

Nursing Leaders Across Two Campuses Strengthen Behavioral Health Care in MASSACHUSETTS



In a time when the demand for mental health services continues to rise across the country, the nursing leadership teams at MiraVista Behavioral Health Center in Holyoke and TaraVista Behavioral Health Center in Devens are working together—despite nearly 80 miles of physical distance—to meet a growing need with compassion, expertise, and a unified vision.

Led by Chief Nursing Officer Karyn Rossacci, DNP, RN, along with Associate Chief Nursing Officers Elizabeth “Beth” Sandstrom, RN, BSN at MiraVista and Michelle Mascitti, RN, BSN at TaraVista, the two campuses share an approach to behavioral health nursing that centers on dignity, safety, and human connection. The trio collaborates daily, coordinates patient-care strategies across

sites, and supports more than one hundred behavioral health nurses whose work is essential to the stability and wellbeing of thousands of individuals each year.

Their shared leadership comes at a pivotal moment. National data show that one in five adults will experience a mental health condition this year, and one in seven adolescents is struggling with anxiety, depression, or another behavioral health challenge. Hospital emergency departments across Massachusetts report significant increases in patients seeking psychiatric evaluation, often with wait times that place additional strain on families already in crisis.

Amid these realities, the role of behavioral health nurses has never been more critical.

A Field Grounded in Compassion

Behavioral health nursing differs from other nursing specialties not in the level of skill required, but in the type of presence it asks of clinicians. Nurses in psychiatric settings often provide the first feeling of safety a patient experiences when they walk through the door. They are trained to de-escalate crisis, observe subtle shifts in mood or behavior, guide patients through daily routines, and build trusting relationships that form the foundation of effective treatment.

“Our work requires patience, perspective, and heart,” said Rossacci, who oversees nursing across both centers. “Behavioral health nursing asks us to meet people exactly where they are, without judgment. Every day, our teams show up for individuals who may feel frightened or overwhelmed. It’s work that matters deeply, and I’m incredibly proud of the compassionate culture our nurses uphold.”

That culture is strengthened by the partnership between the two campuses. Though they operate independently, MiraVista and TaraVista function with a shared philosophy, common safety standards, and a leadership team that treats challenges as collective ones.

Two Campuses, One Nursing Community

At MiraVista, Associate Chief Nursing Officer, Beth Sandstrom leads a dedicated team that cares for adolescents and adults needing inpatient psychiatric treatment. Sandstrom said behavioral health nursing requires a balance of clinical expertise and human understanding—qualities she sees daily among her staff.

“Our patients trust us during some of the most difficult and vulnerable moments of their lives,” Sandstrom said. “That trust is a tremendous responsibility. Every nurse who joins us becomes part of a team committed to creating stability, consistency, and genuine connection—things that help healing take root.”

Across the state at TaraVista, Mascitti echoes that sentiment. While her team supports children through adults across a range of psychiatric needs, the philosophy is the same: care delivered with respect, communication, and teamwork.

“Even with the miles between us, we function as one nursing community,” Mascitti said. “We collaborate, support one another’s goals, and share ideas freely. That connectedness strengthens patient care and fosters an environment where both staff and patients feel safe and supported.”

The collegiality between the three leaders has set a tone that resonates throughout both organizations. Nurses are encouraged to offer feedback, participate in professional development, and contribute to continuous improvements in patient care. The leadership structure—one CNO guiding two Associate CNOs—creates alignment while allowing each campus the flexibility to meet the specific needs of the populations they serve.



MiraVista, Holyoke, MA

Meeting a Growing Need

Demand for inpatient psychiatric care has grown steadily in recent years, accelerated by pandemic-related stress, social pressures on youth, and limited outpatient resources. Nationally, suicide is now the second leading cause of death among teenagers, and mental health emergencies among adults continue to strain community hospitals unequipped to provide specialized care.

Studies show that access to prompt, quality inpatient treatment can significantly reduce long-term complications, prevent repeated hospitalizations, and improve outcomes. Behavioral health nurses play a central role in that process, not only administering medications or conducting assessments, but offering encouragement, structure, and therapeutic presence during a patient's stay.

At The Vistas, that means making the units feel safe, predictable, and staffed by professionals who genuinely care.

A Welcoming Environment for Nurses Considering the Field

For those exploring behavioral health nursing as a career, the teams at MiraVista and TaraVista say the field offers something uniquely rewarding.

"It's purposeful work," Rossacci said. "Our nurses see progress that may seem small on the surface—a patient engaging in group therapy, someone expressing hope for the first time in days or weeks—but those moments represent meaningful steps toward recovery."

Sandstrom agrees, noting that new nurses often discover strengths they didn't know they had. "This is a place where your calm, your empathy, and your ability to listen become part of the healing process."

Mascitti added, "The support system here is real. Whether you are new to psychiatry or experienced in the field, you are surrounded by colleagues who want you to succeed."



A Unified Mission, Backed by Heart

Across 80 miles, two campuses, and countless stories of recovery, the nursing leaders at The Vistas remain committed to the same mission: delivering exceptional, compassionate care to individuals in need of mental health treatment. Their partnership demonstrates that distance is no barrier to connection—and that when leadership is aligned, the impact resonates throughout an entire organization.

At a time when the state needs behavioral health nurses more than ever, The Vistas continue to build teams defined by resilience, collaboration, and hope.



TaraVista, Devens, MA

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