

New Day, Inc.

Billings, Montana

July 24 & 25,

2024

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Site Inspection Conducted by the Mental Disabilities  
Board of Visitors

*Jeremy Hoscheid*

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Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

## INTRODUCTION

### Mental Health Facility reviewed:

New Day, Inc. (Billings)

Sheri Boulter, CEO

### Authority for review:

Montana Code Annotated, 53-21-104

### Purpose of review:

1. To learn about the services provided by New Day in Billings.
2. To assess the degree to which the services provided by New Day are humane, consistent with professional standards, and incorporate Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors standards for services.
3. To recognize excellent services.
4. To make recommendations to New Day for improvement of services.
5. To report to the Governor regarding the status of services provided by New Day.

### Site Review Team:

#### Board Members:

Tyson Schumacher

Melissa Ancell

#### BOV Staff:

Jeremy Hoscheid, Executive Director

Craig Fitch, Attorney

Teslynn Anderson, Consultant

Dennis Nyland, MHO

### Review process:

- Interviews with New Day staff and clients
- Review of treatment activities, tour of New Day facilities
- Review client treatment plans
- Review policy and procedures, organizational structure

## Overview

The Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors (Board) conducted a site review of New Day, Inc. (New Day) on July 24 & 25, 2024, pursuant to M.C.A 53-21-104. During the review process, the Board inspected the physical facilities of the New Day campus, the Ranch, and New Day's adult sober living facility. The Board was also able to visit with multiple clients and staff as well as spend time observing the day treatment program.

New Day is a licensed mental health center that has been providing services for over 30 years. New Day offers therapeutic group homes for youth with SED; Day Treatment/School for Youth; Targeted Case-Management; Adult Treatment Center for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders; Peer Support for Adults; Treatment Court Provider; Sober Living Home for Men; ACT/Prime for Life.

**Mission Statement:** New Day, Inc.'s mission is to create a compassionate environment, inspiring hope and healing for every person so we can all live a meaningful and fulfilling life.

**Vision:** Our vision is to become the preferred care provider through clinical excellence, compassion, respect, dignity, and for progressive transformation where everyone is living the fullness of a healthy mind, body, and spirit.

**Value:** We are a servant leadership organization providing excellence, respect, multi-cultural traditions, & inclusivity.

Similar to other behavioral health providers across the state, New Day has experienced a recent period of significant organizational change. It was clear early on during the review process that New Day had already identified areas of needed improvement and had already taken significant steps toward addressing them, including the evaluation of their physical facilities, risk monitoring, and program effectiveness. New Day had also recently gone through the COA (Council On Accreditation) process and had spent a significant time and energy on the organization's strategic plan. The path New Day is on appears to be looking at all the right pieces in terms of organizational risk, strategy, and operational efficiency. The Board would like to note the willingness of New Day's Board Chairman to be there for the review and an active participant by asking thoughtful and meaningful questions. The Board engagement piece will be critical to this new chapter at New Day.

## **Organizational Planning and Quality Improvement**

New Day produces and regularly reviews an organization strategic plan. New Day provided the Board with a copy of the organization's strategic plan for 2024-2029 that is in line with the 5-year COA (Council on Accreditation) standards. During the strategic planning process New Day conducted listening sessions with staff, utilized consumer satisfaction surveys, as well as input from the Youth Advisory Council. New Day also brought in a consultant who conducted talking circles with staff. It appeared that the strategic planning process was a well thought out approach and that the Leadership Team and New Day Board of Directors utilized the input from a diverse group of stakeholders.

The 5-year strategic plan also included a SWOT analysis and development of the primary goals and focus areas for the organization. Those goals being #1) Increase Awareness of New Day Services, #2) Facility Improvements for Youth Programs. #3) Diversify our Funding Sources, #4) Employer of Choice

New Day maintains regular monitoring of the strategic plan through weekly monitoring of the objectives. The New Day CQI/PQI Committee holds monthly info/data & department goal updates. These updates include all the department leadership and references specific objectives from the 5-year strategic plan. In addition to this regular review and monitoring of the strategic plan the New Day Board of Directors are provided bi-monthly updates.

New Day uses a process of continuous quality improvement to evaluate and improve the organization's activities as it relates to servicing individuals, family members, and guardians. The New Day Quality Improvement process is robust enough to be able to determine various risk factors inherent to residential programs. New Day has a designated Quality Assurance Director who is accountable and responsible for the organization's continuous quality improvement process. During discussions it was found that without an electronic system to enter documentation there is a great amount of manual work that goes into the collection and lag in reporting that data versus having more acute access to data and trends. It was reported to the Board that this topic was actively being worked on.

