

Morris County Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board
Public Forum for Consumers and Families
Many Faces of Recovery: Importance of Connections
June 11, 2013
SUMMARY

Attendance

The Forum drew approximately 110 participants, lower than usual but still a good turnout. The majority of participants were consumers, followed by a good mix of family members, providers and officials. There were parents with small children in attendance as well as a number of young adults and more seniors than in the past. Attendees included representation from NJ Division of Mental Health and Addictions Services, family and consumer advocacy groups, Greystone Hospital, the County and at the majority of MHSAB members.

Agenda

Department Director Frank Pinto gave welcome remarks and introduced the new Human Services Freeholder liaison, Hank Lyon. Freeholder Lyon reported on the importance of officials connecting with the community they serve and provided an overview of the MHSAB and how this advisory board keeps the Freeholders updated on important matters related to behavioral health priorities. MHSAB Chair Carol DeGraw talked about the role of the MHSAB and invited the audience to attend these public meetings. She then introduced Jane Shivas, LCSW, event facilitator for the first time.

Ms. Shivas gave a brief overview on the importance of connections, then introduced the evening's two speakers, Diane and Mike, who gave presentations on their personal journeys to recovery.

Rosaelina Klingener, Saint Clare's director of Intensive Family Support Services, was recognized for her long- term advocacy and support to family members of individuals with MI.

Accommodations

Participant comments on the Haggerty Center, room set up and refreshments were positive. Several individuals reported that they could not hear the comments, which for future events will be remediated with adjustments to the sound system.

Highest Service Priorities ---

Consistent with previous years:

- ❖ Transportation – in western Morris, for veterans, on weekends; for work and education. Provide education on how transportation works. Hard to get to work and school. As last year, mentioned most frequently as service gap.
- ❖ Affordable supported housing and increased congregate group home options. Housing with adequate support is a problem, especially for individuals discharged from Saint Clare's or Greystone Hospital.
- ❖ Medical and psychiatric services—very difficult to find M.D.'s who accept Medicaid or when there is no insurance.

New priorities:

- ❖ Mental health and other services for families of young children.
- ❖ Respite type programs. They do not exist in the County since the CARES program closed. People are more apt to be hospitalized as a result.

- ❖ More legal assistance is needed for individuals who are criminally involved as a result of MI and/or addictions.
- ❖ More focus on spiritual supports.

Suggestions for 2013:

1. Continue to include recovery stories.
2. How to build a positive network in your life.
3. Have leaders of various services available at the Forum to answer questions.
4. Information on medications for individuals with MI.
5. Information on how to handle personal finances.
6. Explore development of consumer run businesses.

Written evaluations: 18 completed

- 72% said Forum met expectations, 28% somewhat
- 72% had attended previous forums, 28% first time participants
- 39% said the personal recovery stories were the program highlight.

Community resource information requested at Forum:

North Region Crisis Residence:

St. Mary's Hospital STEP Program in Passaic.

Access: Through Screening Center

Referrals: Call 973-471-6907

Length of stay is up to 21 days. Four beds in two shared apartments.

Contact: Behavioral Health Director: Kathleen Fisher, 973-470-3168 or fisherk@smh-passaic.org

For further information: Cynthia Gatica, Passaic Program Analyst: 973-977-4398.

**Public Forum
Participant Feedback
June 11, 2013**

Wellness and Recovery is uniquely personal for every individual. It is a wonderful journey (as said by a previous forum participant)

Sampling of Speakers' Comments

1. What connections are most helpful? Good ways to get connected to the community?
 - Connecting with other artists. Writing is helpful. Writing about the time I spent at Greystone. Mental Health Association was very helpful.
 - Education has played an important role in life. Learning and sharing are very important. The Play It Forward Movie helps others. Church and spirituality and praying have helped. Help from family and various other connections.
 - The day program has helped. Connections and meeting other mental health consumers. Developing friendships has been important.
 - I am a recovering drug addict. They helped him gain a spiritual connection. The Market Street Mission works. People there helped him gain spirituality as well as connected him with various services.
 - Connections are important. I was in a very bad living situation and now have my own apartment. He connected with Ms. Becker and she helped him. Connections are essential. The Consumer Complaint procedure was very important in helping him. It's a good place to express concerns and get help.

