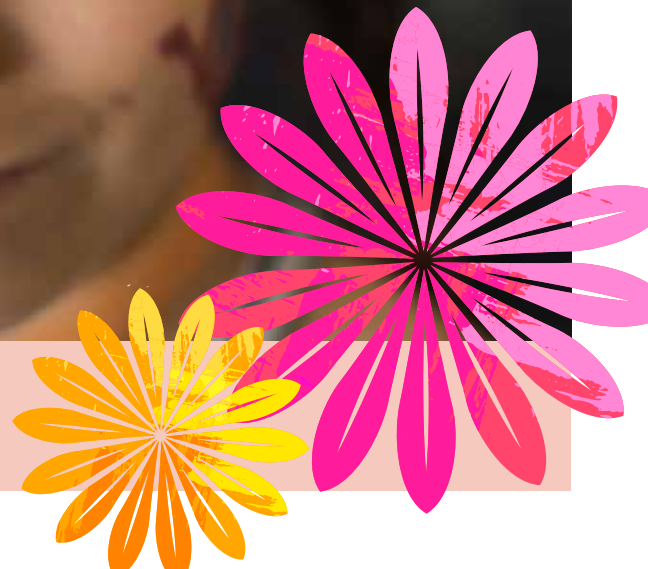




IWS FAMILY  
HEALTH

VOICES OF CARE





## Sandra Frank, APN, DNP

### FROM CRISIS TO COLLABORATIVE CARE: SUPPORT FOR MOMS AND TEENS

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**“I never imagined my IWS Family Health team would respond to my request for behavioral intervention so quickly. Our compassionate and skilled caregivers are a trusted resource for mothers because they know that care goes beyond clinic hours.”**

**\*All names, photos, and identifying details changed for patient privacy.**

On a Saturday evening when the clinic was closed, Sandy Frank, APN, DNP, one of IWS Family Health’s dedicated primary care providers, received a distressing call from a mother who had been her patient for several years. Thankfully, at IWS Family Health, our Medical and Behavioral Health teams work in seamless collaboration, ensuring families have access to coordinated support and around-the-clock crisis intervention services.

#### **Established Trust is Critical to Crisis Intervention**

Because patient-centered care is at the heart of everything we do, Sandy Frank was deeply grateful that mother, Mariana\*, felt safe enough to call when she discovered her teen daughter, Ava\*, was engaging in self-harming



behavior. **While the news was alarming, the mother's swift action, combined with the longstanding trust between Sandy and her teenage daughter, meant the family would not face this crisis alone.** Most importantly, intervention treatment could begin.

Sandy promptly conducted a thorough safety assessment to evaluate Ava's immediate risk, screening for suicidal ideation, access to harmful objects, and overall emotional stability. Sandy also mentioned that because self-harming behaviors can arise from a range of complex factors, it is important that moms respond with compassionate introspection and analysis, not self-criticism.

As part of the daughter's intervention plan, Sandy also assessed the mother's emotional well-being and provided caregiver-specific resources and support. **"I've been caring for Mariana's physical and mental health for several years, and I was very familiar with her home life and how she typically handled stressful situations. It was my responsibility to continue looking after the mother's health while also providing support to her daughter,"** stated Sandy.

### **Self-Care Isn't Selfish; It's Essential for Family Well-being**

IWS Family Health providers pay attention to the needs of the whole person and in many cases, that means supporting a child's support system too. During moments of crisis involving a child, a mother's mental health is just as critical as the child's. **Strengthening a caregiver's emotional regulation and resilience has a direct impact on a child's recovery and sense of safety. The Behavioral Health team at IWS Family Health encourages practical strategies such as journaling, meditation, establishing a personal support system and recovery plan, and seeking counseling.**

After assessing the situation and reassuring the mother, Sandy immediately contacted Denise Vidal Gonzalez, LCSW, affectionately known as Dee, IWS Family Health's Director of Behavioral Health Integrated Counseling, to establish an urgent plan of care. **Dee responded without delay, sharing crisis intervention resources and connecting with Karen Godines, LCSW, Ava's established therapist at IWS Family Health.** Within the hour, Karen reached out to Ava and Mariana to conduct a more comprehensive

risk assessment and develop a safety plan. **Karen's safety plan included identifying coping strategies, listing trusted adults for support, removing or securing harmful objects within the home, and outlining actionable steps if Ava's urges escalate.**