## **Rights, Responsibilities, and Safety**

New Day defines individual rights and responsibilities and provides this information both verbally and in writing to individuals and family members/guardians. This information is provided in the client's handbook that is given to each individual upon entrance in the program.

New Day actively promotes an individual's access to independent advocacy services by providing this information both verbally and written as well as prominently displaying the contact information for the Board, the Mental Health Ombudsman, and Disability Rights Montana. The Board was able to locate this contact info right beside the phone as well as posted on walls.

New Day has a grievance procedure that is fair, responsive, and easy for individuals and their family members to follow. The grievance form was recently updated to be easier to read and completed by the younger residents in the program. The Board appreciated learning about this update and the patient-centered thinking that went into it. In discussions with staff the Board learned that staff will always try to resolve the concern at the lowest level and will follow up on making sure that patients are satisfied with the grievance resolution.

New Day has policies and procedures which fully implement the requirements of Section 53-21-107 MCA, for detecting, reporting, investigating, determining the validity of, and resolving allegations of abuse and neglect of individuals. During interviews with staff the Board learned more about the organization's abuse and neglect investigation process and staff appeared knowledgeable regarding the reporting requirements of 53-21-107 MCA as well as their role as mandatory reporters.

The Board learned about the de-escalation/restraint program Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) that is utilized by New Day. Staff reported that restraints are utilized as a last resort and only if the individual is harming themselves or others.

New Day debriefs after events that involve any special treatment procedures, aggression by clients against other clients or staff, and client self-harm. The Board was pleased to learn about the retrospective analysis that is included in the debriefing. This is important as it provides both staff and clients with a chance to think about how this incident could have been prevented.

### **Individual, Family Member Participation**

New Day identifies in the individual chart the parameters for communication with family members/guardians in regard to the individual's treatment and looks for ways that they may be involved in treatment and support for their family member.

New Day staff proactively provide adult clients, and – with consent - clients' family member a copy of the treatment plan and all treatment planning/review processes proactively elicit information and discussion from the adult client and their family member(s) if they choose to participate. The responses from the children's program were less clear. It appeared to the Board that the youth and adolescent clients only receive a written copy of their treatment plan if they request one.

The therapist is the primary person responsible for assuring that a client's family members/guardians are identified. The therapist is also responsible for ensuring that the parameters for communication with the client's family/guardian are contained in the patient's chart and a primary point of contact for family members.

Parents/guardians are interviewed during intake for purposes of building a treatment plan and again prior to discharge to assess the discharge readiness and discharge plan for any youth or adolescent patient.

New Day has a youth advisory council board designed to give the kids a voice and show kids how to advocate for themselves. The idea behind the council is to collaborate with clients to create programs that the clients truly want and benefit from. Clients who are involved in the council seem to exhibit strong levels of pride in their accomplishments and hope for themselves in the future. The Board found that the youth advisory council is a tremendous strength of the youth program that should remain in place. The clients who were interviewed said that they truly believe their voice is heard and respected by staff.

### **Cultural Effectiveness**

New Day's commitment to providing culturally informed services to traditionally underserved minority populations in Montana is commendable. Staff appeared knowledgeable about cultural, ethnic, social, and spiritual issues relevant to the mental health treatment of the people served. Individual treatment plans describe and identify cultural, ethnic, social, spiritual issues and/or gender/sexual identity issues.

While New Day might not have a specific plan dedicated to hiring an employee that is part of a minority population served, there are several self-identified Native American staff, including more than one clinician who can assist in utilizing culturally appropriate/sensitive clinical interventions.

The facility analyzes the cultural, ethnic, religious, racial demographics of the service area with a specific emphasis on American Indian people. New Day has forged partnerships with several organizations and groups to enhance the support provided to their clients. New Day has collaborated with the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leader's Council which has enabled youth to engage in culturally enriching programs.

The cultural room located at the New Day administrative building provides an authentic space for prayer and smudging. It would be beneficial for clients if there was a similar room/building structure for prayer and smudging located at the ranch rather than just at the administrative building. **The Board would recommend that Indigenous tribal flags be on display in both the administrative building, and more importantly at the ranch for the clients to see daily to strengthen connection to culture and identity.**

The staff interviewed did acknowledge activities were offered to clients, for example Pow Wow, field trips to parks, immersion camps, with storytelling and other Native American centered activities.

