
The Key Update

The free monthly e-newsletter of the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse

Volume 1 No. 9 – February 2005

<http://www.mhselfhelp.org>

The Key Update Volume 1 No. 9 February 28, 2005

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS...

Alternatives 2005 to Be Held in Phoenix, Arizona

Alternatives 2005 at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix, Arizona, begins on Wednesday, October 26th, and continues through Sunday, October 30th. The Call for Papers is available at http://www.power2u.org/workshop_institute_application.html; workshop and institute proposals must be received by **April 6**. Additional information on Alternatives 2005, including hotel registration information, is available at: www.power2u.org. Scholarship funds will be provided by the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the NAMI STAR Center, and awarded through AFYA, Inc. For general conference information, contact: Horizon Meetings, 800-776-1286.

New Matchmaking Community for People with Mental Illnesses Now Online

A free matchmaking service for adults with serious mental illnesses is now available through the Web. "No Longer Lonely, Online Dating for the Mentally Ill" (sic) is the first online dating service designed exclusively for adults with serious mental illnesses. Membership is reserved for people who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, a personality disorder, or an eating disorder. You can check out and sign up for this free Web service at www.nolongerlonely.com. If you are unsure whether you qualify, contact webmaster@nolongerlonely.com.

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT & SERVICES

Governors Negotiate to Change Medicaid.

Governors of both parties are uniting in opposition to President Bush's proposal to cut federal Medicaid spending. Proposed cuts amount to \$20 billion less for Medicaid over the next five years, and \$60 billion less over 10 years. Many governors are also urging changes that they say are necessary to sustain the \$300 billion federal-state safety net, which is the source of health

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care for some 52 million people who live in poverty. “Medicaid as it currently exists is non-sustainable in the long run,” Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack, a Democrat, told The New York Times. “If we don’t get Medicaid solved, what you basically do is put governors in the position where they’ve got to pick between grandchildren and grandparents.” Two key points that the governors agree upon are no cuts and more flexibility. They would like to be able to tailor approaches to the needs of their respective populations. “Each state . . . exploring new innovations, will find ideas that can be shared, that will both improve access and reduce costs,” Republican Mitt Romney of Massachusetts told the Associated Press. “That’s the only way it’ll work.”

Sources: Mental Health Weekly, 2/21/05; New York Times, 2/17/05; Associated Press (via ABC News), 2/19/05.

Study: Nearly One in Six People with Mental Illnesses Are Homeless

A new study by the University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine has found that 15 percent of Americans with serious mental illnesses are currently homeless. Those without publicly funded health care, people with substance abuse disorders, or people with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder were most likely to be homeless. Men were more likely to be without housing than women, and African-Americans more than Hispanics or Asians. Senior author Dr. Dilip Jeste indicated that, along with individual trauma and the cost to society, the impact of homelessness is also manifested in homeless persons’ more frequent use of emergency services and increased time in jail.

Source: Forbes.com

SELF-ADVOCACY AND SELF-CARE RESOURCES

New Jersey Considering Bill on “Advanced Directives” (sic)

A bill was proposed in the New Jersey State Assembly that would treat an advance directive as a living will. This would allow New Jersey residents to create legally protected guidelines about the kind of care that they wish to receive if they need treatment for a mental illness.

Assemblyman Douglas H. Fisher, D-Cumberland, hopes that the bill will pass before this summer. For more information, go to:

www.app.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050216/NEWS03/502160475/1007

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RESOURCES FOR CONSUMER-RUN ORGANIZATIONS & SELF-HELP GROUPS

Essential Information on Self-Directed Care Now Available on the Web

Self-directed care is an essential part of making the mental health system consumer-driven. By enabling mental health consumers to determine how and where the dollars available for their care are spent, self-directed care means effective empowerment within the system, and can provide the basis for services and supports that are truly responsive to consumers' needs. The National Research and Training Center (NRTC) on Psychiatric Disability has produced a resource to help advocates understand and promote self-directed care. "Promoting Self-Determination for Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities through Self-Directed Services: A Look at Federal, State and Public Systems as Sources of Cash-Outs and Other Fiscal Expansion Opportunities" is a thorough discussion of the issues, obstacles, and opportunities in this area. Included is essential information on Medicaid issues and how individual states are developing self-directed care programs. Visit the NRTC on Psychiatric Disability site to download this and other information: www.psych.uic.edu/uicnrtc.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Gay Activists Protest SAMHSA Censorship

A request by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to eliminate the phrase "Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Individuals" from the title of a workshop to be presented at a federally funded conference on suicide prevention has sparked a protest by human rights activists. "We find this behavior on the part of our government intolerable," Ron Bloodworth wrote in an e-mail to colleagues, the Washington Post reported. Bloodworth, a former coordinator of youth suicide prevention for Oregon, is a co-presenter of the workshop. Since studies have shown that people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender have a risk of suicide two to three times greater than average, the workshop would have a great deal of relevance to the lives of such individuals and Bloodworth was concerned that the name change would hurt attendance. "Unless you use an accurate term, the people you are trying to reach don't recognize themselves and don't attend," he told the Post. According to an e-mail alert from workshop co-presenter David Byrom, Ph.D., president of the National Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers, Inc., SAMHSA administrator Charles Curie would not be allowed to attend the conference unless the name change was made. The workshop, to be presented at a February 28th conference in Portland, Ore., organized by the

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Suicide Prevention Resource Center of Newton, Mass., was renamed “Suicide Prevention in Vulnerable Populations.”

Sources: Washington Post, 2/16/05, and Action Alert, by David Byron, Ph.D.

PARC CORNER – OLDER ADULTS & MENTAL HEALTH

Depression in Loved Ones

Depression is an illness that can affect anyone at any time. It is likely that, at some point in our lives, someone close to us, whether it be a neighbor, friend, or family member, will become depressed. If a loved one becomes depressed, we may want to do something to help, but we may be unsure of what to say or do. As a friend of a person struggling with depression, you can most certainly do some things to help. These include being a good listener, avoiding judgment, and keeping your own emotions in check. You may also want to avoid being your loved one's counselor or trying to make light of the problem. For more information and tips on how to talk to a loved one who is depressed, visit the Positive Aging Resource Center:

www.positiveaging.org/consumer/popups/depression_howtolove.html

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR CONSUMERS TO ATTEND MAJOR MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCES

Consumer Scholarships Available for National Mental Health Association's Annual Conference

The Center for Mental Health Services within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, through a contract with Westat/Health Systems Research, Inc. (HSR), is providing financial support to consumers of mental health services who wish to participate in the annual conference sponsored by the National Mental Health Association (NMHA). The completed application and letter of recommendation must be received by **March 18, 2005**, in order for the applicant to be eligible for a scholarship. For more information about the scholarships and the conference, visit the NMHA website at www.nmha.org.

Consumer Scholarships Available for the National Schizophrenia Foundation Annual Conference

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The Center for Mental Health Services within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, through a contract with AFYA, Inc., is providing financial support to consumers of mental health services who wish to participate in the annual conference, July 6-9, sponsored by the National Schizophrenia Foundation. In order for the applicant to be eligible for this scholarship, a completed application and letter of recommendation must be received by AFYA by **March 30, 2005**. If you wish to obtain an application, please e-mail consumerscholarships@afyainc.com or call (301) 270-0841, ext. 249. For conference information, please visit www.nsfoundation.org or call (517) 485-7168, ext. 108.

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