in the community.

C. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Assist in program development of policies and procedures
- Collaborate and interface with other agencies/hospitals in the triage process
- Navigate and document within WMMHC electronic health record as well as PATH spreadsheet and quarterly/annual reports
- Conduct intake screenings on new referrals and determine eligibility for services based on diagnosis, funding sources, current benefits, functioning and level of care
- Carry a small caseload
- Understand medications and their use
- Attend local/state meetings pertaining to PATH eligible individuals and the Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness
- Understand the goals of SSI/SSDI Outreach, Advocacy, and Recovery (SOAR) and complete the
online SOAR training
- Receive weekly and as needed supervision from MSW/LCSW to discuss ethics, boundaries, compassionate detachment, self-care, transference and counter-transference, etc.
- Work within the micro, mezzo and macro levels of social work
- Understand clinical interventions, diagnostic skills and systems issues

D. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS
1. Students are expected to have an understanding of person-centered services, culturally competent services and a commitment to providing quality services; for example, utilizing evidence-based and exemplary practices.
2. Students are expected to have an understanding of mental and physical health issues related to homeless individuals, families, and rural residents.
3. Students are expected to work within a strength-based perspective and have a sound understanding of self-determination.
4. Students are expected to have excellent verbal and written communication skills, including, but not limited to, telephone, e-mail and computer programs/systems.
5. Students are expected to exercise discretion and maintain client confidentiality as well as have excellent boundaries with clients.
6. Students are expected to exercise professional judgement in evaluating situations and making decisions.
7. Students are expected to adhere to WMMHC Policies, Procedures, and values, as well as read and adhere to the Social Work Code of Ethics.
8. Students are expected to work cooperatively and communicate effectively with staff and immediate supervisor; communication is the most important expectation of students.
9. Students are expected to have considerable knowledge of the following: principles and practices of social work; human development and behavior; contemporary social and economic conditions; working knowledge of the laws, rules and regulations related to individuals with mental illness; agency policies and procedures governing treatment services; and causes, treatment, needs and problems related to individuals with serious mental illness.