New Day does not currently have a partnership with any community churches or places of worship. **The Board would recommend that New Day explore these partnerships with community churches and places of worship to ensure that clients have opportunities to practice their religious beliefs.**

### **Staff Competence, Training, Supervision, and Relationships with Residents**

As part of the review process, the Board reviewed job position descriptions provided by New Day. New Day clearly defines optimum knowledge and competence expectations, specific to working with individuals with mental illness or emotional disturbance for each staff position providing services.

New Day maintains a written training curriculum for new staff and has a two-day orientation for new employees as well as a competency test. In addition to the orientation, the staff will also complete shadow shifts in the respective treatment programs. It appears that New Day has focused significant efforts to increase training through both software and content enhancements. New Day appears to be focused on providing subject-level courses along with electives to staff and had a reasonable process for working through competency checks with new hires.

Staff receive on-going training and during discussions it was discovered that the organization was exploring opportunities for staff to attend additional training and conferences to further enhance the quality of care provided by New Day. Several New Day staff shared that it'd be beneficial for all staff to receive more in-depth trauma informed training, and more frequent training to ensure effective techniques. Trainings should focus primarily on "bottom-up" therapies that focus on the physiological and somatic aspects of trauma which must be addressed before doing any cognitive work. One example of daily somatic work would be combining gym time with somatic exercises/movement to deepen the client's relationship with their nervous system. Including psychoeducation from Polyvagal theory is highly encouraged combined with somatic work to help individuals reconnect with and communicate about their bodily sensations, regulate their nervous system, and release stored trauma energy. New Day would benefit from hiring EMDR therapists because it's the most effective trauma treatment (another example of bottom-up therapy).

Staff at New Day receive annual training on suicide awareness and intervention strategies to recognize warning signs and how to respond. Supervisors within New Day are held accountable for monitoring the way staff address and treat individuals to ensure that individuals receive effective treatment as described in the individual's treatment plan. New Day has a dedicated staff member who provides this training to supervisors.

New Day periodically assesses current staff to identify and address knowledge and competence deficiencies. This is done as part of the organization's annual employee review that is completed by the employee's supervisor. As part of the review process staff are also asked to complete a self-appraisal. The supervisor and employee will review the documents together. As a new

employee there is a 6-month probation period after which the first employee review is completed. Montana does allow for an employer to set in policy a probationary period up to 1 year. It may be beneficial for New Day to explore this option to allow for further evaluation of a new hire to determine fit and performance. New Day may also benefit from evaluation of competency with employees by implementing a more robust platform for determining if a new hire is going to be successful, targeting interventions if they are only slightly misaligned.

Professional staff maintain a consistent presence in all treatment environments and interact with direct care staff and individuals. The Board learned that the treatment team meets weekly to discuss any issues or concerns with the individual patient. New Day also described how the lead MHA at the group home works to display, teach, and model healthy, constructive, and respectful interactions with clients. The Board also learned that in addition to spending time regularly interacting with direct care staff and individuals, the professional staff maintain an open-door policy and will make frequent check-ins with staff.

### **Treatment and Support**

A written treatment plan is in place and implemented for individuals receiving services at New Day. The individual treatment plans reviewed by the Board used long, dense explanations of problems and symptoms that contained a number of large or complex words. These treatment plans would be difficult for many clients to understand, especially the youth and adolescent clients that are served by New Day. **The Board would recommend that New Day review the language used in treatment plans and ensure it is easily understood by all clients.**

The treatment plans that were observed did not specify what therapy modalities and techniques will be used to help a client meet their treatment goal. The treatment goals were not measurable which means it's impossible to track and assess progress and which interventions are most effective for the individual. Identifying specific interventions that will be used with each client also helps the direct care staff stay accountable with providing clinical care. **The Board would recommend that New Day look to utilize an electronic healthcare record system within the organization.** This would allow all staff members to document in the same format to better track treatment goal progress. In addition, an electronic medical record system could be beneficial in managing clinician burn out.

The children's program appeared to provide inconsistent or uncertain responses to treatment planning questions. The clinical director provided a clear answer to the questions about the treatment plan processes for the children's services, but further interviews with staff indicate that New Day might want to review the expectations about when the treatment planning process starts, who is invited/expected to participate in the process, and what types of information are gathered to support the treatment plans. **The Board would recommend that New Day provide an in-service training to focus on expectations around the treatment planning process.**



New Day ensures that a thorough physical medical examination and a dental exam has been performed within one year of the individual entering the service. The medication nurse is responsible for ensuring this process happens and that the medical/dental reports and summaries are appropriately documented. New Day ensures that clients are linked to primary health services and ensures that individuals have access to needed health care during treatment with New Day.

