

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Campaign for Mental Health Reform Outlines Emergency Response

The Washington-based Campaign for Mental Health Reform released its new “Roadmap for Federal Action on America’s Mental Health Crisis,” a plan for emergency response to the significant shortcomings in mental health care across the country. Drawn from the work of many of the nation’s leaders in mental health policy, this document is an in-depth prescription for getting mental health reform back in line with the findings of the President’s New Freedom Commission Report and reducing the burden of mental illness for the American people. Read or download it at <http://www.mhreform.org/emergency/index.htm>.

Pennsylvania Team Goes to Texas in Wake of Hurricane Katrina

To help Texans mobilize to provide peer support to Katrina evacuees, the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania (MHASP) dispatched a team of volunteers to Texas on September 19. The objective was to provide training in peer support and disaster response techniques to individuals around the state who were hosting those who fled before the storm or survived its devastation. Texas Mental Health Consumers (TMHC) organized the meetings with the help of the Office of Consumer Affairs of the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

The training, on facilitating recovery among individuals affected by traumatic events, provided by the National Mental Health Consumers’ Self-Help Clearinghouse, was based on a curriculum developed by MHASP and the University of Pennsylvania in the aftermath of 9/11.

The training volunteers, in two teams, spread out around the state. Although the southern team was forced to leave ahead of schedule due to the unforeseen impact of Hurricane Rita, the team covering the north and central areas of Texas was able to continue its efforts for the whole of the planned week. Between them, the two teams held trainings in Austin, Missouri City (outside of Houston), Amarillo, Dallas and Ft. Worth; plans to hold meetings in San Antonio, Lufkin and Beaumont had to be abandoned. In addition, Joseph Rogers, MHASP president/CEO and Clearinghouse executive director, was able to visit the Austin Convention Center, which was housing Katrina evacuees. Plans to visit the Houston Astrodome on Wednesday were cancelled when the Astrodome was evacuated due to the impending arrival of Hurricane Rita.

“We plan to continue to be in touch with folks in Texas and find a way to connect with the cities we were not able to reach,” said Rogers. “And we are working in coordination with the other national technical assistance centers and the National Mental Health Association to look at other opportunities to provide support.”

The manual for the trainings, in both pdf and Word formats, is available on the Clearinghouse Web site Resources page
<http://www.mhselfhelp.org/resources.php#disaster>.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Report Outlines Need for Improved Mental Health Care for New Jersey Latinos

A panel of 15 mental health experts released a report on September 27th stating that Latinos in New Jersey endure stigma, language barriers, cultural insensitivity and other issues when accessing mental health care. Included in the report, entitled "Time For Action: Improving Mental Health Services for the Latino Community," is a list of recommendations to improve the mental health system, including the creation of a Latino Task Force for Mental Health Public Education and Outreach and for qualified Latinos to be appointed to all levels of New Jersey's mental health system. The report, commissioned by the Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey, also requests increased funding for Spanish-language community education programs about mental illness and outpatient services. Panel members want each New Jersey mental health screening center to have at least one bilingual mental health screener on call, improved data collection of services targeted toward racial and ethnic minorities, and support for mental health training programs on cultural diversity for law enforcement officials and judges. Robert Davison, who chaired the task force, called the recommendations of the panel of mental health experts "very solid," adding, "We see it as a policy that can be embraced."

For more information, contact the Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey, P.O. Box 25, New Brunswick, NJ 08903-0025; Tel: 732-828-7606; Fax: 732-828-7526; E-mail: hdanj@optonline.net .

Source: Kidd, Gannett/Asbury Park Press, 9/21/05.

People with Mental Illnesses Victimized at High Rate

More than 25 percent of people with serious mental illnesses were victims of violent crime within the past year, according to a study reported in the August issue of the Archives of General Psychiatry. This is 11 times the rate among the general population, the study noted.

The study, led by Linda A. Teplin, Ph.D., of Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, compared results on the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) administered to 936 randomly selected participants in 16 outpatient, day or residential mental health agencies in Chicago with those of the 32,449 participants in the annual NCVS conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

"Over one quarter of the sample (of people with serious mental illnesses) had been victims of a violent crime (attempted or completed) in the past year, 11.8 times higher than the NCVS rates," Teplin and colleagues reported. "Nearly 17 percent of the sample (of people with serious mental illnesses) had been victims of completed violence."

In an accompanying editorial, Leon Eisenberg, M.D., of Harvard Medical School, wrote, "The underlying lesson is that the neighborhoods in which patients are forced to live because of limited income are what make them so vulnerable. . . . The aggregation of persons who are seriously mentally ill in urban areas that are not safe for any inhabitants, let alone for those at cognitive disadvantage, is why rates of victimization are so high."

Sources:

Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2005;62:911-921 and 825-826.

