

Morris County Mental Health Addictions Services Advisory Board
Public Forum for Consumers and Families
Many Faces of Recovery
June 21, 2018
Highlights

Attendance

The 24th Forum drew over 154 participants, about the same turnout as 2017. 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, the County Freeholder Board, Sheriff Gannon and the Mental Health Addictions Services Advisory Board members. Agency leadership was well represented and there was good participation at community resource tables.

Theme: Many Faces of Recovery

Freeholder Kathy DeFillippo welcomed everyone to the 24th annual Consumer forum. She stated that 89% of people that need help will not reach out for help due to the fear of stigma. Some may not know where to go for help and some may not be able to get there. Recently became aware that the Skylands region has the highest rate of completed teen suicide (which is part of Morris County). This is a public health problem that cannot be ignored. The County provides public funding for education, recovery and treatment and provides facts on these illnesses and available resources. Help is available when people need it.

Morris County is “Stigma Free” with 33 towns, many nonprofits and residents joining as partners. With help, recovery can begin, hope is inspired and tragedies are avoided.

Ms. Marcy McMann, chair of the Mental Health Addiction Services Advisory Board (MHASAB) has served a total of 15 years. The MHASAB is Freeholder appointed. One of the board members, Charles LaRussa, recently passed away. For at least 15 years he has been a strong part of our advocacy work to the Freeholders, State and neighboring counties. He was instrumental in supporting the mental health parity law and always cited the importance of consumer driven services. The Board and many community members miss him dearly.

Ms. McMann cited the growth of community outreach programs including the Sheriff’s Hope One van that brings substance use focused services directly to the people. The van and staff go into the community to provide recovery information, Narcan training, and treatment linkages to individuals, families and friends at no cost.

Ms. McMann concluded by saying that the advisory boards help determine where public funding goes into our provider community. It is extremely important that we hear from

you and what you need and any gaps in services. We are here to help and your comments are important to us.

Ms. Becker introduced herself. She welcomed back Dr. Peter Basto as the Facilitator for the evening. Dr. Basto received the National Psychiatric Rehab Association Education Award and is mentoring a new generation of leaders.

Dr. Basto talked about the history of Recovery, beginning with the Mental Health Association in the late 1800s. At the time, people were given medications and that was considered recovery. Later on that changed. **Hope** is an integral part of the recovery process. Peer involvement began and their input and advice was sought to improve the system. Peer management programs were developed and peers ran wellness centers. Research began about recovery. Recovery meant being in control of your illness and moving beyond your illness.

Part of recovery is having hope. It is a unique process for each person and every person's recovery is different. The individual drives it. There is a need for peer support. Recovery is possible and everyone needs to understand that. Never lose sight of hope. Support is an essential part of recovery and we must all respect each person's journey.

Mr. Basto then introduced Maria and Delia, who spoke about their unique stories of living with MI (Maria) and co-occurring addictions (Delia).

Continued Service Priorities:

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

New service needs/emerging concerns: Lack of reliable transportation. Negative impact of providers' transition to Fee For Service cost reimbursement.

- 100% forum met expectations
- 66% recovery stories are the highlight

Stories of Recovery: Two speakers in recovery from mental illness and co-occurring addictions.

Presentation: Life Center Stage offered an "I am" photoshoot with song "This is Me" , presented at the end of the evening. Many attendees were involved.

Terri Belske Consumer Advocate: John Robbins, CSP

Suggestions for 2019:

- Keep recovery stories, music
- Topics, themes: Mindfulness, Laughter, Yoga, Caregivers support; homeless outreach;

- Have more information on transportation

Public speakers: At least 35

Written evaluators: 16

Public comment:

What Services Have Most Helped Your Recovery/Why Helpful

- MHA – Staff support, caseworkers, social clubs, support groups and training to help gain independent (4)
- Morris Wellness Center – help with recovery, driving, peers, etc. Always felt welcome. John was always so kind and supportive, non-judgmental. His wife gave free haircuts (5)
- Case worker, counselors
- St. Clare's
- New Bridge
- AA – 8 years clean and sober. 31 years clean and sober. Help to gain back confidence/lifeline (2)
- Zufall Clinic helped with dental work
- Morris Self Help Center (2)
- Community Hope
- Morristown Medical Center
- NJAS – helped w/transportation, transitioning back to society, structure, counseling and housing
- Nurse practitioner and therapist
- PACT (Program of Assertive Treatment) – helped her to focus and be herself and they helped and supported her
- NJAS—helped transition him back to community after being homeless, incarcerated, on the streets for four decades. Provide mental health counseling, transportation, structure.
- NewBridge groups; counselor helpful.
- MHA Essex/Morris—I now have more independence;
- CSP
- Saint Clare's – gave me all aspects of Wellness in one spot.
- Saint Clare's helped me with employment

Services You Want but Can't Find

- Medicaid transportation – Logisticare did not pick her up several times. They try to help but they are not dependable. Stood up six times. Left stranded (4)
- Transportation – trouble with City Limo, which is effecting many people on Medicaid. Need more transportation that is reliable.
- Looking for grants to start own non-profit – Project I Can/Instead of I Can't
- Has VNS/nerve stimulator – there are no psychiatrists to deal with this in NJ

- Like more psychological screening services – especially for children
 - St. Clare’s is the largest provider—Children’s Crisis Intervention Services (CCIS)
 - Morristown has outpatient services and emergency evaluation services but no (involuntary) inpatient unit.
- More mental health services and addictions services with peers providing services.
- Need more affordable housing/there is a lack of housing and it is too expensive
- Need rent money
- Problem with housing – she lives with her childhood abuser and cannot get help since she has housing already. (JBWS)
- MAPS is helpful and reliable but need to give them 2-week notice and is only for medical appointments.
- Access Link is also available.
- Dial a Ride is also a good service.
- Parsippany offers transportation, but if you have a physical problem it is hard to stand and wait for the transportation.
- When staying at places like Homeless Solutions, unable to get medication. Staff is not able to help with that so they are unable to distribute medications.
 - Comment from Homeless Solutions they allow medications but cannot administer it.
- Trouble getting dental care (Zufall?) and eye care. No help in this area.

