

SAMARITAN HISTORY

The Samaritan program began in Elkhart, Indiana in 1972 when a physician, two parish pastors, and a seminary professor observed that by working together, ministers, therapists, and physicians were very effective in helping people with stress-related problems. This team approach became the foundation of the Samaritan program. Samaritan counselors believe that there is a close relationship of mind, body, spirit, and community, and that optimal health care involves consideration of all four.

In 1979, the Samaritan Institute was formed as a non-profit corporation to unite and develop counseling centers using the Samaritan name and model. To provide the growing Center network with more cost-effective, centralized management services, in 1983 the Institute relocated its headquarters to Denver.

Today, the Samaritan program is one of the largest providers of professional counseling. There are 481 Samaritan Center offices in 389 cities in the United States and Tokyo, Japan. Using cost-effective management practices and low-cost, sponsor-provided facilities Centers are able to offer counseling at affordable rates – typically about two-thirds the cost of other providers. As a result, more people can receive help.

Samaritan Centers employ licensed counselors who are trained in both theology and psychology. Additionally, they understand and respect the religious perspectives of each counselee and, if appropriate, incorporate these views into the therapeutic process. Local physicians provide assessment and consultation in cooperation with the Center's resident counseling staff. These combined skills allow for complete assessment of each counselee's needs.

Centers offer outpatient counseling, wellness programs, and consultation and training for clergy and other professionals. The Samaritan program is supported by congregations of 40 denominations and faith groups and also serves people who do not claim a religious affiliation.

The Samaritan Institute starts new Centers, consults with the established Centers on management issues, promotes the service nationally, and develops programs to strengthen the overall network. To assure consistent quality at every Center, the Institute also maintains a rigorous accreditation process.

During its 37 year history, the Institute has started 55 Centers and has helped in the development of an additional 88 established programs that affiliated with the Samaritan network. The experience and resources of the Institute greatly enhance the likelihood of a Center's success.

The growth of the Samaritan program has been in direct response to the needs of congregations and communities as they realize the emotional and physical costs of stress. The growth is also a tribute to the thousands of people who have realized the importance of having a local Center and who have made the Center a reality through faith and hard work.