After interviewing clients and staff, it is evident that the staff at New Day are dedicated and want to help their clients reach their treatment goals. While the intentions are clear, there is room for improvement. This is expected given the organizational changes that have occurred in the past few years. One New Day employee shared that they would like staff to be person-centered with one another just as they are with clients. During interviews with youth clients, they reported feeling overwhelmed by the staffs' interpersonal relationships and drama/conflict. It's imperative that details about staff and their personal lives are not discussed at work, even if a client is not in eyesight. **The Board would recommend that New Day explore opportunities to provide staff with in-service training focused on person-centered relationships and professional care giving.**

The discipline system that New Day uses has come a long way from where it started, according to staff, and still needs adjusting. A youth client reports that if clients drop down a level (in a point-based system) then the client is not allowed to speak to anybody else in the lodge and must raise their hand and wait to be called on to speak to staff. This is very punitive and will likely cause clients to develop negative cognitions about themselves and others, which is the opposite of healthy treatment. An easy to implement person-centered activity would be to celebrate the clients' birthday (regardless of point system). This activity could be more special without breaking the bank. For example, allowing the child to pick out a game to play with peers after having cake and singing 'happy birthday' can produce feelings of purpose, connection, and empathy. It's important that the discipline system used to shape behaviors never invalidates the existence of a client; birthdays are not a tool to leverage behavior because every human deserves a day to celebrate their existence.

Both clients and New Day staff would like there to be more classes offered that provide clients with real-life skills such as cooking, doing taxes, applying for insurance, jobs, finding housing, and house/lawn maintenance. **The Board recommends that New Day explore opportunities and programs to allow clients more exposure to real-life skills to better prepare clients for their discharge.**

In true wrap-around services there is continuity between documentation and techniques used by staff to better help the client. More group trainings will allow staff to feel and act competently and ensure that everyone is learning the same thing. Clinicians at New Day would like to be able to teach/train direct staff how to implement therapeutic interventions appropriately to the clients. Clients should have a copy of their treatment goal, and to help clients remember and feel motivated about working on a goal it should be seen daily whether it's on a client's wall or in a notebook. It may also be helpful for New Day staff to develop a safe word to use when staff notices that they themselves are feeling triggered with a client, or have it be used in a way in which a staff member uses a code word (i.e. watermelon) which tells another staff member, "hey, I notice you're triggered, let me take over while you go regulate." This technique is used

amongst direct staff to help prevent further incidents and overall burn out. It would be ideal for each lodge to have their own assigned clinician. New Day clients would benefit from at least 120 minutes of individual therapy a week; two 60-minute therapy sessions per week is a higher level of care found in just outpatient treatment for example. Two 60-minute sessions a week provide clients' brains with the repetition needed for neuroplasticity.

Outpatient programming at New Day is coordinated in a bright, beautiful building known as the Eagle's Nest. Located on the main campus, the Eagle's Nest has several features that are culturally connected to Native Americans and meeting spaces that are filled with natural light, color, and features. The Eagle's Nest also houses a few administrative staff, likely to have ambient supervision of the space and appears to provide reasonable confidentiality to clients who will be visiting.

The Youth Day Treatment Program and School includes a large gymnasium/recreation facility, and the classrooms are in an adjacent building on the corporate campus. The Board was able to observe a volleyball session where the kids were so exceptionally supportive of each other, which was very rewarding to see. The Board noted that the Recreation and Education Services are supported by very passionate staff. The Board was also able to observe classrooms, computer labs, and areas for the youth to hang out. It was reported to the Board the food services are also primarily done in this building.

It was noted that the medication assistant has an office within the day school, and there is a space for the contracted Physician's Assistant (PA) to do evaluations and medication changes. Throughout discussions about the process and prescribing protocols the Board felt comfortable that New Day is doing the right things to get needed feedback from youth, family members/guardians, and staff to make and monitor the individual client's medications appropriately. In discussing medication with staff, it was stated that staff felt the medical/professional staff were easily available for consultation and discussion when youth were having issues. Telemedicine is also available through a contracted provider.

The school had a lot of creative features that were less about expensive architecture and more about clever and creative employees including the use of lighting, color, and all the trappings of a "mainstream" school building. Lines on the floor helped kids line up in an orderly fashion and people were frequently stopping to talk and interact with kids. The Board noted that it was a very warm and inviting space. The Board learned that Superintendent also provides the crisis intervention trainer for the facility.

