



The Rural DIFFERENCE

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ALLIANCE OF RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

Collaboration Defines the North Central HealthChoices Program

Over the past five years the North Central State Option Health Choices contract has seen many successes. The key stakeholders in the contract attribute those successes to what has turned out to be a unique collaborative relationship between the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), Community Care Behavioral Health and the Behavioral Health Alliance of Rural PA (BHARP).

The North Central HealthChoices program covers a vast geographical region of predominantly rural counties in North Central PA. The region stretches from Warren County in the west to Wayne County in the east as far south as Huntingdon County and up to the Northern Tier in Bradford County. In order to provide an avenue for stakeholder feedback across the region the County MH/ID, Drug and Alcohol and Human Services directors came together to form The Behavioral Health Alliance of Rural PA. This Alliance has worked collaboratively with OMHSAS and Community Care to assure that cost effective and innovative services are available to individuals and families in the North Central Region.

One of those innovative and cost effective programs is School Based Behavioral Health (SBBH). This program was developed by Community Care in collaboration with OMHSAS Children's Bureau, as an alternative to traditional Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services provided to children and adolescents in the home and community. The SBBH program took the BHRS platform and added an enhanced level of clinical accountability and a strong family component. Individuals that receive SBBH reap the benefits of highly skilled master's level clinicians, flexible services that move between the home, school and community and an accountable, clinical home not found in other services. All the staff involved in the service participates in a learning collaborative that allows them to receive training and clinical support as well as networking with other SBBH programs to share their successes.

The families receiving the service use a web based tool to evaluate progress and satisfaction with the service. When SBBH was rolled out in the North Central Region the BHARP members played an integral role in determining where the service could be implemented and working with the School Districts to assess their readiness for the service. The North Central Region currently has SBBH programs in 5 counties serving children and adolescents in 18 schools.

Another innovative program developed in the North Central is the Dual Diagnosis Treatment Teams which serve individuals with a mental health diagnosis and a developmental disability. For these individuals and their families receiving clinically appropriate services in a timely manner helps to maintain community based living arrangements and often times avoid unnecessary hospitalizations. The treatment team is holistic in its design and staffing includes a master's level behavioral specialist, psychiatric nurse, pharmacist and a psychiatrist. This model employs a community based team delivered approach, through cross-systems integration, which utilizes principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) and positive behavioral supports.

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These innovative programs are only 2 examples of what the strong collaborative relationship between BHARP, OMHSAS and Community Care Behavioral Health has accomplished. The remainder of our newsletter highlights several other projects and collaborations throughout the North Central Region. If you would like to learn more about BHARP and our programs you may visit our website at www.BHARP.org.

The County Line:

Innovative Program Assists Families and Individuals in Wayne County

The Family Focused Solution Based program was initiated through the North Central State Option, HealthChoices program at the request of Wayne County. According to the service description approved by OMHSAS, the Family Focused Solution Based Services (FFSBS) initiative utilizes a team approach and provides services in the home and community to optimize the recovery process for adults with serious and persistent mental illness. "The team applies clinical expertise to the assessment of the family system, therefore building upon the strengths of that system and providing clinical support for change. The service engages individuals who may be struggling with family, social, and economic situations that are stressful to the family unit and puts the individual's mental health recovery at risk."

Due to the very rural nature of Wayne County, "there are real and perceived barriers to mental health assessment and treatment. Because of the rural culture and the limited resources for persons suffering with mental health illness, many individuals with mental health diagnoses rely on their family support systems for all aspects of their recovery. In working with individuals and their families, it has been documented that positive family interactions and the family support system's understanding of recovery, the individual's diagnosis and medication requirements are all critical to a person's recovery and stability in the home and community. In an area where outpatient appointments are as far away as 34 miles and psychiatric services are months in the waiting, families serve as the primary witnesses to and caregivers for persons with mental illness. The goal of the FFSBS is to expand the continuum of treatment services available to individuals that address their behavioral and emotional issues in the context of their parental/familial roles in a way that other traditional mental health services have not."

