

COUNTY OF MORRIS
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF COMMUNITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

P.O. Box 900
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Laurie S. Becker
973-285-6852
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Participants, 2016 Public Forum: Many Faces of Recovery: Stigma Revisited

FROM: Laurie Becker, Mental Health Administrator

DATE: August 31, 2016

RE: Public Forum Summary Report

I thank each of you for participating in this year's Forum. You may access the full summary report as posted on the County website at:

<http://morriscountynj.gov/hs/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Summary-of-2016-Public-Forum-for-Consumers-and-Families.pdf>

If you prefer, I am happy to send you the full report at your request.

Every year, the Forum Summary Report is incorporated into Morris County's planning and advocacy activities. The Report is also available to the State's Division of Mental Health Services and public officials for consideration.

If you would like to participant on next year's Forum planning committee and/or if I can be of further assistance to you, please contact me at 973-285-6852.

C: Jennifer Carpinteri, Director
MHASAB Members
Eileen Alexander, DMHAS

Morris County Mental Health Addictions Services Advisory Board
Public Forum for Consumers and Families
Many Faces of Recovery: Stigma Revisited
June 14, 2016
SUMMARY

Attendance

The 22th Forum drew approximately 150 participants, lower than last year but still a good turnout. The majority of participants were consumers, followed by providers, family members 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 MHASAB members. Agency leadership was well represented and there was good participation at community resource tables.

Focus: Addressing the stigma (and self-stigma) of mental illness and addictions.

Continued Service Priorities:

Transportation, housing, wellness programs, employment and education opportunities.

New service needs:

Taxi business for individuals with disabilities

Temporary pet care when an individual is hospitalized.

Written evaluations

- 90% forum met expectations
- 10% forum somewhat met expectations
- 70% recovery stories were the highlight
- 30% mental health players were the highlight

Suggestions for 2017:

HOW TO IMPROVE NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:

- What are the services? (A panel, work session?)
- Have recovery stories be more detailed.
- More recovery stories about those with mental illness so consumers can relate better.
- Invite public safety/service providers.
- I think the forum is just right!
- Rethink the chair set up. Should be easier set up for Peter to go to consumers for comments. (Make sure there are aisles)

TOPICS FOR NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:

- How to integrate those recovering back into the community.
- Collaborative efforts of public safety/service providers.
- The meaning of work, the importance of work and the benefits of work.

Morris County Mental Health Addictions Services Advisory Board (MHASAB)
Many Faces of Recovery: Stigma Revisited
June 14, 2016
Speaker Highlights and Public Comments

Agenda

Freeholder Hank Lyon, welcomed everyone to the 22nd annual Forum. He announced that Morris County the “Stigma Free Communities” initiative and reported that the Freeholder Board continues to give priority to funding a safety net of services for anyone who needs it.

Ms. McMann, Chair of the MHASAB, announced the creation of the “Terri Belske Mental Health Consumer Advocate” award, given posthumously to her family at the Forum. For twenty six years she was a dedicated advocate in Morris County. She empowered herself and many others and was a pioneer in the advocacy movement. Sadly Terri recently passed away.

Ms. McMann, presented the Resolution announcing that Morris County is a “Stigma Free Community” on behalf of the board. Ms. McMann started with a quote from Governor Codey about stigma. Stigma is a public health issue and becoming a “Stigma Free” community is a step in the right direction. She welcomed back Mr. Peter Basto as Facilitator for the evening. Mr. Basto received the National Psychiatric Rehab Assoc. Education Award for education and mentoring a new generation of leaders.

The MHASAB help determines where funding in the amount of approximately \$23 million goes into our community. She emphasized the importance of the that we hear from the public, what they need and any gaps in services. Mr. Basto stated that this evening we will soon be hearing several journeys of recovery. He introduced Tammy and Brittany to tell their story.

Tammy –

Tammy is a mother with a child that was addicted to heroin. The family was terrified, angry and sad. It was hard to overcome the stigma. They felt isolated and embarrassed. Brittany was a loving kid and got with a new boyfriend and new friends. After being with the new crowd she began to take cocaine and heroin. When she was drugging there were many times she stole and lied. Her behavior was very out of character. Tammy watched her daughter get arrested. She went to a rehab for nine months and has been living sober since. She is very proud and happy to have her daughter back to her old self. Even in recovery stigma can follow but it can be overcome.

