



Wellness Information Network

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Education Committee

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Diversified Care Management Providing Meaningful Service to Youth

Diversified Care Management (DCM) is a sister company of Great Lakes Behavioral Research Institute that provides administrative support and staffing to many large non-profit and public sector entities in Western Pennsylvania. DCM has placed hundreds of staff in various professional positions throughout Allegheny County government. DCM's Youth Support Partner (YSP) unit, under the auspices of the Department of Human Services, is dedicated to helping youth who are receiving services through the Office of Children Youth and Families, Juvenile Probation and/or Office of Behavioral Health.

Youth Support Partners serve as positive role models, peer supports and advocates for youth. Each YSP has had their own system involvement as youth, making it easier to establish rapport and work empathetically with youth they serve. Typically, YSP's age from 19 to about 27 and at maximum capacity, the unit employs 36 YSP's. The unit continues to grow and adapt in order to help youth the best that they can. Services are voluntary, allowing youth to have a decision whether to work with a YSP.

YSP's serve youth ranging from 14-20 years old, with some exceptions. Youth are mostly referred to the YSP unit by caseworkers, probation officers or mental health service providers.

The YSP role is quite different from that of other service providers. Their primary principle is voice and choice for the youth they serve. They encourage youth to identify goals, and provide support and guidance in helping youth to obtain those goals. Some typical things YSP's do include helping youth in finding employment, obtaining vital documents, (social security cards/birth certificates etc.) building resumes, identifying natural supports and supporting them in reaching their goals, hopes, and dreams.

DCM is hiring persons to work as YSPs. If you or someone you know has had system involvement as a youth and is looking to for a fun work environment and to make a difference in the lives of young people, call (412) 442-8977 or email a resume to Aaron Thomas (Assistant Unit Director) at Aaron.Thomas@AlleghenyCounty.us.

By David Muehlbauer

Editor's note: A DCM staff person shares a personal perspective on working as a Youth Support Partner Please see page 3.

Say What?

- "I take opioids to treat chronic pain. Stigmatizing them will harm me." **Sonya Huber**, Author
- "The beauty of recovery is it's about connecting. It's one addict talking to another, saying, 'I get it.'" **Jamie Lee Curtis**, Actress
- "We would never tell someone with a broken leg that they should stop wallowing and get it together." **Michelle Obama**, Former First Lady
- "The saddest people always try their hardest to make people happy because they know what it's like to feel absolutely worthless and they don't want anyone else to feel like that." **Robin Williams**, Actor

SAMHSA Introduces New Efforts to Advance Evidence-Based Practices for Opioid Use and Serious Mental Illness

In January, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced a new Technical Assistance (TA) effort to focus on the specific needs of states and local jurisdictions to address the opioid crisis in their areas. SAMHSA released \$12 million in funding to the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry to begin the effort to utilize local expertise to provide TA and training on evidence-based practices to combat the nation's opioid crisis.

The Opioid State Targeted Response TA program aims to provide TA on evidence-based practices across the spectrum of prevention, treatment and recovery. The program is funded to support the Opioid STR program authorized by the 21st Century Cures Act. The TA program will ensure that Americans suffering with opioid use disorders will gain access to the life-saving evidence-based, medication-assisted treatment and psychosocial services they need.

"Ensuring that communities across the nation have access to evidence-based services is critical to

advancing the behavioral health of the nation," said Dr. Elinore F. McCance-Katz, Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use. "I am committed to ensuring that the implementation of evidence-based practices is a top priority."

In keeping with that priority, SAMHSA has also released a new funding opportunity to develop a national Center of Excellence dedicated to the implementation of evidence-based practices to treat individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI). The Clinical Support Services for SMI TA Center will provide training and education to providers across the country to treat the nation's most vulnerable populations.

This is only the start of SAMHSA's new efforts to ensure that communities are well equipped with the knowledge and training needed to implement evidence-based practices for those living with behavioral health conditions.

For more information, visit samhsa.gov.

Engaging Opportunity to Promote Recovery

The ACCR's Collaborative for Recovery Dialogues (CRD) committee, under the direction of Dr. Wesley Sowers and Sarah Goldstein, is dedicated to improving and promoting communication between behavioral health service users, partners, and practitioners of services.