How We Can Improve Services

- Better supervision and training of staff on how to support people with MI and disabilities.
- More funding for transportation, homelessness, mental health, etc.
- When St. Clare’s changed to fee-for-service, lost some of their clinicians. There is no place for day-to-day help. Would like to see that come back in some way.
- More peers training and more peer jobs.
- One place for a day program, pharmacy, group home, psychiatric facilities, etc. Would like one stop shopping.
- Ability to go back to school.

Say One Thing to Someone Struggling With a Mental Illness

- Go out in the world and do not give up.
- Look at me. See yourself as a role model.
- Seek help and pick up the pieces. Talk to people and give life a chance.
- Hang in there and hang tough. Do not give in – do the dos.
- Do not give up and do not stop thinking about tomorrow.
- Do just do it - do it good!

Stigma – How is it a Barrier to Recovery?

- Part of why she did not want to be on medications and got rid of them.
- Lost employment after hospitalization.
- Trouble getting a job due to stigma.
- Wasn't accepted back to work
- Fear of the unknown and fear of the past. People are often afraid. They are trying to spread the word that HIV is a livable condition.

What Could People Say to be a Stigma Free Ambassador/Advice

- Feel stigma free movement does not address her OCD.
- It is ok to get help and you should not be ashamed.
- Stigma may prevent people from getting help.
- People should be more aware of what is available.
- Many companies discriminate against the handicapped and/or mentally ill.
- Believe many people have stigma – think there is a need to start at the top and make all aware.
- More education needed in the schools. Early intervention is important.

Mr. Basto thanked all for their comments.

Ms. Becker announced the “Terri Belske Mental Health Consumer Advocate Recognition” award. Ms. Belske was a pioneer for many years in the consumer advocacy movement. She empowered herself and many others. Terri passed away a few years ago and this award is being given out annually in her memory. This year's award is presented to John Robbins. He could best be described as an Unsung Hero. John Robbins has proven it is possible to be both a strong advocate and compassionate person. He is able to stimulate others to thought rather than rash action and to encourage positive change resulting in recovery.

Ms. McMann stated that Mr. Robbins has been a member, driver, facilitator, and manager at the Morris County Wellness Center for the last eight years. He is an extraordinary example of recovery, determination, courage and caring to everyone he meets. He shares his story with others and helps bring them into recovery. All congratulated Mr. Robbins and he thanked everyone for this very special award. He thanked all the providers and professionals for their compassion and drive. He believes that sharing stories helps to people in their recovery journey.

Ms. Becker stated that the Morris Stigma Free Communities has grown a lot in the last few years and encouraged all in attendance to take the Stigma Free pledge. She also reminded everyone to complete the forum evaluations.

MHASAB member, Vicky Mulligan announced that tonight's forum is dedicated to Charles LaRussa. Although she didn't know him personally she heard a lot about him and his role as an advocate and his many years serving on the Mental Health Addictions Services Advisory Board. She presented a slide show, which included some special pictures of Charles LaRussa. A beautiful song accompanied the slides called "I Am". Each person was asked to find a word that described him or her. Each slide had positive words reflecting each person. She asked everyone to remember to let the positive qualities live on and know you are whole. "Celebrate You".

The evening concluded at 7:30 p.m.

Written comments:

1. Most important issue:
Early intervention in schools, PTA, suicide awareness before a crisis happens
Housing, transportation, Client issues
2. What I wished I had said:
How much I enjoyed; thanks to MHASAB, Laurie Becker, for getting the word out.
Would like to know more about the medications that someone spoke about at Homeless Solutions.
3. Biggest gap:
How and when to use our medication, promptly and on time.

Met expectations:

Yes (12)

Somewhat (3)

No (1)

Attended previous forums:

Yes (5)

No (7)

Highlights:

- Speakers on recovery, I AM photoshoot by Vicky, Dr Basto, TB advocate award. Resource sharing; great job with Forum.
- Dr. Peter Basto

Suggestions to improve next year's Forum:

- Better transportation

Suggested Topics

- How to deal with emotional and mental problems.

Received services from:

NewBridge, AA, attended Life Center Stage functions
MHAEM
MHAEM, Homeless Solutions, OTA

Answered by:
Consumer (4)
Family member (2)
Provider (2)

Agencies in attendance included:

Atlantic Health
Collaborative Support Programs/Wellness Center
Community Hope
Daytop
Family Intervention Services
Freedom House
Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital
High Focus
Homeless Solutions, Inc.
Hope House
Intensive Family Support Programs
Legal Services NWJ
Life Center Stage
Mental Health Association of Morris County
Morris County Department of Human Services
Morris County Prosecutor's Office
Morris County Sheriff's Office/Hope One
NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services
NAMI Morris
NewBridge
NJ AIDS Services
New Pathways
Office of Temporary Assistance
Prime Healthcare/Saint Clare's
Project Self Sufficiency
Summit Health
United Way