



Silence Hurts. . . Step Up. . . Speak Out!

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Recovery Voices ARE Being Heard

By Brenda Schell, MRN Project Director

The long held dream of parity in behavioral healthcare is now a reality. On October 3, President Bush signed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act into law. This law will begin to end the insurance discrimination facing people with addiction and mental illness.

This victory came as a result of years of advocacy efforts, which included call-in days, email campaigns, sign on letters, and numerous phone calls and visits with members of Congress in their home district and in Washington DC. This victory would not have been possible without the tireless advocacy efforts of individuals like you and allied organizations across the country that supports recovery efforts.

When the law goes into effect on October 3, 2009, group health plans that offer coverage for addiction and mental illness will be required to provide benefits in the same way as they are offered for all other medical and surgical coverage. That means that insurance companies will no longer be able to impose different limits on inpatient days, outpatient visits, or require higher deductibles or cost sharing when individuals are seeking treatment for addiction and/or mental illness. The law applies to all group health plans with more than 50 employees. This law will protect and preserve all state laws that provide greater protection than the federal law. It extends out-of-network coverage for substance use disorders and mental illness where there is out-of-network coverage for medical and/or surgical conditions. It also requires that medical necessity criteria and reasons for any denials of reimbursement be available to participants and beneficiaries upon request.

This victory also means that the voices of the recovery community are being heard loud and clear. Today, more legislators and individuals across the country know about the reality of recovery from addiction and that there are organized constituencies, both at the state and national level, that are advocating on behalf

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**Check out our website!
www.morecovery.org**

A Day of Celebration

By Dan Duncan, Director of Community Services, NCADA, St. Louis

This past summer I got wind of some plans that were brewing in New York concerning a major recovery advocacy event. Faces and Voices of Recovery (FAVOR) along with the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) met with representatives from the A&E television network to discuss an event to bring attention to recovery. Buoyed by the popularity of their most successful television program "Intervention," A & E had become increasingly aware and intrigued with the whole subject and phenomenon of recovery. As a result they met with FAVOR and NCADD to discuss ways to raise awareness that recovery is possible and very real.

Having heard about advocacy rallies around the country in September during recovery month, A & E proposed assembling a large rally in New York that could attract the recovering community of New York, New Jersey and beyond. Inspired by the bridge rallies being planned in St. Louis and Oregon, they decided to hold their rally at the world famous Brooklyn Bridge and named it Project Recovery. One delegate from each state was chosen to participate. The only requirement was a minimum of ten years in recovery and a history of recovery advocacy. I applied and to my delight I was chosen to attend.

At 6:00 a.m. on Saturday morning, all fifty delegates arrived at a wide open expanse in a public park with a stage at one end with a band of all recovering musicians and the event's MC, recovery comedian Mark Lundholm. The signal was given and the walk began. Traffic slowed down and stopped to see this huge procession begin taking shape as it started across the long bridge. About halfway across the bridge I climbed up onto a bridge support to look back. I looked back on five thousand people in recovery behind the delegates. It was extremely inspiring to see that many recovering folks in one place celebrating the joys of recovery, there to make a statement that recovery is possible and real for everyone still suffering from the disease of addiction.

A&E will air a show about Project Recovery in the future. Be looking for it because I think you will likely feel at least some of what we felt that day, lots of wonder and gratitude for what we'd all been given, a new chance at life.

Brenda Frank Joins MRN

With a new year, comes a new face at MRN. Brenda Frank has been hired as the new MRN Program Associate. She has many years of experience in program management, public relations, training/meeting facilitation, and office administration. She is very familiar with the important role advocates play in helping shape public policy.

When you call in to the MRN, be sure to specify which Brenda you would like to speak with, Brenda Schell or Brenda Frank. Whomever you speak with, I'm sure either Brenda will be able to get you excited about getting involved in the MRN advocacy efforts this year and in years to come.

Mental Health Champions to Be Honored

The Department of Mental Health and the MRN invite you to attend the 2nd Annual Mental Health Champions Banquet set for Wednesday, April 1, in Jefferson City. This celebration will honor three individuals who have overcome challenges they have faced as a result of a mental illness, developmental disability, and/or substance abuse addiction. Come be inspired by individuals whose actions and activities have had a positive impact on the lives of others and on their local communities. Additional details regarding this event will be posted on the MRN website at www.morecovery.org.

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Recovery Voices ARE Being Heard

of those in recovery and those who still suffer from the disease.

