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CMHS is charged with improving the quality of mental health services across the country. We have undertaken a program of activities and pursued policies that can fulfill that goal.

The current wave of public attention and interest in our issues is energizing our work. From the Surgeon General's Report to the White House Conference, the nation is focusing on mental health issues. We're riding this wave, but we need the insight of consumers to help guide the country towards system improvement. At CMHS, we have been in the forefront of listening and helping amplify consumers' voices. But there is always room for improvement.

A number of issues are raised in the planks, and here are ways we are responding to them.

**Advocacy:** CMHS supports advocacy education in a number of ways. We support the Clearinghouse, NAPAS and others in developing self-advocacy training. We provide consumer networking grants throughout the nation, and fund three self-help technical assistance centers (the National Empowerment Center, CONTAC and the Clearinghouse), as well as two consumer supporter technical assistance centers, NAMI and NMHA. We've also developed educational materials for consumers on the Consumer Bill of Rights.

**Alternative Services:** CMHS is sponsoring a \$20 million Consumer-Operated Services Project to study and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of consumer-run services in augmenting and improving traditional services. We've also just published a manual on Consumer-Operated Services. In addition, we will be sponsoring the 15<sup>th</sup> Alternatives conference.

**Community Support Systems:** CMHS has studied effective employment strategies through the Employment Intervention Demonstration Program. We are supporting grants throughout the country that are looking at ways to support employment for individuals with mental illness. We also are developing models of supportive housing and ways of assisting homeless families, as well as providing Community Action Grants, which are a good vehicle for consumers' activities.

**Financing:** CMHS has helped develop publications to educate consumers on managed care and a planning guide to help consumers in the contracting phase. We also are developing technical assistance materials to involve consumers, and parity studies to demonstrate the cost-efficiency of covering mental illnesses on a par with physical illnesses.

**Force and Coercion:** We support the protection and advocacy system and its protection of consumer rights. We have sponsored various meetings on involuntary treatment, developed a report on ECT, worked with HCFA [Health Care Financing Administration] and others on seclusion and restraint standards, and published materials on privacy issues.

**Forensics:** We have sponsored the Criminal Justice Diversion Grant Program, supported the GAINS Center, and provided support to model police training programs, such as crisis intervention training.

**Multicultural issues:** We have assisted a number of People of Color Networking and Training conferences, developed cultural competence standards for providers, and sponsored two major conferences, one for Asian-American Pacific Islanders and one for Hispanics. We also sponsored bi-lingual radio anti-stigma public service announcements.

**Organizing:** CMHS has helped consumers to communicate via the technical assistance centers and the Knowledge Exchange Network. We developed a guide on using the Internet, and have sponsored regional meetings across the nation to enable consumers to network with one another. We've supported leadership training programs that have been pioneered by CONTAC, and helped older consumers to come together and develop an organization that will represent older Americans who are consumers.

**Recovery:** We have sponsored a number of studies on supporting recovery, and a series of dialogues for consumers and providers to meet as collaborators on improving the system. We have developed a training video for providers to help them learn how to be more responsive to consumers, and we are working with Mary Ellen Copeland, an expert on recovery, to develop other recovery materials.

**Research:** We have developed consumer-operated studies, and a bioethics work group.

**Social Accountability.** The Mental Health Statistics Improvement Program has developed a consumer report card that many of you are using to evaluate programs.

**Stigma and Prejudice:** We developed thousands of anti-stigma kits, which we hope you can use in your own activities. The kit includes a poster for your office or your local Mental Health Association's office. We also developed an anti-stigma video and a guide to addressing stigma in the media. We also are supporting the National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, which kicks off tomorrow [June 7].

CMHS also is involved in a variety of other activities, including working on issues affecting people with HIV/AIDS, on state planning councils, on implementation of the *Olmstead* decision, and on other initiatives. You can read about our activities on our Web site, [www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org), and in the Consumer Affairs Bulletin.

We soon will be announcing the nine people who have been selected as members of a new subcommittee on consumer/survivor issues on the CMHS National Advisory Council. [Editor's note: This announcement was made in July.]

I look forward to continuing this partnership [between CMHS and the consumer/survivor movement].

