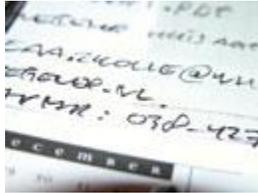


Community-Based Services Foster Wellness and Recovery

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Community-based behavioral healthcare providers understand what people need to lead healthy, productive and rewarding lives. They are dedicated to building opportunities for well-being and success through a continuum of services, which encompasses prevention, early intervention, treatment and various types of support programs. In fact, every provider in the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA) offers a variety of programs that address most, if not all, of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness that are promoted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), according to Shauna Moses, Associate Executive Director of NJAMHAA.

These dimensions are emotional, environmental (defined by SAMHSA as “Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being”), financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social and spiritual (“Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life”). They are the focus of SAMHSA’s National Wellness Week (September 17-23, 2012), which is part of National Recovery Month. This annual event “celebrates people in recovery, lauds the contributions of treatment and service providers, and promotes the message that recovery in all its forms is possible,” as described on www.recoverymonth.gov.

“Community-based behavioral healthcare providers and their services are invaluable resources for children and adults,” Moses said. “Over the past six years since I joined NJAMHAA, I have been greatly inspired by many stories of how the services our members provide empower individuals to manage mental illnesses and addictions and, as a result, truly transform their lives. I continue to enjoy hearing stories from our providers and directly from some of their clients. More recently, I had the opportunity to observe and experience first hand the amazing work that our members provide,” she added, referring to her own diagnosis of depression and how Carrier Clinic, a NJAMHAA member, enabled her to begin progressing toward recovery.

Moses demonstrated the impact of services from both her experiences and observations during her stay at Carrier Clinic. “I quickly evolved from being reticent and withdrawn to being more open about the various approaches the staff took, as well as being more open with my feelings with the staff and fellow patients. Before I left Carrier, I had connections made with a psychiatrist and a psychologist, and I felt motivated – and still do – to continue progressing with the supports of medication, therapy and individual endeavors, such as exercising.”

While at Carrier, Moses met a woman in her 20’s who talked about her many returns to drug use, multiple overdoses and the fact that she has never had a job. “Before I left, she expressed her determination to get off drugs so she can truly show her family how much she loves them and

her plans to earn a GED and open a dog grooming business with her sister,” Moses said. “Another striking example is a man in his 40s who barely said two words the first couple of days. Then, one day, during our break, he joined my roommate and me for enjoyable conversation as we walked around the courtyard.”

“I have every confidence that my fellow patients and I will continue to become stronger, healthier and happier, thanks to the expert and compassionate services we received at Carrier,” Moses added. “I also have no doubt that many more individuals will benefit tremendously from services that Carrier and NJAMHAA’s 170-plus other members provide.”

Moses shared several examples of NJAMHAA members’ services and the successes that these programs foster.

Many NJAMHAA members offer supportive housing and residential programs: safe, stable home environments, as well as treatment and other services, which enable consumers to achieve goals related to recovery from their illnesses and other aspects of their lives. For instance, Greater Trenton Behavioral HealthCare (GTBHC) abides by a “Housing First” model, which has been proven effective for providing security and leading to many successes, such as beginning or returning to school and the workforce.

To meet the goal of financial wellness, several NJAMHAA members offer services that enable consumers to achieve and enjoy many rewards of independent living. For example, Community Enterprises Corporation (CEC), an affiliate of Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey in Freehold, offers the federal Individual Development Account program, through which participants receive financial education and save money; several ultimately purchased homes, started businesses and started or returned to school, including GED and college programs; CEC also created a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program and established the Access Financial Literacy Education Association. Family Guidance Center Corporation (FGCC) in Hamilton offers a broad range of Consumer Credit Counseling Services, which include Credit/Budget/Financial Counseling, Debt Management Programs, Pre- and Post-Bankruptcy Counseling, Representative Payee Services and Housing Counseling.

Regarding the physical dimension of wellness, several NJAMHAA members have launched successful integrated-care programs to ensure that consumers receive primary healthcare services, including preventative care and treatment for chronic illnesses, as well as treatment for mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders. GTBHC and All Access Mental Health (AAMH), which is based in Princeton, coordinate with local Federally Qualified Health Centers; Catholic Charities Diocese of Trenton and FGCC have the capacity to provide primary care on site, which GTBHC and AAMH also aim to do in the near future. These agencies’ efforts, together known as the Mercer County Integrated Care Collaborative, have led to significant achievements in just the first two years: substantial improvements in management of diabetes and cholesterol levels; reduced hospitalizations for psychiatric and addiction-related reasons (from 14 patients [5 percent] during the 30 days before program enrollment, to one person [.08 percent] after six months, to zero upon discharge); reduced emergency room visits for psychiatric reasons (from 5 percent at baseline to zero after six months); majority of clients (87 percent) experiencing no serious psychological distress during the program; more participants not using

illegal substances (from 75 to 82 percent); and more participants in stable housing in the community (from 44 to 63 percent).

Equally positive results have been achieved at a co-located integrated-care program at Care Plus NJ, Inc. in Paramus. Clients are getting colonoscopies and mammograms more than before, so cancers are detected early; and recurring bronchitis and sudden psychotropic death are being prevented because the staff has immediate access to a nebulizer and an EKG. In addition, consumers are becoming more health conscious: individuals with diabetes are bringing their insulin and glucometers to the center every day, and 100 clients lost a total of 864 pounds in one year by participating in the on-site gym and nutritional education program.

“These are just a few of many more examples – including those successes already achieved, others in progress and undoubtedly many more in the future – of the tremendous value community-based providers and their programs offer to individuals of all ages,” Moses said.

To locate community-based behavioral healthcare providers by county, visit www.njamhaa.org, scroll down and click on the “Need Treatment?” button.