

OMHSAS PEER SPECIALIST INITIATIVE

July, 2006

In April 2002, President Bush announced the creation of the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. This commission was charged “to study the mental health service delivery system, and to make recommendations that would enable adults with serious mental illness and children with serious emotional disturbance to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.” In July 2003, The President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health completed this task and presented their final report, *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*. Based on the commission’s review of research and testimony, they found that recovery from a mental illness is a real possibility. However, in order to facilitate recovery, the nation needed to fundamentally transform the system’s approach to providing mental health care. The commission recommended that transformation occur in the direction of actively facilitating recovery and building resilience to face life’s challenges.

In November 2004, the Pennsylvania Recovery Workgroup generated the following definition of recovery to guide service system transformation in this State:

Recovery is a self-determined and holistic journey that people undertake to heal and grow. Recovery is facilitated by relationships and environments that provide hope, empowerment, choices and opportunities that promote people reaching their full potential as individuals and community members.

In 2005, the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) gave full endorsement to the definition and committed to transforming our own mental health system which included the development of services that facilitate and support recovery. Peer Specialist Services have been defined in Pennsylvania as one of these services.

TRANSFORMATION GRANT – DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Background

- The Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) received a 3-year \$300,000 Mental Health Systems Transformation Grant award from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This grant project is funded until September 30, 2007 and has provided for the development and refinement of a training curriculum and peer certification process known as the PA Peer Specialist Initiative (PSI).
- The initiative is designed to promote the quality and expansion of recovery practices within the Commonwealth’s county mental health programs, by training and certifying peer specialists to work within provider agencies.
- The goal of this grant demonstration project was to train 20 certified peer specialists per region and to create or transform up to 20 Certified Peer Specialist employment positions in each region’s local county mental health system.
- The goal and design of Pennsylvania’s grant project was a partnership between OMHSAS and Mental Health Association of Southeastern PA (MHASP) to develop a certified peer specialist training curriculum and to research service design that could lead to Medicaid funded Peer Supports Services in PA.
- A training and technical assistance team from the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania comprises the PSI demonstration project implementation team.

- The PSI training curriculum is designed to help consumers better understand peer support and utilizes a three-tiered approach focusing on providing education, skill building and experiential process.
- Montgomery County currently employs Certified Peer Specialists. That initial pilot effort served as the template for design of the OMHSAS PSI.

Demonstration Grant Implementation

- On March 1, 2005, OMHSAS selected projects in three (3) regions across Pennsylvania representing the Northeast, Central and Western regions. Those projects selected included Erie County in the west, a Northeast 7-county collaborative with Lackawanna/Susquehanna coordinating (plus Bradford Sullivan, Wyoming/Luzerne and Tioga) and a 5 county collaborative coordinated by Capital Areas Behavioral Healthcare Collaborative (CABHC) in the central region includes Dauphin Cumberland/Perry, Lancaster and Lebanon.
- Additionally York/Adams and Franklin/Fulton counties were invited into the Peer Specialist Initiative under a separate funding arrangement as part of the Harrisburg State Hospital closure.
- A 2-day PSI orientation/kick-off event was held in State College on April 13 and 14, 2005.
- Shery Mead, a national consultant on peer specialists provided the keynote address for the kick-off event. For more information on Shery Mead and peer specialists go to the following web address www.mentalhealthpeers.com
- Attendees at the kick-off event represented 17 counties, including the original 13 county PSI grant project, plus the 4 additional counties in the Harrisburg State Hospital Service Area.
- In June 2005, MHASP completed the first round of in-county technical assistance for the PSI project teams. The main task was to refine project workplans and timelines as well as to determine strengths and potential barriers to implementation.
- Training classes and certification of the first classes of the PA OMHSAS Certified Peer Specialists took place in June 2006. Simultaneously, a 2-day orientation training for supervisors of peer specialists was rolled-out state-wide

MEDICAID FUNDING – STATE PLAN AMENDMENT

- In July and August 2005 OMHSAS conducted research of the 6 states that have successfully developed Medicaid funded peer supports (Georgia, South Carolina, Hawaii, Arizona, Iowa and Washington D.C.)
- September through November 2005 OMHSAS facilitated the Peer Support Workgroup, a group of 20 state-wide stakeholders whose task was to develop the various peer support service requirement documents necessary to complement the submission of a State Plan Amendment for Peer Supports
- The requirements document created by the Peer Support Workgroup was reformatted by OMHSAS, creating the Peer Support Service Medical Necessity Criteria and Standards for Medicaid Reimbursement
- A Peer Supports State Plan Amendment package was submitted to CMS on December 23, 2005, with an operational start date for PA Peer Support Services projected as October 1, 2006
- In February 2006 OMHSAS staff began to work on Peer Support Operational Issues to include: delineating the peer specialist certification process, identifying core components for

an OMHSAS approved training curricula, outlining the provider licensing and enrollment process, establishing coding, benefits limits and rate setting methodology.

- On February 1, 2006 OMHSAS drafted a PA Public Notice regarding coverage of peer support services and additionally drafted the HealthChoices Memorandum
- In March 2006, OMHSAS developed a work plan and timeline for statewide implementation of Peer Support Services.
- In July 2006, the Peer Supports Bulletin and also the Peer Supports Service Medical Necessity Criteria and Standards for Medicaid Reimbursement was completed and circulated for internal and stakeholder review and comment

PEER SPECIALIST STATEWIDE EXPANSION

- On June 15 2006, as a next stage or phase of development of Peer Support Services in Pa, OMHSAS Deputy Secretary Joan Erney wrote to all County MH/MR Administrators, who were not originally a part of the OMHSAS PSI Demonstration Project, inviting those counties to join in the state-wide development of certified peer specialists.
- It is the intent of this phase of the project to develop peer support service access throughout the state by October 1, 2006
- In late July 2006, OMHSAS convened a meeting with key stakeholder organizations. This group is charged with the task of developing the PA Peer Support Information Campaign. The goal of this group is to develop and package PA Peer Support information to be conveyed statewide in a series of regional information sharing meetings and other communication methods.