Recent feedback from families and individuals demonstrates the effectiveness of this new program. The following is information shared in a letter written by Margaret Ennis, Wayne County Mental Health Administrator, to Community Care Behavioral Health

"Thank you for all your efforts in helping Wayne County develop and attain the Adult Focused Family Based Program. The staff here is very pleased and impressed with the positive effects the program has had on the consumers and their families.

I had a Mental Health public meeting on April 24th. Parents of one of the adult consumers in the program attended the meeting. They spontaneously shared their family's experience with the family based team. They each spoke, first Mrs. F. and then Mr. F. As they spoke, each cried as she/he relayed how wonderful the team has been to them, "how much healing has been able to take place in their family," "how much the time and the patience of the team have taught their family about L.'s

illness and how to help manage it," "how much better and effective the treatment is in their home –how comfortable that is for L., them and the other members of the family," "how this program has extended to benefit even the aunts and uncles and how grateful they are for that," "how this shared understanding among the family has taken away the embarrassment and stress of family gatherings," and many more accolades.

They spoke for 15 minutes. This is a prominent family in our community who have provided L. with the best treatment available within a two hour radius. They have been struggling for years with L.'s illness and its impact on their family. L. was frequently in crisis and the 70 year old parents were left to manage her on their own as the siblings and extended family withdrew from what they perceived as the "chaos" and "embarrassment" of L.'s illness. This program has brought the family together in a new understanding and awareness of L.'s illness and the natural supports for L. have thus increased 8 fold. Most importantly, L. has blossomed with the love and support that now surrounds her. Her crisis situations have all but diminished since the team's involvement.

A second consumer, L., has made significant progress since the team's involvement. L. has been able to develop outside friendships and expand his support network. This is remarkable for L. as he has been isolated (physically and socially) for years.

In a third case, staff has seen a "transformation" in R. For the first time in her young daughter's life, R. has been receptive to the tools, support and treatment to make her daughter a priority. The natural consequence of this is that R. is now garnering the support of her own natural family and others. R.'s new focus on her daughter and role as a mother and support from her family have provided a positive foundation for her continued recovery. R. has become so confident in her recovery; she requested we no longer provide her with case management: she feels she no longer needs that service.

The stories echo the appreciation for the service, how it has changed lives (of the consumer and the family members who are participating), and how the crisis situations are being diminished and averted by new found family and community supports.

Please know how vital this service has become to our consumers and this community. Thank you for your support in this endeavor."

Decision Support Centers Foster Individual Empowerment and Recovery for Adults with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness

One of 2 decision Support centers in the North Central region was started on November 10, 2011 by RedCo in Schuylkill County. The community based program received assistance from Community Care Behavioral Health and specifically, Alissa Martin, Common Ground Specialist from CCBH. According to Ms. Martin, the response has been excellent and outcomes very positive. She reports that, "the DSC staff have been fully committed and passionate about the DSC. Their Recovery champions, Jill Bainbridge, Executive Director, and Corrine Ryan, DSC Coordinator, have led the implementation and have done a terrific job. Feedback from staff and clients has been overwhelmingly positive." Ms. Martin also reported on a positive story about one of the Peer Staff working at the DSC. "She started in the DSC part time just coming back to work and found out she enjoyed the work so much she decided to pursue her CPS certification and is now employed full time with the Agency." It was also reported that the DSC has assisted both the clients and staff in their recovery. Ms. Martin also expressed that "the Medical Director, Dr. Garloff, has really validated the work of the peer staff and clients in the DSC stating that when individuals come into his appointment with a Power Statement and are prepared for the appointment he has a lot more to work with."