<http://www.emaxhealth.com/7/2922.html>

<http://www.emaxhealth.com/7/2923.html/>

Commitment Bill Splits NJ Governor from Mental Health Advocates

New Jersey acting Gov. Richard Codey has made mental health care reform a significant priority in his administration. He has dedicated \$240 million to provide more housing, screening and treatment opportunities for those in need. However, one of his most recent proposals has divided his supporters. The "involuntary outpatient commitment bill" (S2760) would allow a Superior Court judge to hospitalize a person who has mental illness if he or she refuses to take prescribed medication. Supporters of the bill have said that it would affect an estimated 400 out of 400,000 people, mostly those with bipolar disorder or schizophrenia; they feel that the bill could protect patients and their families from unwanted hardship. Marie Verna, the Mental Health Association in New Jersey's director of consumer advocacy, feels differently. "People with mental illness live with the terror of their illnesses, but they also live with the terror of discrimination, ridicule and the idea that they could once again lose their mind, their dignity and control over their own lives," Verna said.

Source: The Star-Ledger <http://www.nj.com/statehouse/ledger/index.ssf?/base/news-0/1127797202116080.xml&coll=1#continue>

RESOURCES FOR CONSUMER-RUN ORGANIZATIONS & SELF-HELP GROUPS...

Choice in Depression Treatment Improves Outcomes

Freedom of choice leads to better outcomes in treatment for depression, according to a study reported in the October issue of the Annals of Behavioral Medicine.

Individuals who were allowed to choose their treatment from a list that included medication alone, psychotherapy alone, or both, found that their symptoms subsided more rapidly than those whose treatment was selected by their doctors alone, according to researchers at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle. The researchers studied 335 adults — most of whom were male, with an average age of 57 — who had been diagnosed with clinical depression. Approximately three-quarters of the study's subjects were treated according to their wishes. Both groups in the study experienced symptom reduction, although the group treated according to their preferences found that they felt better more quickly.

Source: Health Behavior News Service

SELF-ADVOCACY AND SELF-CARE RESOURCES...

Comprehensive Guide to Empowerment Is Published

“Empowering People with Severe Mental Illness: A Practical Guide,” by Donald M. Linhorst, is an investigation into the foundation of empowerment and the methods for creating it. In a collection of research, experience and examples, this book provides an easily digestible, broad view of empowerment, applicable for diverse purposes. Advocates, program directors, consumers and researchers may all find elements of interest in this book, which begins with a definition of empowerment, looking at the term both generally and as it is used in relation to mental health services.

Linhorst briefly describes the history of powerlessness from the 17th century through deinstitutionalization, followed by a discussion of individual rights and coercion. He then describes conditions for empowerment, both internal and environmental, touching on stigma, professional norms and access to resources.

The second half of the book looks at empowerment as it relates to seven different activities, including treatment planning, housing, organizational decision making, planning and policy making, employment, research and service provision. Each chapter includes examples, both positive and negative, to illustrate how different programs reflect empowerment principles. Summaries and guidelines help provide an overview of many different approaches to empowerment in practice.

The book is available for purchase through Oxford University Press <<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/SocialWork/?view=usa&ci=01951718X>> or through most online book dealers.

Empowering People With Severe Mental Illness: A Practical Guide. by Donald M. Linhorst. 2005. Oxford University Press, \$39.95 (019517187X).

PARC CORNER

CyberSeniors: A Web Site Worth a Visit

Surfing the Web for a site geared towards older adults? Visit CyberSeniors (www.cyberseniors.org), which is dedicated to teaching older adults how to use computers, from very basic skills to more advanced Internet use. The ability to use the Internet to find health information can be a valuable skill for those who are aging or have a chronic illness. Also, check out www.positiveaging.org for some easy-to-navigate information on mental health and positive aging.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse Has Two Employment Opportunities:

Project Coordinator

Description: FT (37.5 hrs.) The Project Coordinator will be responsible for the project management of several Clearinghouse communications projects and trainings. Responsibilities include serving as the managing editor for electronic and print newsletters, creating and managing work plans that will coordinate staff effort for assigned Clearinghouse projects, and serving as key contact and project coordinator for federal, state and local anti-stigma campaigns.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree (B.A.) or equivalent or four or more years' related experience and/or training, or equivalent combination of education and experience. Experience in one or more of the following areas: management, social policy, mental health, public health or public relations. Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite desired. Project management and strong public speaking skills a plus. Consumers of mental health services are strongly encouraged to apply.

Information Specialist

Description: FT (37.5 hrs.) Responsibility for the provision of technical assistance materials to mental health consumers and consumer groups across the country, maintenance of an extensive library of educational materials, provision of training as requested, and participation in the development of ongoing Clearinghouse programming.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree (B.A.) or equivalent; three to five years' related experience and/or training, or equivalent combination of education and experience. Experience in mental health arena and one or more of the following areas: customer service, social policy, public health or library science. Good oral and written communication skills required. Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite and Internet

search skills desired. Training skills and knowledge of Spanish a plus. Consumers are urged to apply.

To apply for either of these positions, please send resumes with cover letter to Cheri Marranzini, Director of Human Resources, MHASP, 1211 Chestnut Street, 11th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107, or e-mail to: cmarranzini@hasp.org. No phone calls please.

The Key Update

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

Volume 2 No. 4 – October 2005 <http://www.mhselfhelp.org>

To subscribe send a message to: Majordomo@majordomo.dca.net. Leave the subject line blank with the following message in the body: subscribe thekey end. To unsubscribe send a message to: Majordomo@majordomo.dca.net. Leave the subject line blank with the following message in the body: unsubscribe thekey end. For content, reproduction or publication information, contact Susan Rogers at 215-751-1800 x288 or srogers@hasp.org.