

Employee Spotlight

Meet Brianna Gillis, Senior Services Case Manager

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“Brianna goes above and beyond every time. She is patient, kind, caring, and sincere. A great team player and an exemplary employee,” raves Robin Covington, EBCAP’s Director of Elder Services, as she relates the many ways Brianna Gillis contributes to the success of the Senior Services team. As a Senior Services Case Manager, Brianna applies her extensive behavioral health skills and knowledge to help seniors connect to an array of resources, ultimately, helping them remain in the community and avoiding hospitalization or nursing home placement. “I strive to ensure that they get culturally competent, trauma informed, and compassionate care,” Brianna relates. “Especially during the COVID pandemic, when many of our elders and their families are vulnerable and isolated,” she adds.

Brianna began her career in the field of justice studies and mental health. She soon realized her passion was working for elders and elder justice. “It’s fulfilling for me to work with elders,” she explains. “I’ve always really loved the elderly population ever since I was young. I’m kind of like an old soul, maybe that’s part of the reason,” she adds. Brianna talks about her family and the influence they had on her career choice. Having several family members working in social services, and witnessing how they helped others, inspired Brianna as a youth. She credits her family’s devotion to others as playing a big role in her chosen profession.

As part of the 10-member team that comprises EBCAP’s Senior Services Department,

Brianna works closely with several entities to ensure her clients receive vital services. She and her fellow case managers receive referrals from the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging, physicians, family members, and other care providers to help elders connect to such services as home care services, social service case management, assisted living case management, adult daycare options, and counseling services. “We want to make sure our seniors are getting the resources and services they need to keep them in the community as long as possible,” explains Brianna. “It’s essential for many of them. They want to stay in their homes and maintain their independence,” she adds.

Networking with EBCAP’s vast support services is also a key component to ensuring Brianna’s clients maintain their health and well-being. “Every EBCAP employee I have collaborated with has been kind, informative, and dedicated to providing the best care to our clients. It is so refreshing to know that each department -- whether it’s the Senior Congregate Nutrition Program, behavioral health, LIHEAP, or so many others -- communicates effectively with one another to ensure our clients’ needs are being met,” states Brianna. In addition to EBCAP services, she also mentions the collaborations her department has with community partners like Neighborhood Health Plan of RI, the Rhode Island Minority Elder Task Force, senior centers, and many home care agencies.

Providing elders with much needed support services has never been more critical due to

the COVID-19 pandemic. As a very vulnerable population, seniors have been impacted on multiple fronts due to the pandemic. Not only affected by the isolation from family, friends, and critical services, many seniors are immune compromised and suffer from other health issues that make them susceptible to contracting the coronavirus. “COVID has really shifted things for our clients,” relates Brianna. “Not only is there a CNA shortage, but our clients are getting sick and some are dying from COVID, and adapting to remote care has been challenging for so many, especially elders who don’t have the technology needed to effectively communicate,” she laments. She adds that adapting to working remotely has been a learning curve for everyone involved. “For me, I very much love doing community outreach so it was a big shift from going out all the time to working remotely. I just can’t wait to go back to the office, see my colleagues, and get back into the community to visit my clients. I really miss it,” stated in her usual mix of passion and optimism.

When asked to talk about her proudest moment at EBCAP, Brianna is very reflective in her response. “It changes routinely. I feel proud when a client tells me that they are thankful that I took the time to listen to their story and help them. I feel proud when my teammates tell me that they think I did great on a project or that I helped them accomplish a goal of their own. And I felt proud when I was nominated for the Employee Spotlight. Not everybody has the opportunity to hear a thank you or words of kindness and encouragement. I am so grateful that I have,” she concludes.