

### In the Spotlight: Becky Payne

It is ironic the way things in life often come full circle and fall right into place. When Becky Payne started her career more than 30 years ago, she never imagined she would work in health care.

Long before Becky became Wexford Health’s Health Care Unit Administrator (HCUA) for Yavapai County Detention Facility (AZ), she started her career as a certified police officer and she really enjoyed working in the community. After a couple years on the force, and many first-responder experiences with injured or sick people, she decided to take an Emergency Medical Technician class. “I was taking an EMT class and the Medic teaching it convinced me to go into Nursing. I had previously never considered it!” says Becky. From there she set the wheels in motion to go back to school and begin a career in nursing.

As a registered nurse, she worked for almost ten (10) years in various positions in different settings throughout Arizona. It was when she saw an ad for an opening with Wexford Health at the Yavapai County Jail that she felt her career path had come full circle. To start in law enforcement and then go into nursing, and then finally correctional nursing – it was the perfect fit. As they say, “the rest is history”, and she has served as the Jail’s HCUA ever since.

“In my role the best part of my job is the interpersonal interactions I have every day with the medical and security teams. Working with these fun and skilled folks makes my day.” And she really means it. Everyone at the jail works together and they all lean on, and learn from, each other a great deal.

When looking at the work she has accomplished at Yavapai over the past 14 years, she is most proud of the Restoration to Competency (RTC) program. RTC is Yavapai’s innovative approach to restore the defendant to competency for court by educating the defendant on the court process and also assessing the individual’s cognitive gains. The program has been very successful, and is now duplicated in other counties across the state. “I’m quite proud of the RTC program we put together for Yavapai and the amazing way our team has acclimated to the extra responsibilities they inherited



Becky Payne, RN, CCHP Health Services/Restoration to Competency Program Administrator



when we started it. Everyone stepped up to make it a comprehensive and efficient program which has enjoyed tremendous success for nearly a decade now. It is a real financial God-send for our home county of Yavapai as well!”, says Becky.

Moving forward, she is pleased to see an increased emphasis on addressing mental illness in corrections, and improved release coordination and re-entry services. Years ago she was involved in the development of the first mental health unit at Yavapai Jail, and she has seen first-hand the benefits and importance of those services. To add to that unit, the jail is developing a women’s mental health unit and program – another crucial piece in the care the jail needs to provide.

As Becky says, “Yavapai and Wexford Health are never at a loss for projects here at the jail”. The list of ongoing projects and potential opportunities that Becky may be working on may be long, but for her the work is satisfying and it is crucial for the community. For example, working with facility leadership, Becky created programming that provides homeless (or rideless) inmates with a social worker to coordinate a safe place to go upon release, and also recently assisted in writing a grant for additional monies to provide safe transportation to released inmates. In addition, with an eye the opioid epidemic that is sweeping the country, Yavapai and Wexford Health started the first Vivitrol Release Program in Arizona. On March 1, 2018, they added a Naloxone Release Program to help prevent opioid overdoses in the community.



As a former first responder, she knows how important it is to study the results of programs like these and also ensure the continuation of support for released offenders with drug addictions. She is now working to procure better statistical data on the recipients’ follow-up care in the community, and has met with the Jail Commander and

other staff to see how they can benefit from a large state grant that is focused on enhancing opioid addiction in municipalities throughout the state.

It may seem like Becky is really busy with projects at the Jail, and for the most part that is true because she always has multiple projects on her plate, but it is just another day for Becky. Outside of work at the jail, she cherishes her family, and any family time she can get, and also her volunteer work. As the Chairwoman of a state-wide group of correctional nurse leaders, she gets to learn from, and compare, practices with health care staff and leaders from the other 14 jails in Arizona. “I love hearing how some have found successful ways to overcome the challenges of correctional health care, along with being able to help others with the experiences we’ve had in Yavapai.”