

QI Spotlight

November 2005

Over the past year, OMHSAS formed a Recovery Workgroup to explore how to transition the Pennsylvania mental health system to a more recovery-oriented approach. This task is seen as a major priority by OMHSAS. In November 2005, the publication entitled "A Call for Change: Toward a Recovery-Oriented Mental Health Service System for Adults" was distributed as the initial product of the Recovery Workgroup. It calls upon all stakeholders to recognize the emerging need and growing interest in Pennsylvania to make a shift towards a more recovery-oriented service system. This QI Spotlight contains excerpts from the A Call for Change document, and CBHNP plans to participate fully in upcoming training opportunities.

What is meant by "recovery"?

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.

People with serious mental illnesses do, in fact, recover. Some become fully symptom-free with time, while others live rich and fulfilling lives while still experiencing some psychiatric problems. The amalgamation of these voices has created what is now known as the "recovery movement" in mental health. One of the basic premises of this movement is that the role of a mental health service system is not to "do for" or to "do to", but to "do with."

The 2003 President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health stated that the goal of mental health services is recovery. Recovery was defined as the process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. For some individuals, recovery is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability. For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms.

Is this also what is meant by being "in recovery" from drug and/or alcohol abuse problems?

The two concepts of mental health and addictions “recovery” share the term, but there are philosophical and practical differences between the two fields that hopefully will become more unified in time. For example, one of the primary elements of a 12-step recovery is to admit powerlessness and turn one’s self and life over to a Higher Power. In mental health recovery, the focus tends to be more on empowerment and self-determination. In 12-step programs, members are encouraged to label themselves as their addiction or disorder (“I’m an alcoholic”). In recovery-oriented mental health, the emphasis is on moving beyond diagnostic labels as defining characteristics. Despite the differences, recovery is strongly associated with self-help, peer support, challenging stigma and discrimination, and moving beyond traditional treatment settings in both mental health and substance abuse recovery.

What can be done at CBHNP now and in the near future?

- *In all interactions with Members and Providers, consumers of behavioral health services should be considered and treated as equal partners in the treatment process.*
- *A non-judgmental atmosphere should be promoted by all employees. Avoid and correct “us-them” attitudes.*
- *Understand and strongly promote consumer-operated peer support services, which are now available to CBHNP Members in all Counties as a Reinvestment service.*
- *Educate ourselves (CBHNP employees, Providers, and Members) in recovery principles and concepts.*
- *Promote full and meaningful participation by Members and family in the treatment planning process (e.g., ISPT meetings) and in input into CBHNP operations (e.g., committee involvement).*

Lastly, as a starting point, we encourage all employees and other stakeholders to read “A Call for Change: Toward a Recovery-Oriented Mental Health Service System for Adults” and be challenged by its concluding questions:

How can you use this document?

How will you use this document?

How can we partner to support peoples recovery?

What are you willing to take responsibility for?