



Government Affairs Dept.

Mental Health Association in New Jersey



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## **AGENDA FOR PROGRESS**

### **WE ARE THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN NEW JERSEY (MHANJ).....**

The MHANJ is New Jersey's premier statewide private non-profit organization dedicated to improving treatment and opportunities for children and adults with mental illnesses through legislative and executive advocacy. Our organization is dedicated to working with, and for, consumers and families to create a better life for those with mental illness across the state.

Our focus is fighting for what is best for our citizens throughout NJ who need access to mental health services for themselves and their families.

Proudly, in 2010 the MHANJ celebrated its 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of providing advocacy, public education and innovative specialized programming.

### **THE AGENDA FOR PROGRESS NEEDS YOUR HELP.....**

We are living through difficult times where there is uncertainty almost everywhere you look. Nationally, the severe recession has shaken many of the foundations of the current mental health system. States are confronting record deficits with cuts to Medicaid, state mental health authorities and many health and social services. In NJ, even after budget reductions for FY 2011, there remains a large state deficit and great concern that further reductions in services and personnel can be expected. Health care reform will be a driver for mental health and substance use services and the state implementation plan will be critical starting in 2011.

For the Mental Health Association, this presents an opportunity for us to consider our priorities in light of the recession and health care reform. With these issues in mind, MHANJ has developed Public Policy goals for 2011.

**HEALTHCARE REFORM:** With emphasis on integrating healthcare as a priority of healthcare reform, MHANJ will focus on integration of physical and mental health care, integration of substance use and mental health care treatment, inclusion of mental health in development of insurance coverages including Medicaid. MHANJ will:

- Work closely with DMHAS on reform planning; hold statewide forum to educate state players on healthcare and NJ;
- Establish a working relationship with Medicaid to increase understanding of behavioral health population and plan for integrated reform;
- Establish a relationship with DMHAS and addictions treatment community to spearhead joint response to reform;
- Advocate for implementation of Parity as part of reform. Evaluate and advocate for possibilities of coordinating primary and mental health care services using a variety of vehicles (e.g. FQHCs, ACOs, medical homes).

**YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS:** New Jersey is one of a few states that does not have a state wide suicide plan. This failure leaves the state vulnerable to inadequate and inappropriate responses when a suicide attempt occurs. There are federal dollars that are available to assist New Jersey in developing an appropriate response. MHANJ needs to work with the Department of Children and Families and other appropriate entities to improve the State's capacity to respond effectively.

**SUICIDE PREVENTION:**

- Investigate policy and advocacy issues involved with the development of a state-wide Suicide Prevention campaign focused on youth;
- Utilize statewide focus to draw down federal funding.

**CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH:** Youth attending college should have access to mental health care when needed, without stigma. Colleges and universities should have guiding principles that include organizational procedures, assessment, and treatment options. Continue to work with legislators and colleges to address concerns and promote solutions.

**SYSTEMS REFORM:** The mental health system needs to continue to improve its capacity to meet the challenge of providing services to people in the most appropriate settings: There remain too many people in institutions who could better be served in the community; some County hospitals remain under-utilized and do not fit into an integrated system of care.; too many people experience long waits in emergency rooms. Additionally, inadequate outpatient services lead to unnecessary delays in accessing necessary care which often force people to use emergency rooms when it could be avoided.

**CONSUMER RECOVERY – PEER/CONSUMER PROVIDER WORKFORCE:**

- Continue to provide leadership and training towards the integration of peers/consumer providers into our community and hospital based mental health services.
- Create new and expand existing opportunities for peer delivered services that will be eligible for future Medicaid funding.

**SERVICES FOR ELDERLY:**

- Develop a plan to improve services to the elderly. Goal is to develop a survey, if appropriate, to determine gaps in services as well as identify gaps in delivery system.
- Evaluate specialized nursing homes that are equipped to treat seniors with behavioral health problems and identify gaps in knowledge and care.
- Legislate necessary clinical training in managing behavioral health patients for community nursing home staff at all levels.
- Develop goals and lead a statewide coalition to accomplish them.

**FAMILIES OF ADULT CHILDREN WITH MENTAL ILLNESS :** A recent statewide survey shows us that families with adult children living with them are in great need of assistance in assisting their relative and defining their parenting role given the ages and problems experienced by family members. MHANJ recommends:

- Expansion of IFSS programs
- Inclusion of family members in mental health system as part of planning and treatment- especially discharge planning
- Development of advocacy strategy to eradicate family suffering as a result of stigma.

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## THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN NEW JERSEY.....

- Reaches over 100,000 people each year through our 24/7 Helpline, websites, and community programs.
- Champions legislation to advance rights in health care.
- Spearheaded the development of New Jersey's Supported Housing movement — resulting in thousands of affordable permanent housing units for the state's disabled residents.
- Developed innovative employment programs, led by the nationally recognized Consumer Connections program which has trained over 1,000 persons with mental illnesses to be employed within human services.

Together, with our county affiliates and national organization — Mental Health America — and in partnership with other disability groups, we strive to influence policy and funding decisions that will advance mental health treatment at the local, state and federal levels. We do this as a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation with a strictly non partisan agenda.

The MHANJ remains dedicated to realizing the vision described in the July 2003 President's New Freedom Commission Report *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*, in which it is written "we envision a future when everyone with a mental illness will recover, a future when mental illnesses can be prevented or cured, a future when everyone with a mental illness at any stage of life has access to effective treatment and supports — essentials for living, working and participating fully in the community."