Brittany –

Brittany was known as a good kid. As she got older she wanted to fit in and find something exciting. She began to do cocaine and pills. After that her boyfriend got her into heroin. Life spiraled out of control. She felt shame and guilt. She stole, lied and cheated to get drugs. She went to jail.

Being in jail was not beneficial since there was no help at the jail. Once she came out of jail she started doing drugs again. The last time she got in trouble she ran from the cops and got serious charges. The judge gave her a last chance and sent her to a rehab for nine months instead of sending her to jail.

After six months in the rehab, Brittany finally got into the program. Once she left the program she went to sober living and found a new life and friends at NA. She learned to live a different life. There is still stigma in many ways. If she gets pulled over driving the cops see she has a record. Many people with records have difficulty getting a job and getting employed. She was lucky since there was an employer that gave her a chance and hired her. Now she wants to help others and give them hope.

Mr. Basto thanked Tammy and Brittany for their inspiring stories and introduced Diane Beck.

Diane –

One of the first people Diane met was Terri Belske at Saint Clare's as volunteers. She stayed connected mostly through the Mental Health Association. Diane was diagnosed with a paranoid schizophrenia. Her best friends were Valerie Fox and Denise Johnson. Both of her friends helped her through many trials. She has come a long way in twenty five years since being discharged from Greystone Hospital. Today Diane is a part-time substance abuse counselor in the Somerset County jail. She has a full time job at Bridgeway and does outreach at Greystone and in the community. She is trying to make a difference through her jobs. She was diagnosed in 1989 when there was a lot of stigma. The biggest thing for her was self-stigma. She was also in Overeaters Anonymous. Today she has a lot to be grateful for since she has overcome her illness and it made her a better person. Diane thanked Hank Lyon and all our Freeholders, Laurie Becker and Morris County for the great services we have in this county!

Mr. Basto introduced Alton.

Alton –

Alton praised the title "The Many Faces of Recovery" instead of "The Many Faces of Addiction". He thinks talking about good stuff is important. He talked about his many years of addictions, prison time, drug court and his decision to be in recovery. Today he is on staff at Morris County Prevention is Key as a Peer Recovery Specialist. He stressed the importance of hearing success stories as they are very inspirational.

Alton also spoke of his experience when he was homeless, ending up at the Mennen Arena during hurricane Sandy. He gave thanks to staff at the arena who were helpful to him during one of his darkest times when he had no job, wasn't employable and needed to learn skills.

Ms. Becker handed out Certificates of Appreciation to each of the speakers. Mr. Basto thanked all for their inspirational stories and for sharing their journey of recovery.

Mental Health Players, Mental Health Association of Morris County

Mr. Basto introduced the Mental Health Players who presented a skit on stigmatizing mental illness. Bob, Cy and Joanne were three people at a barbeque. Cy had recently been a patient at a psychiatric hospital. Joanne was very sympathetic and understanding of Cy's mental illness while Bob was rude and not kind or compassionate to Cy. The skit effectively showed how stigma can really hurt people.

There were comments and questions from the audience about Bob being ignorant and not making an effort to be understanding of his friend who had a mental illness. Questions included how to change people and stop them from stigmatizing others. Comment was made that people need more education and to learn empathy towards those with mental illness. It takes a lot of people and time to change others. The skit is based in reality. One in five families have a family member with a mental health diagnosis and many deal with the stigma attached. Audience commented that the Mental Health Association is a great advocate for individuals with mental illness and provides many services. It was suggested that mental illness be treated with as much compassion as any other illness.

Peter Basto

Question: Stigma – How many people have experienced stigma? Many participants raised their hands.