New Day operates group homes on a single campus (The Ranch) along with a men's sober living home at a different location in Billings. The Ranch and Equine Program is located a little outside of town on a sizeable property that includes a riding arena, horses, and a fair amount of space. It was noted during the tour that there is not a lot of shade on the campus due to lack of natural shade and exterior structures. **The Board would recommend that New Day explore options for the construction of an outdoor area or gazebo that may help improve the outdoor usability of the space.**

Nearby trails are accessible from the campus, but there is not much within walkable distance (e.g. schools, restaurants, etc.). In discussions with staff, it was clear that frequent opportunities to get transportation into town are created throughout the day. Primarily, these opportunities come from being bussed to the Day Treatment – School program and then kids have additional opportunities from transportation from there. It appeared throughout discussions with clients that they felt they have a reasonable amount of flexibility for transportation on the weekends.

There is an onsite kitchen at the group home facility, but it was reported that most meals are made in the Day Treatment - School and then transported to the group home facility. Meaning that the group homes act as more of a warming kitchen and dining hall type facility. The units did not have kitchens and it was noted that in the facility plan for two new group homes there would not be kitchens. While there is no requirement to have a kitchen, the Board would encourage New Day to consider roughing in kitchen plumbing and electrical in case they'd like to change that in the future. Preparing and cooking a meal can be a valuable coping skill for kids, as well as an important activity for daily living (ADL).

Substance Use Programming comes through ASAM Level 1, 2.1, and 2.5 along with Canyon House Men's Sober Living. Programming is offered to youth with co-occurring needs in Day Treatment and Group Homes as well as to adults.

### **Access and Entry**

New Day services are convenient to the Billings community and overall New Day maintains good working relationships with local healthcare providers within the area. New Day also has an ongoing partnership with Youth Dynamics and Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch. New Day also works closely with Montana's Child and Family Services as well as Probation and Parole. New Day also has described their relationship with the local school district and described how the Day Treatment program fits into that relationship.

Upon admission, individuals receive their psychiatric assessment within a week. New Day has a partnership with Big Sky Psychiatry for psychiatric and medication management services.

New Day conducts admissions during regular business hours and does have an after-hours crisis line available for clients who need assistance after-hours. New Day has a dedicated admissions review team that maintains a system for prioritizing referrals according to risk, urgency, dysfunction, and disability. This is an internal review process and is reportedly fairly streamlined.

**The Board would recommend that New Day explore opportunities to develop and offer more services for the young adult population 18–21-year-olds.** This is a common frustration the Board hears about as this age range typically falls outside of children's mental health programs and for a variety of reasons, these young adults have a lower overall participation rate in recommended mental health services.

### **Continuity of Services through Transitions**

Within New Day, the therapist proactively facilitates communication and coordination between New Day and any new service provider of the client. This included transfers to higher level care as well as discharge or a step down to a lower intensity level of care.

During a temporary stay in a higher level of care, the therapist would be the main point of contact with the staff at the facility that provides the higher level of care.

When an individual exits services, the facility provides information on the range of relevant services and support available in the community to them and their family members/guardian.

New Day has close working relationships with other behavioral health providers in the Billings community and across the state. New Day works closely with other providers to help ensure that an individual transitioning out of services has the proper services in place prior to that discharge occurring.

### **Overall**

The Board really enjoyed spending time with the staff and clients of New Day and getting to learn more about the organization and programs they provide. The Leadership Team at New Day seems to clearly understand the important role that New Day provides not only within the Billings community, but within Montana's statewide behavioral health system. It appeared to the Board that New Day has a renewed focus dedicated to revitalizing the organization after a period of significant change. Throughout the site review it was clear that New Day has a clear plan and has self-recognized areas to improve upon. Maintaining this continual organizational improvement will ensure the future success of New Day. The Board is excited to see what the New Day of 5-10 years looks like and the way the organization has further developed to provide for progressive transformation where everyone is living the fullness of a healthy mind, body, and spirit.

## Recommendations

**The Board recommends:** That Indigenous tribal flags be on display in both the administrative building, and more importantly at the ranch for the clients to see daily to strengthen connection to culture and identity.

**The Board recommends:** That New Day explore these partnerships with community churches and places of worship to ensure that clients have opportunities to practice their religious beliefs.

**The Board recommends:** That New Day review the language used in treatment plans and ensure it is easily understood by all clients.

**The Board recommends:** That New Day look to utilize an electronic healthcare record system within the organization.

**The Board recommends:** That New Day explore opportunities to provide staff with in-service training focused on person-centered relationships and professional care giving.

**The Board recommends:** That New Day explore opportunities and programs to allow clients more exposure to real-life skills to better prepare clients for their discharge.

**The Board recommends:** That New Day explore options for the construction of an outdoor area or gazebo that may help improve the outdoor usability of the space.

**The Board recommends:** That New Day explore opportunities to develop and offer more services for the young adult population 18–21-year-olds.