In speaking with the DSC Coordinator, Corrine Ryan, and having asked what her experience has been she shared the following. "The Decision Support Center at The RedCo Group in Pottsville has gone through quite a journey over the last few months. The DSC went live in November 2011, starting with a fully booked first day. Our very first experience was exciting, seeing 13 individuals in one day. We met with new faces and discussed with them the importance of personal medicine and power statements. We were hoping for good feedback and we got it. Most individuals enjoyed the new addition to their doctor appointment. Some even told us they felt it gave them a voice. Not only were consumers feeling empowered, but the peer guides felt a sense of accomplishment and pride in being part of helping others in their recovery journeys."

"As the months went by and we saw more consumers, we started to build relationships and become familiar with who we were going to see next. We created an environment of relaxation and wellness, where people could feel calm and empowered before seeing their doctor. Not only did the report give them a better way to communicate with their doctor, but peer guides were able to support and guide them through their report, or just listen as they commented on their progress or about something that was bothering them. We offered them the chance to search the database library and learn more about their illness and their wellness. We also offer light refreshments and healthy snacks to promote physical wellness. We have many people come through the door to the office and know the peer guides' names, and ask, "When do I get to use the computer again?" It is exciting to know that people look forward to sitting with us and completing the reports that help in their recovery process. There have been many positive outcomes from participation in the DSC. We had some people excited about their ability to complete the report, and we had people who were very scared of technology and computers, that through the process and with support realized that they enjoyed working with computers and were astonished at how easy it really was. Another peer explained to us that he felt comfortable enough to answer the questions honestly. Honesty is important to the peer guides, as we want to provide a positive outlet for the peer, the doctor and the therapist to work together on the individual's path of recovery."

Bradford and Sullivan Counties Get Supported Employment Through the HealthChoices Program

The Main Link's Supported Employment Program

Our supported employment program has two components, the first is a mobile employment specialist who works with mental health consumers to obtain and maintain competitive employment, get a GED, drivers license or enroll in further education opportunities. The second component is a used furniture store called "The Furniture Link", a time limited program that provides an opportunity for people to develop various skills that will enhance their employability. The goal of the supported employment program is to prepare individuals for full time employment in the community.

The Furniture Link is a three year project funded by the HealthChoices Program. The store currently employs 6 part time and two full time employees, as well as an employment specialist who works with mental health consumers on job enhancing skills and goal planning. This approach is showing great success with participants in the 18-26 year old transition age group. Individuals in this age group are focusing on drivers permits and license exams, GED testing and basic employment skills like resume writing, job applications, interview protocol etc. The program also welcomes consumers involved in the criminal justice system who may be challenged with the stipulations and restrictions that accompany probation and parole. The employment specialist uses a strength based approach, taking into account the talents and desires of the individual.

The Furniture Link offers a wide variety of jobs to suit people regardless of their previous work history. Those with little or no experience in the workforce can begin by cleaning, organizing inventory, or deliveries. More experienced employees can work in sales, buying at auctions, managing the store, book keeping etc. As employees gain skills in the area of their choice they are encouraged to seek employment elsewhere. This opens the opportunity for others to be a part of The Furniture Link experience.

The Furniture Link has been welcomed by the community and provides a needed resource for people seeking home furnishings in a range of prices to fit any budget. The Furniture Link employees work as a team on occupational goals as well as personal goals. The team is dedicated to each other and the business. They are building self-esteem and confidence and developing natural supports in the community. "It's great to watch them brainstorm and troubleshoot ideas together".



Public-Private Partnership Provides Housing for Individuals in Schuylkill County

The mission of the Barefield Development Corporation, a non-profit affiliate of the City of Pottsville Housing Authority, is to improve the general welfare of the people of Pottsville, particularly those with very low to moderate income. This mission is accomplished by the construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of housing projects and related facilities that promote recreational, educational, vocational, and healthy neighborhood activities, as well as facilitates for the care of children, aged, and disabled persons. Throughout the years, Craig Shields, Chief Executive Officer of Barefield Development Corporation and Executive Director of the City of Pottsville Housing Authority, has seen this mission through by providing housing for numerous individuals and families in the city of Pottsville. This dedication to housing has led to the partnership between Barefield Development Corporation and Schuylkill County MH/DD/DA Program to utilize Capital Costs for Housing Developments under the Behavioral Health Alliance of Rural Pennsylvania (BHARP) HealthChoices reinvestment plans to renovate and develop Barefield Plaza.

