

Morris County Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board (MHSAAB)
Public Forum for Consumers and Families
Many Faces of Recovery: Creative Expressions
June 9, 2015
SUMMARY

Attendance

The 21th Forum drew approximately 200 participants, the highest turnouts for this annual event. The majority of participants were consumers, followed by a good mix of family members, providers and officials. Attendees included representation from NJ Division of Mental Health and Addictions Services, family and consumer advocacy groups, Greystone Hospital leadership, the County Freeholder Board and the majority of MHSAAB members. Agency leadership was well represented and there was good participation at community resource tables.

Daily Record feature reporter Lorraine Ash and her photographer also attended. (See scanned attached newspaper article.)

Accommodations

The Haggerty Center is an ideal venue. The planning committee continues to address a few challenges with the audio system.

Agenda

Morris County Human Services Director Jennifer Carpinteri gave welcoming remarks and introduced Freeholder Director Kathy DeFillippo.

Director DeFillippo thanked all in attendance and emphasized the importance of providing an annual forum for the public to hear the benefits and challenges when utilizing the local human service system. She also reported on the Task Force on Opiates initiative, recently formed to deter children and adults from using heroin and abusing prescription drugs.

Director DeFillippo gave special thanks to NAMI and Kathy Moser for bringing art and song to the event and extended appreciation to the all of the speakers who shared their recovery stories. She then introduced Ms. Barbara Ward, the Chair of the MHSAAB. Ms. Ward introduced her MHSAAB colleagues and gave a brief overview of the advisory board's role and responsibilities.

Special recognition was given to Carol MacLean and Eileen Griffith, mental health leaders, who collectively have spent over 60 years as family advocates.

Ms. Ward introduced Peter Basto, forum facilitator. Mr. Basto reported on his recent travels to Norway and Philadelphia to museums and conferences that explored how art and storytelling can inspire recovery. He thanked the NAMI representatives for sharing the "Mind My Art" exhibit.

Mr. Basto introduced the three speakers who shared personal stories on their recovery from mental illness and/or addiction. The final speaker, Kathy Moser, ended her presentation in song with the audience.

Mr. Basto then opened the floor for public comment.

Highest Service Priorities --- :

- Transportation – increase access countywide. The Medicaid provider (Logisticare) needs to improve quality of service.
- Housing subsidies, supportive housing, homeless services
- More places for socialization, recreational activities, writing and music.
- Employment with supports, willingness of employers to hiring individuals in recovery.

Newer priorities:

- Groups, education for families who have an addicted loved one
- More youth advocacy, ways to get youth off the streets

Suggestions for 2016:

- More resource information.
- Decrease time on introductions to allow more time for public comment and presentations.

Written evaluations: 20 completed

- 55% said Forum met expectations/40% somewhat
- 55% had attended previous forums, 45% first time participants
- 60% said the personal recovery stories and music were program highlights.

Meetings of the Morris County Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board (MHSAAB) are open to the public and are held most second Thursdays of the month, 5:15 p.m., Morris County Department of Human Services, 30 Schuyler Place, 3rd Floor, Morristown NJ. Parking is available under the building and parking passes are available at the meeting.

The primary purpose of the MHSAAB is to advocate to the County and State for a strong continuum of human services to benefit individuals living with mental illness and/or addictions disorders. All are welcome to attend and provide public comment to the MHSAAB for consideration. Call the mental health administrator at 973-285-6852 to confirm the meeting time and to address any questions or concerns.

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Speaker Highlights and Sampling of Public Comments

RECOVERY STORIES

C—Spoke about her fight for many years to recover from anorexia, bipolar disorder. With help from family, friends and her church as well as a mental health provider, she considers herself to be in recovery.

ME—Spoke of a long history of trauma and abuse and relationship problems which all contributed to her severe psychiatric problems with many hospitalizations. Through treatment and spiritual supports, she is now employed part time and has family in her life. She suggested it is best to fight stigma by talking about the illness.

K—Spoke of being humbled to be in long term recovery. She has been clean and sober for 19 years and is the only person in her family that got help for addictions and mental illness. Creativity saved her life. She asked everyone to sing with her one of the first songs she wrote about being sober—“I am who I am”.

Questions for Attendees:

What services and supports are most helpful to your recovery?