Question: What helps? Comments below:

- Get out in the community and don't let stigma bother you.
- Whether you are a victim or not people are always evolving and learning. Everyone has different views. Be open and compassionate. Recognize you are on a path of healing and making slow and steady progress. It is a learning experience.
- Consumers are often not fans of coming to events about stigma. Some people will never accept individuals with these problems but they should try. People in recovery may have to walk away from people who can't offer acceptance.
- There is a need to love yourself first and accept the illness, build relationships with your family, friends and be strong.
- Seek help don't be ashamed or afraid.
- I have experienced two types of stigma with mental illness in the family. There is self-stigma and stigma from the outside. Need to forget the negative things people say and take care of yourself. When you feel better you are a happier person.

- Life changed for the better once I moved into a group home.
- On Facebook some people are very ignorant and talk about those who are crazy.
- Everyone has their own journey yet still wants love and happiness. Mental illness is a curse but also a gift since it helped me evolve into the person I am now. Mental illness is not just a word it is a label. A person can be a very good person and a person in despair. Often the person gets a label. Need to get rid of labels.
- The Mental Health Players saved a friend's life. He is a bi-polar man and seeing the Mental Health Players really helped him realize there is a lot of stigma and he should not let it bother him so much.
- There is a need to have more difficult conversations and to open up to each other and connect with love and understanding.
- Rest Stop & Rejuvenate is a place where people can go to express themselves.
- There is stigma and we can choose to help make change. Some choose to disclose their background and try to help educate people.
- Those with mental illness have it harder than other people. It is not easy doing things despite the stigma. Those that don't understand are ignorant and those in recovery need to stay strong and fight for the life they deserve.

Peter Basto commented that just being here (Forum) is fighting stigma.

Question: Are there any changes with the health care system or health care concerns?

- Got a big bill from Greystone in the amount of \$350,000.
- ✓ Individual was advised to contact Laurie Becker, mental health administrator to get information on how to address this bill.
- Medicare changed they were more liberal before. Now you must check to see what your insurance covers.

Question: Any comment on housing now that housing vouchers are being operated by a different agency is there any problems from the new management company (statewide Supportive Housing Connections)?

- Since SHC has taken over (especially in Sussex) people are not showing up for inspections.
- Switching an apartment after having Section 8 housing you don't get your deposit back. The client has to go back to OTA to try to get their money back.
- ✓ Seems like this may be a landlord issue.

Question: Any services that were helpful during the last year?

- The food pantry in Wharton is helpful and you can go there weekly.
- Involvement in the Morris County Caregivers and Support Group for Intensive Family Support helped me work through the system and to deal with my wife's mental illness.
- The food pantry and soup kitchen. On Mondays they distribute free groceries. In Morristown at the soup kitchen there is also a psychologist and psychiatrist and NJ Workability person available to see clients.
- Interfaith Food Pantry in Morris Plains. They even hold cooking classes.
- Several people commented that Saint Clare's at 50 Morris Ave., has been helpful and have a great program.
- Saint Clare's LEARN (education, employment) program.
- Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT)
- The food pantry in Rockaway.
- There is a lot of information that can be found on line on mental health treatment and advocacy.
- Mental Health Association has been helpful. They come to visit through the Connections program. There is also a Rest Stop Rejuvenate program where I can sing.
- Supportive housing through NewBridge.

Comment:

The Housing Vouchers waiting listing is open this week only and ends June 17.

Question: How do you access services?

- I am looking for services for my son who turned 24.
- ✓ Ms. Chandler, Saint Clare's, suggested the Intensive Family Support Team at Saint Clare's can help. She will be happy to talk with the family.
- There is a resource guide in the folders distributed tonight.

Question: What services are missing?

- Dentists are hard to find.
- Transportation for medical is available but it's hard to find transportation for other needs.
- ✓ Dial A Rides in town, Access Link
- It's very hard to function in this county if you don't have a car.
- Client was told by Logisticare that 50 Morris Ave., Saint Clare's, doesn't provide transportation any longer.
- Access Link has been very helpful.

- She is sharing an inheritance and on Medicare and needs to know if services will be discontinued once she gets the money. Has legal questions about this.
- ✓ Ms. Chandler will find out who she can talk to.
- Living in Netcong and still gets transportation from Logisticare.

Question: What is on your wish list?