Under the Capital Costs for Housing Development initiative, HealthChoices funds are used as one-time capital funding to promote the development of permanent supportive housing for the target population, MA-eligible individuals ages eighteen and older with serious and persistent mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders. Specifically to the Barefield Plaza, the initiative will support individuals in their transition from Community Residential Rehabilitative Programs (CRR) and other restrictive housing environments to permanent supportive housing.

Service Access and Management, Inc. (SAM, Inc.) on behalf of the Schuylkill County MH/DD/DA Program has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Barefield Development Corporation. As a result of the MOU, Barefield Development Corporation has been provided funding to assist with renovations to an apartment building in downtown Pottsville. In return, Barefield Development Corporation has guaranteed that all bedrooms will be rented only to the persons identified in the target population for an initial ten year term and with consideration for one subsequent five year Agreement.



Barefield Plaza provides three units, each with two bedrooms. Each unit includes a bathroom, living room, full kitchen, and laundry facilities. In addition, each unit has access to an outdoor patio area and on-site parking. In order to guarantee the property is maintained, SAM, Inc. may require or conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

In addition to Barefield Plaza providing housing for individuals, the City of Pottsville Housing Authority has assured that each tenant in need of assistance will receive a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher. These vouchers are portable, meaning that should an individual chooses to move from Barefield Plaza, the individual will be able to use the voucher to seek a private apartment that meets the requirements of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Utilization of the Housing Choice Voucher will ensure that individuals residing at Barefield Plaza will pay no more than thirty percent of their income in rent and utilities.

Individuals may also choose to participate in services such as Blended Case Management/Administrative Case Management, Certified Peer Support Services, Out-Patient Psychiatry and Therapy, Crisis Intervention, Medical Mobile, Representative Payeeship, Vocational Services, etc.

In addition to a broad array of supportive services, Service Access and Management, Inc. (SAM, Inc.) provides continuous oversight of the apartment building and serves as a single point of contact for the tenants. Even if the tenants do not choose to engage in formalized, supportive services, they know that assistance is readily available through SAM's Housing Director, Housing Supervisor, Housing Specialist, or PATH Case Manager. In particular, SAM's Housing Specialist is assigned the duty of assuring the on-going success of tenants living in Barefield Plaza. The Housing Specialist does this through continuous contacts with the tenants and by building credible relationships.

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Before



After



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“Multi-County Collaboration Provides a New Service and Employment Opportunities for Individuals in Recovery”

Over the last five years the BHARP counties have collaborated on numerous mental health and drug and alcohol initiatives for both children and adults. Some prevalent examples have been School Base Behavioral Health, a co-occurring disorders learning collaborative and a specialized treatment team for individuals who are dually diagnosed (MH/ID), just to name a few. Another prime example of this is the collaboration between Centre County MH/ID and Juniata Valley Tri County MH/ID (Huntingdon, Mifflin, and Juniata (HMJ)) in the development of the Advocacy Alliance - Seven Mountains Warmline.

In 2010 HealthChoices funds were designated to develop a warm-line program that could be shared by HMJ and Centre Counties. The contract was awarded to the Advocacy Alliance, and they set about developing the Seven Mountains Warm-line. Advocacy Alliance, a small nonprofit based in Scranton, has developed and managed several warm-lines in other counties over the last five years, which made them a good fit for the HMJ/Centre Program.

At the onset, their goal was to hire ten individuals, from each county, who are in recovery or have a family member in recovery. Becky Scott, the Supervisor of the Warm-line, stated that this is the same criteria used to hire staff for the Consumer and Family Satisfaction Teams (CFST). Scott also stated several of the local

Advocacy Alliance staff work for both programs at the same time. A few of the warm-line staff have also completed the training for Certified Peer Specialists (CPS), and Becky herself has acquired the CPS Supervisor training. The program's goal is to eventually have all of the staff trained as CPS, and both Centre County and HMJ have been very supportive with this goal.

