



intersect

Everything and Nothing Has Changed

Last month, we began letting our friends and partners know of some changes here at Access Services. Among the changes we mentioned are a fresh new logo as well as a clearly collaborative tag line, Strengthening Communities. Another such shift is that Intersect has now been named the Christian Division of Access Services. For some, these announcements may together feel like a bit of whiplash. On the one hand, the shift in our logo from a cross to a plant looks like a distinction has been made between the Access of today and the organization founded in 1976 by Christian social workers. On the other hand, Intersect's new status as the Christian Division of Access Services sounds like a leaning into that heritage. So, which is it? Well, both. To put it another way, everything has changed, and nothing has changed.

Everything has changed in that since 1976 Access has grown into an increasingly diverse organization. As an equal opportunity employer receiving government funding, we now have employees from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives serving individuals across 14 counties in Southeastern PA. At Access, one often sees people across all walks of life joining together to strengthen our communities. Another example of significant change for the organization came when Intersect was founded in 2017. Intersect is a unique service that supports people at the much-neglected intersection of faith and mental health through consultation, training, and fostering collaboration between faith communities and human service providers. Just as Access was undergoing changes related to its expanding workforce and scope as an organization, it was also experiencing the changes that came with newfound open doors to have a greater impact in the faith community than we've ever had before. Intersect's new status as a Division of Access Services thus reflects its growing influence and burgeoning opportunities to collaborate with local faith communities, mental health services, universities, and foundations to expand and replicate its work into new communities and systems of care.

In all these ways, one could say that everything has changed. But seen from another angle, nothing has changed at all. For those Christians who are concerned the move away from the cross logo represents a rejection of the organization's heritage, we want to emphasize that the Christian faith that influenced Access' founders to start the organization is the same faith that inspired the founding of Intersect and sustains it on a daily basis. Intersect is both rooted in and guided by that heritage. And for those outside the Christian faith, who may be concerned that having a Christian Division of Access means less opportunity for all people, we want to emphasize that Intersect is both committed to collaboration and responsive to all people. Intersect works with any mental health provider both inside and outside of Access Service to offer spiritual support to those we serve and connect them to faith communities of their choice. Our commitment to collaboration is further manifested through the work of our Multi-Faith Coalition as well as our growing network of partners across diverse faith communities, institutions, and systems of care. Access has always been committed to collaboration and our new tag line, Strengthening Communities, shows just how serious we are about it. Intersect is simply expanding this commitment through the strengthening of faith communities both locally and across the nation. And just as our commitment to collaboration hasn't changed, neither has our responsiveness to all people. Access' Philosophy of Care has always held that regardless of what an individual believes, all people have inherent value. While our convictions may not always be the same, we believe that respect is different than agreement. Every mental health provider can refer any person to Intersect and know that they will be met where they are and provided with holistic support for their spiritual, emotional, physical and social needs.

In sum, the multi-directional changes at Access Services that may feel like whiplash at first are simply the reflection of an organization growing wider in its influence and deeper into its heritage. It's an organization serious about naming its present reality, while continuously looking to its past to give direction to its future. As someone who's spent all 22 years of my career working at Access Services, I've never been more excited about what's in store for us next.

David Eckert, Senior Director of Intersect