### **Dynamic Coordination and Continued Care**

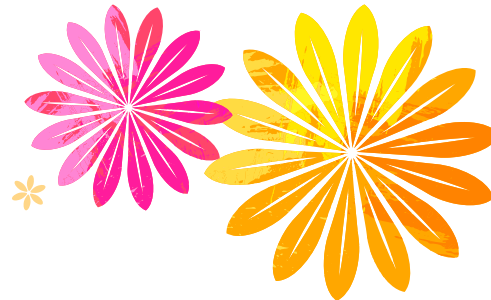
Based on the assessment findings, she was referred to the emergency department for further psychiatric evaluation to ensure her immediate safety and medical stability. Following evaluation, she returned home with a follow-up appointment for Behavioral Health Integrated Counseling services and an active, carefully developed safety plan in place.

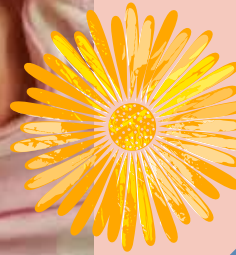
The swift, coordinated response from Dee, Karen, and Sandy ensured the patient received real-time, comprehensive support. Their ability to communicate efficiently and align around a unified treatment strategy allowed for ongoing collaboration, continuous monitoring, and sustained counseling services tailored to Ava's evolving needs.

This situation exemplifies the dynamic coordination and continuity of care that defines IWS Family Health. "I'm so proud to be part of IWS Family Health," Sandy shared. **"Here, children move seamlessly between services, receiving coordinated support designed to help them thrive.** And mothers can plan with confidence, knowing we are there for them at every stage of their child's development."



**"A mother showing care for herself is also caring for her child."**







## Arlene Wallace, CNM

### BEYOND CHECKUPS: PRENATAL CARE THAT TREATS THE WHOLE WOMAN

Every pregnancy is unique—even for mothers who have already given birth. For this reason, providers like Arlene Wallace, Certified Nurse Midwife, approach each pregnancy as a distinct clinical and emotional experience, offering holistic, patient-centered care as a mother’s physical, psychological, and social needs evolve.

#### **A Joyful Surprise Leads to Expert Care**

After moving to Chicago with her young child and husband, Sol\* came to IWS Family Health for treatment under the care of Dr. Ioffe. The couple had previously been told they would likely be unable to conceive, making it an unexpected and joyful surprise when they

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**“I want all my patients to experience their pregnancy and birth in the most positive way possible. I listen with intention when my patients speak. I pay close attention to even the slightest signs of discomfort.”**

learned she was pregnant. Sol began prenatal care with Arlene Wallace, CNM. At her initial visit, she appeared joyful; however, her depression screening revealed a depression diagnosis.

### Making the Connection Between Mental Health and Pregnancy

During pregnancy, providers give the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) to screen for depression diagnoses. Following birth, mothers are screened for postpartum depression at newborn visits using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS). **These evidence-based screenings allow providers to identify mood disorders early, guide treatment planning, reduce maternal morbidity, and improve both maternal and infant outcomes.**

Our providers took Sol's results seriously. Untreated severe depression and anxiety during pregnancy are associated with increased risks of preterm birth, low birth weight, poor adherence to prenatal care, impaired maternal-fetal attachment, and postpartum depression. After a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation, she was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder.

Sol began counseling services through a trusted IWS Family Health partner that provides trauma-informed behavioral health services, family support programming, and culturally responsive mental health care. Establishing a structured care plan with consistent follow-up was essential to supporting both her health and the healthy development of her baby.



**“It is common for pregnant individuals to experience a mixture of joy, anticipation, anxiety, and fear upon learning they are expecting.**

**However, depressive symptoms, may not always be outwardly visible. For this reason, universal depression screening during pregnancy is considered a best practice in obstetric care.”**



## Empowering Moms to Experience Childbirth in an Affirming Way

Fortuitously, Sol's therapist was also pregnant and shared the same due date. This shared experience fostered empathy and trust. When Sol advocated for herself while discussing a treatment plan for her diagnosis, her therapist honored those choices and focused on empowering her through cognitive behavioral strategies, stress-reduction techniques, and structured emotional support. **This collaborative, values-aligned approach helped Sol feel confident, respected, and fully supported, allowing her to navigate pregnancy and childbirth in a way that affirmed her experience.**

During her pregnancy, she developed severe lower back pain and was referred to Physical Therapy at a partner hospital, where she attended regular sessions for several months. Her physical therapist recommended a specialized maternity support belt, which IWS Family Health care coordinators helped obtain. **With coordinated care, her pain became manageable, and her mobility and quality of life improved.**

Two weeks after the baby was born, the new family of three returned to IWS Family Health for follow-up. Sol's mood was stable, and her depression screening score had returned to a normal range.