The warm-line offers an alternative level of care to the existing Crisis-line; in fact most of the referrals for the warm-line come from the local crisis-line. The other primary referral sources are inpatient mental health units and case management staff. When individuals call the warm-line they get to speak to a peer who provides the support and encouragement they need to continue in their recovery.

Moving forward, the warm-line is looking to expand their services to provide check-in calls for the higher levels of care. If the warm-line check in service is added to an individual's treatment or service plan, the warm-line staff will make periodic calls to check in with folks at various levels of care and then follow-up with the referring provider.

The Advocacy Alliance Seven Mountains Warm-line is open seven days a week, 365 days a year including weekends and holidays. The hours are 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The phone number is (800)411-9102. You are then prompted to indicate if you are calling from Centre County or HMJ.

The Advocacy Alliance Seven Mountains Warm-line has proven to be yet another successful collaboration within the North Central HealthChoices Program.

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Public- Private Partnership Provides Housing for Individuals in Schuylkill County

Under the Capital Costs for Housing Development, HealthChoices funds have contributed toward the renovation of Barefield Plaza. In addition to the HealthChoices funds, Barefield Development Corporation has assumed the additional costs needed to renovate the property. Mr. Shields had stated that the availability of HealthChoices funds had gotten them "over the hurdle" needed to complete the project. Without the use of these funds Mr. Shields estimates it may have taken another five years to complete the Barefield Plaza renovations. As the owner of the property, Barefield Development Corporation will be responsible for all future costs, leaving Schuylkill County with no future financial liability. It is expected that rental fees from tenants will sustain Barefield Plaza's on-going operating costs.

Currently, all three units at Barefield Plaza are occupied, serving three individuals and one single mother of two young children.

Two of the individuals were referred by one of Schuylkill County's CRR Programs, one tenant had previously been homeless, and one had successfully completed the Bridge Housing Program.

While speaking to the tenants about their experience in living at Barefield Plaza, the gratitude was overwhelming. They had described their past housing experiences, and described the opportunity they now have as "a gift" that provides them with a "different outlook in life." The convenience of living so close to services, pharmacies, and access to transportation is a major advantage of the location of the property. One tenant is able to attend AA meetings and utilize peer support services, which may otherwise be a difficult task.

The development of Barefield Plaza has been a long, but very successful journey. The partnership and tireless work of Barefield Development Corporation and Schuylkill County MH/DD/DA have turned a vision for much needed housing into a reality, and a true gift for those who call Barefield Plaza home.

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"We truly believe that the Decision Support Center is very helpful in the recovery of our peers. Each question focuses specifically on certain topics. Because the information can be accessed immediately, the physician sees the peer's report before he/she enters the room. This makes the Medication Review much smoother and both the doctor and the peer can work together to come to one shared decision. The report will highlight what we like to call focus points. We call them focus points, because we do not want to add a judgment by labeling it a concern, rather we want to focus on an area that may need more attention or work. Therapists have access to the report, making for a great connection in care. When all members of a treatment team have and are working off the same information, the peer is more likely to make progress on his/her goals."

"Every peer seen in the DSC is encouraged to complete a Power Statement. "A Power Statement is a goal for a peer's recovery. We view this as a chance to invite the doctor to help the peer find medication or find activities to help in their recovery. Because we ask peers to have a Power Statement, the DSC at The ReDCo Group in Pottsville has one too. Our power statement reads: "We are the CommonGround peer staff and we want to work with everyone to bring together treatment teams so we can build power and strength in recovery!"

"To date our DSC has provided over 1400 services, and we have shared in the many great experiences. We look forward to continuing our work helping our peers advocate for their recovery and feel empowered to have a voice."

Visit Us Online at: www.bharp.org



Behavioral Health Alliance of Rural Pennsylvania

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