CRD is offering the opportunity for all stakeholders to engage in impactful discussions that foster respect, understanding, honesty, trust and collaborative problem-solving between these groups. CRD will provide training and/or coaching for persons to participate in the dialogues as facilitators, note takers, listeners and conversationalists. In addition, CRD will serve as an advisory group to others who are interested in developing dialogues and promoting recovery. Anyone interested in helping to advance recovery as an individual or as part of an organization, are encouraged to participate!

For more information, please contact Sarah Goldstein via email at goldsteinse@upmc.edu.

Conferences

Allegheny Annual Spring Recovery Conference: Suicide Prevention
April 4, 2018; Pittsburgh, PA
ccbh.com

Peerpocalypse 2018 Conference
April 9-12, 2018; Seaside, OR
Mhaoforegon.org

National Council for Behavioral Health
April 23-25, 2018; Washington, DC
Natcon18.thenationalcouncil.org

Mental Health America
June 14-16, 2018; Washington, DC
Mentalhealthamerica.net

IEPA 11 Conference
October 7-10, 2018; Boston, MA
Iepa.org.au

Perspective: An Essay from a Youth Support Partner

(See related story on first page)

Someone Who Understands

Empathy is often described as the ability to step out of one's own perspective and walk in someone else's shoes. Imagine; being a young teenager and being removed from your home for reasons you do not understand whatsoever. The feelings and emotions that coincide with this removal from home vary from person to person but may include anger, frustration, isolation, stigma, sadness, confusion and many more. Having someone to talk to who truly understands can make all the difference and this is where the Youth Support Partners (YSP's) help make a difference in the lives of youth in the system.

A family of five is split up. The three children who once resided in the home are now removed from mom and dad and placed into different programs. Safety of the children was a dire concern and something had to be done right away. Despite this dire need for temporary removal, the children do not understand why they are being removed. Each family functions in a different way, and even though a family's function is not safe, it still becomes normal to the children in the family. Therefore, the children are removed and then comes the feelings that come with this removal. The oldest of the three children is old enough that the caseworker on the case made a referral for the youth to get a YSP. (Typically ages 14-21)

From the first time I met with the youth I realized we were a perfect match. We shared similar interests including outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, camping, and interests in firefighting and first responder involvement. Most importantly, we shared the common bond of system involvement. I shared personal system experience with the youth so that the youth would know that he is not alone. The youth did not understand why he and his siblings were removed from their home. I explained the children's removal under terms that the youth not only understood, but also interested him. I explained that just like a firefighter must undergo training before they can enter a burning building, the youth's mom and dad must also undergo some training to make their home a safer place for him and his siblings before they can return home. The youth understood this because it was in terms he understood and something that interested him. It also came from a credible source because the youth knew that I was also involved in the system when I was a youth. I not only helped the youth set and reach goals, advocated on the youth's behalf and helped the youth understand the system but also did activities with youth like fishing, sports, and attended youth's sports games.

Having a YSP can make a big difference in helping youth understand how the system works, and help them develop their own voice. Every child who is in the system deserves to have someone who truly understands. This is just a brief story of how I specifically helped one youth. Our unit has touched the lives of over 800 youth in Allegheny County to date and our role is very effective. It is our mission to ensure that every youth in the system in Allegheny County be given a voice and a choice and an opportunity to have someone in their life who truly understands.

Sincerely,

Anonymous Youth Support Partner Staff



A Worldwide Movement for Social Change

The Human Library is an initiative for social change based on the power of a person’s story. It is designed to build a positive framework for conversations that can challenge stereotypes and reduce stigma through dialogue. The project started in Denmark and has grown tremendously as people invest in the power of people’s stories.

Thanks to the generous support of the Staunton Farm Foundation, the Consumer Health Coalition (CHC) is building a Human Library here in Allegheny County.

CHC organizes Human Library events where people share their experiences living with and in recovery from behavioral health issues with individuals and community groups. Through this project, CHC will present the breadth of behavioral health and will support and educate the community and challenge stigma.

CHC is currently training storytellers as well as seeking organizations, faith groups, community groups, businesses, government agencies, schools, and universities to listen and engage.

The next event will be Monday, March 12, 6 pm at the Carnegie Library East Liberty Branch.

To RSVP for the March 12 event or to participate with the Human Library, contact Amanda Woodside by phone at 412-456-1877 ext. 211 or by email at awoodside@consumerhealthcoalition.org.

SOURCES

- Coalitionforrecovery.org
- Consumer Health Coalition
- Diversified Care Management
- Goodreads.com
- Humanlibrary.org
- MentalHealthHumor.com
- SAMHSA.gov

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