**IWS Family Health begins seeing newborns as early as two days old, providing physical examinations and screenings, weight monitoring and follow-up, and immunizations.** Sol's baby continued pediatric care at IWS Family Health, ensuring continuity between maternal and infant services.

Arlene notes, "It was important for me that postpartum depression is continuously monitored at the newborn visits, as the risk for postpartum depression remains elevated in the first year after delivery. **Because IWS Family Health connects the postpartum depression screening to pediatric care, we can promote healthy maternal-infant bonding, reduce risks of developmental challenges in children, and decrease the likelihood of severe family stress or dysfunction.**"

Throughout the pregnancy and postpartum period, her husband remained consistently supportive and engaged in her care.



## Community Health Partners Unite to Close Critical Gaps to Care

During Sol's six-week postpartum examination, her results prompted Arlene to make another specialist referral for ongoing care. The specialist recommended a non-invasive surgery. Because a strong foundation of trust had already been established during prenatal care, Sol felt confident moving forward with a minor surgical procedure so soon after giving birth.

Despite navigating significant physical and emotional challenges throughout her pregnancy and postpartum journey, the validation, coordination, and comprehensive support she received at IWS Family Health empowered Sol to experience childbirth in an affirming way.

When community health centers operate in isolation, families are left to navigate a confusing maze of services and programs. It costs patients valuable time and money, leaves critical needs unmet, and ultimately creates barriers for mothers seeking the support they deserve. **By uniting prenatal services, behavioral health support, specialty referrals, and postpartum care, we ensure the well-being of mother and child.**



**“Continuous counseling and reassurance from the medical team helped alleviate anxiety throughout her pregnancy, allowing mom to focus on her growing family.”**



**Jennifer Morrison, APN, MPH**

## **TELEHEALTH: TRANSFORMING CONNECTION TO CARE**

**While telehealth visits have transformed the nature of connection, they also offer providers meaningful glimpses into their patients' home lives, providing valuable insight into their environments, daily routines, and natural demeanor. Through the screen, clinicians are invited into patients' everyday experiences in ways that extend beyond the walls of the clinic.**

### **Making Scheduling Accommodations for a More Comfortable Visit**

To better support families, Jenn Morrison, APN, MPH, a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, has expanded her schedule to include early morning and evening appointments, providing psychiatric services with the flexibility and comfort families deserve.

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**“Telehealth helps me better tailor a treatment plan that aligns with a child’s strengths, emotional capacities, and developmental needs.”**

IWS Family Health introduced telehealth services in 2020 with a vision of delivering flexible, accessible care to the community. **Since then, telehealth has proven to be an effective and reliable way for patients to maintain consistent access to care through Pediatric and Adult Health, therapy through short and long-term Counseling, and psychiatric services through the Medical-Behavioral Health Clinic.**

For mothers managing busy weekly schedules, coordinating medical appointments with school drop-offs and pick-ups can present a significant barrier to treatment, especially for those supporting children with diagnoses such as ADHD, autism, or depression.

**Families are increasingly comfortable using virtual platforms to continue both physical and mental health treatment without interruption.** Telehealth helps IWS Family Health remain accessible and responsive, leading to strong patient engagement and positive clinical outcomes.

### **Walk Alongside Patients and Enter into Their Lives**

For many parents, simply learning that follow-up care can take place virtually brings a visible sense of relief.

**Promoting a high quality of life for our moms and their families means removing barriers to care and embracing technological advances that increase access. IWS Family Health's work is most powerful when it honors both the science and the human connection that patients depend on for care.**

As Jenn shares, "In those small, personal moments when I engage with patients in the comfort of their homes, I'm able to see beyond their diagnosis and think more critically about their whole experience outside the clinic. **Healthcare isn't just about managing symptoms, it's about building trust, connection, and a being an inspiring and meaningful presence in a child's life.**"

While telehealth will never replace the value of face-to-face visits, it has redefined what connection and access to care can look like busy mothers with kids.

**For IWS Family Health families, it has transformed care into something more flexible, compassionate, and empowering. For providers, telehealth services have reaffirmed the heart of their work: to truly meet patients where they are.**



Thank you for being part of our mission.  
We hope these stories show you the difference  
your generosity makes.



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IWS FAMILY HEALTH

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