2. What services and supports have been important to your recovery?
 - New Bridge Supportive Housing Staff have given support with mental health concerns and with his family.
 - During the last 9 years the Morris Self- Help Center has helped and the Peer Support program there. This has been a great help to her through difficult times.
 - Community Hope has been a great help to her son.
 - Affordable housing through Mt. Laurel.
 - Volunteering at the Red Cross and at church helped. Support through other peers and family members. Also got support from the job network. Affordable housing is very important and lacking.

3. What services are missing or hard to find?
 - Mental health services and support for young children.
 - Transportation, especially for homeless veterans. It's difficult to get rides.
 - Transportation, especially in the Flanders area.
 - Medical care is hard to get if you don't have insurance. There is inadequate access for health care. Many doctors don't accept Medicaid.
 - Social clubs should be accessible throughout every county. It is hard to find social clubs, especially in Sussex and outlying Morris areas.
 - Many psychiatrists take Medicare but it is hard to find any that take Medicaid.
 - There is a lack of housing for people with mental illness.
 - Two (2) participants stated there is a lack of transportation.
 - Need for more low income housing, group homes, and different levels of group homes.
 - Two (2) participants stated there is a lack of affordable housing.

- Problems with folks being sent to Meadowview Hospital instead of Greystone Hospital. People are separated from their family and friends. It is hard for their loved ones to visit them when they are so far away. Upon return to Morris County it is harder to get services and housing.
 - Need more lawyers to be advocates for folks with mental health and substance abuse issues.
 - Transportation. Difficult to get from home to school and work.
 - Housing is a huge problem. Once folks get out of Saint Clare's or Greystone Hospital, finding housing is a big issue.
 - Need for more respite programs. The CARES program in Morris County was closed. This was a respite program for folks in Morris County. Now people end up being hospitalized since there is no respite program available for them.
 - I miss having respite programs. Family member helps out but there is a limit to what family can do.
 - There is the Saint Clare's Wellness & Recovery Center. They do have a 24 hour hotline. They have a type of respite but do not have any sleepovers. They do make an effort to help. Saint Clare's has a van to pick up clients and get them to services and help.
 - More help for veterans especially more housing for them.
 - Someone stated that they believe there is soon going to be a respite program in Morris.
 - Ms. Becker will check what respite services are available since the closing of CARES. Maybe folks can go to respite in another county.
4. If you could say one thing to someone struggling what would it be?
- Show them you care.
 - Hope. Family gave hope to me and it's important to try to instill hope in people.
 - Family members should be there for support and understanding. They should also help monitor and educate their loved ones.
 - Greystone hospital has great forums. It is good to hear what other folks say and to be able to share what you know.
 - Medication, diet, therapy and exercise are very important to everyone.
 - Hope and consumers accepting other consumers. Spreading hope is a powerful message.
5. What role do family members and friends play?
- Met a friend at Greystone and we now work together. It is a good and healthy relationship. Relationships are very important. We keep each other company and the friend helps with transportation.
 - Friends and family can help or hurt. Family ditched me and had to accept it. Learned to accept it and in the long run did better. It is important to help yourself and take responsibility. Each person has the power over their own life. It's a long process but you have to take responsibility and take care of yourself.
 - Recovery is a process it doesn't happen overnight.
 - Family gave a lot of support. Friends were also very helpful.
 - Four family members are bi-polar. They help each other and educate and support one another.