- Transportation to support groups and other functions.
- Wish someone could set up a taxicab services for people with disabilities.
- Like an agency or group to help people who feel the effects of stigma get back into society. Need more wellness programs and more programs to teach people to help themselves.
- ✓ Ann Marie Flake, Saint Clare's, responded that she should see her to join the LEARN Program. They have programs to help clients start their own business.
- Would like help financially or some way to set up programs for the arts and such.
- It's hard to find care for pets when you are sick or in the hospital. Wish there was a place for pets to go when these things happen.
- Love to see a grant for a pet program so pets can get care when their owners are sick or hospitalized. Perhaps it can be a peer run business to give temporary care for animals when owners are sick.

Comments:

- Legal Services can help with wills, powers of attorneys and advance directives.
- Community Wellness Center is looking for drivers. They have jobs and is a great place to get information.

Question: Any last words about stigma?

- Would be helpful to have more sports activities so people can use their energy in a positive way. Would like to see more intermural sports.
- Cathy Burd stated that she is blessed to work for Morris County. The speakers tonight have given hope and inspiration. She is proud to work for Morris County and proud of all the good work the county, local agencies and the community provides.

Mr. Basto gave special thanks to Terri Belske's family and to all for joining us this evening.

Ms. Becker thanked everyone for this successful forum. This is her 19th year attending and organizing and it's an honor to be here. She asked that everyone complete the program evaluation tonight or send it her by mail or fax. Ms. Becker thinks the pet resource is a great idea.

She expects the Stigma Free Initiative to roll out countywide this summer. She is looking forward to working with everyone to build the Stigma Free website, currently introduced on the Morris County Human Services page. Stigma-Free tee shirts will be distributed on the way out. If anyone needs or wants further information, please feel free to call Ms. Becker. Her contact information is in the folders that were distributed.

Ms. Becker thanked Mr. Basto and the speakers for joining us this evening.

Forum Summary—Written Evaluations

A total of 8 Evaluations were submitted

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE MHSAB TO ADDRESS IS:

- Ways to improve mental health and make a full recovery.
- My food stamps were cut to only \$16 a month. How can a consumer stay healthy with this little money?
- It would be very helpful if one could navigate through the “system” to find help quickly for those in immediate need.
- There is a lack of treatment centers. Demand exceeds supply.
- Need to educate public safety/service providers.
- Move people in the direction of success.
- Many are concerned over the impact fee for service will have on agencies.

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

- Transportation to forums and other fun activities. Currently basically only transportation available is to doctors and therapists. - 4
- Collaborating with public safety/service providers.
- Need for pet care.
- More recreation and activities.

WHAT I WISH I WOULD HAVE SAID AT THE FORUM:

- I am here as a representative of the public safety community/how can we help?
- Wish I had talked about my relative’s situation.
- Teachers need to be better educated in regard to stigma of kids attending school and they need know more about psychiatric illness.
- Would love to see a centralized list of places that donate tickets, space, etc. to non-profits and a way to contact them. For example free tickets to ballgames, MAYO Theatre, mini-golf, bowling, etc.

THE FORUM MET MY EXPECTATIONS:

YES - 7

NO - 0

SOMEWHAT - 1

HAVE YOU ATTENDED PREVIOUS CONSUMER AND FAMILY FORUMS?

YES - 3

NO - 5

FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

- Consumer recovery stories especially Tammy and Brittany.
- All of the consumer recovery stories. – 3
- Diane's presentation.
- Mental Health Players.- 2
- Food!

MY SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:

- Have recovery stories be more detailed.
- More recovery stories about those with Mental Illness so consumers can relate better.
- Invite public safety/service providers.
- I think the forum is just right!
- Rethink the chair set up. Should be easier set up for Peter to go to consumers for comments.

TOPICS FOR NEXT YEAR'S FORUM:

- How to integrate those recovering back into the community.
- Collaborative efforts of public safety/service providers.
- The meaning of work, the importance of work and the benefits of work.

FAMILY MEMBER – 2

CONSUMER – 2

PROVIDER – 3

Meetings of the Morris County Mental Health Addiction Services Advisory Board (MHASAB) 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 MHASAB 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 MHASAB for consideration. Call the mental health administrator at 973-285-6852 to confirm the meeting time and to address any questions or concerns.

Lsb/8/31/16