- Supportive housing programs – New Bridge specifically.
- Rides back and forth to work.
- Morris Community Wellness Center – a place to socialize, gather and make friends.
- Transitions Program – Saint Clare’s – coping skills helped her live better.
- Supportive housing program at Saint Clare’s.
- Homeless Programs – free meals and a place to go and get food.
- Morris Community Center – used to be Self Help Center – helped her to get involved and to give back to the community.
- Exercise programs at New Bridge – they have a lot of activities.
- Wellness Center – helped to go there and spend time with others and stop isolating.
- Community Hope – helped him get an apartment but he is still lonely. The nurse at the Wellness Center helps him but he believes there needs to be more place for disabled people to go. He would like more socialization.
- Saint Clare’s helped her get a job through their career services.
- Mental Health Programs (through PACT) got services and supports from them. They are great and helped a lot. Also it’s good to have friends and to help others. Reaching out others is important.
- Mental Health Association of Morris County helped her to get out of the house and meet people.
- MHAMC helped her with their various programs (fitness center, community garden, exercise, etc.) Special thanks to Lou Schwarcz.
- Help from the food bank and music helped in recovery.
- Career employment services helped get a job.

- Thanks to many people and all those that are here including Saint Clare's transitions programs, MHAMC, Morris Wellness Center and many programs were helpful. Now a driver from Wellness Center, "paying it forward."
- Was placed in Saint Clare's and Greystone for drugs/alcohol. Then was sent to a group home. Had a relapse and got better and got a job. Saint Clare's helped with recovery.
- MAPS provides great transportation services

What services did you look for but were unable to find or unable to access?

- Families of addicts have a lot of problems in recovery and need information on how to cope with their situation. It is important to point the families in the right direction. In court it would also be helpful to have some help to move the family in the right direction. Seems to be a lack of information to the families. Need more information on AA/NA and often this information is not in brochures and not easy to find.
 - *Families that interact with drug addicts need to learn good interactions – change must be with the non-user. The drug user won't seek help as long as the family solves his/her problems.* (Mother of a drug addict)
- Help to find more jobs. More employment services needed. Although there are places to go it is difficult to get a job. I have been healthy for four years and at twenty nine years old can't find a job. Probably due to past problems.
- More vocational programs for the disabled to gain skills. Working is very important. Families need education and to understand why it is important for disabled to work. His family tells him he should stay home.
- Think that human services are pretty good but that One- Stop- Career Center should make some changes. They said they can't help me get a job since I attend school. I often sit in the waiting room and then end up getting sent home.
- More services to get kids off the street. More youth advocacy. More people to hear the youth voice.
- Maybe a help line just for those with mental illness.
- Transportation

What barriers are there to access service?

- Lack of transportation – need more services.

Ms. Becker introduced Ms. Lauren Burd, Morris County MAPS director, who reported that there is a statewide campaign to ask the Governor's office to increase transportation budgets. \$750,000 has been lost from the MAPS budget in recent years. She asked all in attendance to complete the campaign surveys that she will be forwarding to the Governor's Office.

Ms. Fox stated that MAPS is a wonderful service and has been helpful to her.

- Problems with insurance—understanding the paperwork requirements and making the payments.
- DYFS (DCPP) Programs are difficult to access. Has been trying to work with DYFS for ten years and they often don't answer the phone, or don't give him the information he needs. Has been frustrating trying to deal with them.

Wish question – if I could create a program what would it be?

- A program on rape and incest.
- Opportunity for nonprofit and profit organizations to work together.
- More programs for foster children and homeless children. Would like to expand programs so the children can visit nursing homes and be involved in other activities.
- Create an evening of poetry and coffee once a month or so.
- More social gatherings – alternative ways to spend time.
- More transportation – especially in the evening.
- More affordable housing and a speedup of access to subsidized housing.
- Peer visiting at hospitals. Would like to gather more folks together to visit hospitals.
- Morristown has a Wellness Center but insurance doesn't cover it. Wish there was something similar for people that don't have insurance.
- Supportive employment at Saint Clare's.
- Low cost dental clinic that specializes in anxiety. Also a training program for clinics to teach staff how to work with the mentally ill.
- Everyone needs a car. It would be good if there could be help for folks to get a car. Also would be great if there was an innovative transportation system. Better transportation services would be helpful.