- Illness changes those around you. Relationships can change. Sometimes it is for the better. Eventually most have accepted me. Most important to accept ourselves. Self stigma is a big problem.
 - I would like to compliment Community Hope. Have lived in a few other countries and am a naturalized citizen. There is a strong devotion here in Morris County and especially at Community Hope and New Bridge that I have not seen in any other country.
 - Family members and people in the workplace, need to be better educated about mental health and substance abuse.
6. If you could create an ideal program, what would it look like?
- More free clinics.
 - More centers for folks on the road to recovery.
 - Morris Self Help Center has monthly calendar – television – arts – things going on. People need a place to go.
 - Alternate to substance abuse recovery – program smart recovery. It would be nice to have a variety of options.
 - Have friends in other states and they have systems that are lacking. Morris County is fortunate to have Mental Health Association, Residential Intensive Support Team (RIST), Integrated Case Management Services (ICMS) and all kinds of help and services.
 - Would be good to get a centralized location for services.
 - Need more help for children and adolescents with mental illness and substance abuse problems.
 - A nonprofit mall in one centralized location with a shuttle would be great.
 - Thanks for this forum and for everything folks have done to provide this annual forum.
 - There should be another state psychiatric hospital like Greystone. Greystone is overcrowded and there is a need for more hospitals not so far away. Also a need for more funding.
 - Don't understand why they closed some of the other hospitals such as Hagedorn.
 - Lack of funding is the reason some hospitals were closed.
 - Greystone is not overcrowded. There are strict codes that do not allow overcrowding.
 - Need more services for children and adults.
 - Medicare should provide more services for transportation, housing and recreation.
 - There should be greater support, professional training and education for consumers about the service system.
 - There needs to be more support to encourage people on disability to become employed. It is risky to give up current benefits for employment that may not be sustainable.
 - Getting callbacks from the temporary assistance office is a hassle. Often caller doesn't get a return call. More advocacy and support for services.
 - Public awareness. There is the need to change the public's perception. More lobbying for legislation should be done.

Ms. Shivas stated there was a lot of positive talk about Morris County. Yes there are many gaps. All feedback is very helpful in making decisions on what is spent on resources.

Summary of Written Evaluations

A total of 18 Evaluations were submitted.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE MHSAAB TO ADDRESS IS:

- Integrating wellness coaching into service delivery.
- Importance of the Morris Self Help Center in Parsippany.
- Better coordination of services for consumers.
- Trying to arrange some lobbying efforts on consumer's behalf in Trenton.
- Drug, alcohol and tobacco use. Why do professionals "allow" tobacco use in recovery programs.
- Emergency shelters where you can stay at during the day.
- Transportation--(4)
- Housing-- (2)
- Housing with mental health services.
- Service access.
- More for families
- Funding to meet the demand for co-occurring services for those who can't afford it.
- Funding--(2)
- Support--(3)
- Better pay for mental health workers, counselors and staff.

IN MY OPINION, THE BIGGEST GAP IN MORRIS COUNTY'S SERVICE SYSTEM IS:

- Lack of transportation to/from some areas--(6)
- There are good services in the system in Morris County.
- Disinterested treatment providers.
- Housing--(3)
- More information on all types of schizophrenia.
- Getting through on the phone to a "live" person to solve problems. 99% of time caller gets voice mail; no return calls (i.e. housing).
- Emergency shelters and co-ed shelters for couples who aren't married.
- Agencies need replacement transportation vans (cars). Older vehicles are being repaired constantly.
- Services for families with children afflicted with mental illness.
- There is a need for more case workers.
- Connecting people to services.
- Local programs.
- Implementation of the involuntary outpatient commitment (IOC) law. The Treatment Advocacy Center (200 N. Glebe Rd., Arlington, VA) could be helpful in advising how to implement IOC in Morris and other counties.

WHAT I WISH I WOULD HAVE SAID AT THE FORUM:

- I give credit to the Mental Health Association for their good entertainment center.
- More advocacy for housing for people not being released from Greystone due to shortage of housing options.
- Make up your minds – are you running a full recovery or only recovery for those who are bi-polar smokers.
- Help for lower and middle income persons. Need higher income ceiling limits for income.
- Group homes have a place in the service system.
- The programs offered by Devereux Foundation for Children.
- Peace, love and understanding.
- In response to what programs have been helpful to me, as a family member; NAMI-Morris County, MHA-MC, IFFS and Community Hope.

THE FORUM MET MY EXPECTATIONS:

Yes – 13

No – 0

Somewhat – 5

HAVE YOU ATTENDED PREVIOUS CONSUMER AND FAMILY FORUMS?

Yes – 13

No – 5

FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

- Hearing stories of recovery is motivating to other consumers in attendance.
- Information on Mental Health Association, apartments, boarding homes and places like Community Hope.
- The person who suggested lobbying efforts was brilliant.
- Bad highlight – I couldn't hear the clients speaking.
- Public stating their concerns.
- Allowing consumers to speak about issues. (3)
- Everything.
- Success stories from successful consumers. (7)
- Good discussion.
- Opportunity to meet with friends and other mental health consumers and share concerns.
- Honoring Rosaelina Klingener.

MY SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE NEXT YEAR'S FORUM

- Discussion on wellness and leading a healthy lifestyle.