In response to request for information on public entitlements and supportive employment, Ms. Becker identified two providers in attendance, Saint Clare's careers program and Office of Temporary Assistance. She also reported on two new programs set to begin later this year:

1. Assisted Outpatient Treatment in Morris and Sussex will be under the auspices of the Mental Health Association of Morris County
2. Medically enhanced supportive housing for five individuals leaving Greystone will be provided by NewBridge Services.

All comments brought to our attention tonight will be reported to the Mental Health Substance Abuse Advisory Board. The MHSAAB meets monthly and all are welcome. It is a public meeting the second Thursday of the month at 5:15 p.m. at 30 Schuyler Place, 3rd Floor in Morristown. The meeting dates are also on the www.MorrisHumanServices.org website. The MHSAAB wants to hear from you on advocacy issues. Thanks you!

Forum Summary—Written Evaluations
20 Evaluations received

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE MHSAAAB TO ADDRESS IS:

- Housing/transportation. - 4
- Helping consumers stay in recovery and get back into life.
- More pediatric therapists.
- Affordable alternative care i.e. acupuncture, meditation.
- To be more inclusive – have more alternative creative programs such nature, programs at the arboretum, and music programs.
- Housing/energy assistance.
- Eating disorders.
- Unreliability of Logisticare.
- Communication between agencies.
- Tobacco addictions.
- Getting information out to the community. It is difficult for people in the community to navigate the system.
- Police education about mental illness especially in Essex County.
- Recovery options.

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

- Supervised housing for people in our community.
- Services to integrate consumers into the community.
- Job help/technical classes - 3
- Suggest more nature based recovery and more community gatherings.
- Transportation - 4
- Housing – 3
- Rent too high/need more low income rent - 2
- Food stamps is not enough money - 2
- Utility/Heating Assistance – 2
- Homelessness
- More available for people with learning disabilities and mental illness.
- Care management process.
- Poor communication.
- Child support.
- Insufficient board certified psychiatrists accepting Medicaid plans.
- Information/resources available to people in the community. Find ways to advertise more; use 211 information.
- Stigma free campaign.
- Tobacco cessation support.
- Residential and supportive housing for mental health women consumers with proper oversight of medications.

WHAT I WISH I WOULD HAVE SAID AT THE FORUM:

- The need for more doctors to accept Medicaid.
- What places can I go for socializing?
- More artwork/music/creative and social programs. - 2
- How great the IOP is.
- I wish I would get a job and money someday.

- I would like help to get a job and drive a car.
- People recommended me to go to the Morris Wellness Center. There are improvements from last year; however I don't see others that were substance abusers there.
- There is a need for at home nursing care.
- Transportation is not reliable and there is inadequate scheduling.
- Morris needs more transportation.

THE FORUM MET MY EXPECTATIONS:

YES - 11
 NO -
 SOMEWHAT - 8

HAVE YOU ATTENDED PREVIOUS CONSUMER AND FAMILY FORUMS:

YES - 11
 NO - 9

FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

- Kathy's song AND MUSIC! - 5
- Consumer recovery stories. – 6
- Friendly people
- Mental and physical health.
- Peter's talk and examples.
- I can express my opinion.
- Counseling services and support services.
- Stories were more inspiring than last year.
- Open discussion from attendees.

MY SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:

- Use a regular microphone, it was hard to hear.
- Omit introducing the whole board-we don't need that information – prefer more time for open forum instead.
- More recovery stories.
- More agencies with tables.
- Have better questions.
- Tables to eat dinner at. - 2
- Dealing with Greystone – just a holding area and no adequate counseling and significant group therapy. One's safety is of great concern.

TOPICS FOR NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:

- How families can help their loved ones.
- Socialization opportunities.
- Any additional funding.
- Insurance coverage.

**I CURRENTLY RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES
(OPTIONAL):**

- Mental Health Association of MC - 4
- Food Pantry (Interfaith Food Pantry) - 2
- DCA
- Hispanic Affairs
- OTA - 2
- Self Help Center Parsippany
- Saint Clare's – 3
- PACT
- Mountainside Hospital, Montclair, NJ
- Intensive Family Support Services of M.C.
- Section 8 Housing
- Soup Kitchen
- Medicaid

OTHER COMMENTS: -

- Although things are not perfect – this county has the best mental health resources.
- To improve funding for Medicaid recipients.
- I never abused drugs in my life.
- I don't use drugs.