There are many ways in which you can advocate to help reduce stigma, end discrimination, broaden social understanding about addiction and recovery, reduce barriers to and support recovery, and help shape public attitudes, policies and opportunities for those in recovery. I encourage you to get more involved in the MRN advocacy efforts. If you are not already a member of the Missouri Recovery Network, I encourage you to join. You can join online at www.morecovery.org. YOUR voice can and does make a difference!

CCFC and MIMH Hosts Recovery Support Service Summit

By Daphne Walker-Thoth, Executive Director, CCFC

Close to 50 participants from throughout the state convened in St. Louis October 16 for Missouri's first recovery support services summit. The summit was sponsored by Committed Caring Faith Communities (CCFC) and the Missouri Institute of Mental Health (MIMH). It was designed to begin the dialogue about permanently incorporating recovery support services as part of the continuum of substance abuse treatment. Panelists shared information about the national movement toward recovery oriented systems of care, Missouri's future plans for recovery support services, and a new credential for individuals called the Missouri Recovery Support Specialist. Among the panelists were Mark Stringer, Director, Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse; Jocelyn Whitfield, Senior Public Health Advisor and Advisor on Community and Faith-based Initiatives for the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment; and Rev. Scott Breedlove, Administrator, Missouri Substance Abuse Professional Credentialing Board.

Recovery support services are non-clinical services that assist individuals and families in their recovery from alcohol and other drugs. In Missouri, these services are provided by faith and community-based organizations with funding from the federal Access to Recovery (ATR) Initiative.

Recovery support providers receive reimbursement from the Missouri Department of Mental Health for the provision of an array of services that include, but are not limited to, temporary and emergency housing, work preparation, family engagement, transportation, spiritual life skills, pastoral counseling, and recovery support mentoring. Recovery support services were first offered in Missouri in April of 2005.

Preliminary data have shown that the addition of recovery support services to substance abuse treatment has improved client outcomes. Summit participants attributed these improved outcomes to the spiritual tools that the faith community offers to clients. Ideas were discussed on how to increase access to recovery support in rural areas, improve collaboration between recovery support providers and clinical treatment agencies, and additional recovery support services that need to be incorporated.

On January 22, 2009, CCFC and the Missouri Faith Community Substance Abuse Resource Network will host a recovery support services rally between 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. on the 1st Floor Rotunda of the State Capitol in Jefferson City. The purpose of the rally is to promote awareness about the value of these services. For additional information, contact CCFC at (314) 951-1033 or visit their website at www.ccfc-stl.org.

Recovery Support Specialist Credential Now Available

By Scott Breedlove, Admin., MSAPCB

The Missouri Substance Abuse Professional Credentialing Board is excited to now offer a credential for those individuals working in recovery support services. On October 18, 2008, the Missouri Recovery Support Specialist (MRSS) credential became available. This credential is designed to recognize the expertise of faith based and other individuals who have been providing recovery support services throughout Missouri. To apply for this credential, an individual must meet the following requirements:

1. Hold a minimum of a High School Diploma/GED.
2. Have a 1000 hours of work/volunteer experience in the 2 MRSS domains.
3. Completed the CCFC Basic Addiction Academy or completed the Foundations of Substance Use, Abuse, & Dependence training and 20 additional hours of substance abuse education.
4. Completed 6 hours of a substance abuse ethics training.
5. Letter of recommendation from a qualified individual.

The 2 MRSS domains are Recovery Mentoring/Coaching and Recovery Support Services. To find out more and to obtain an application visit www.msapcb.com.

The *MRN Newsletter* is a production of the Missouri Recovery Network. Contents may be reproduced to further take action toward recovery from substance and drug addiction. Contents are not official statements of the Missouri Recovery Network. The *MRN Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Missouri Recovery Network. The Missouri Recovery Network works in partnership with ACT Missouri and the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

DMH Leadership Summit Held in St. Louis

By Judie Didriksen, MRN Council Member

Brenda Schell, Austin and Teri Montague and Judie Didriksen, along with many other consumers and advocates, were invited to attend the Leadership Summit entitled “Real Voices – Real Choices” held in St. Louis at the St. Patrick Center on November 5th & 6th. This summit was supported and funded by the Department of Mental Health. The purpose of the summit was to identify consumer leaders from all three DMH divisions and invite their participation in the planning process for the statewide consumer conference to be held in 2009. Keith Schafer, Director of the Department of Mental Health, opened up the conference with words of inspiration, setting the stage for the planning which lie ahead. Several very good speakers presented training on leadership, including several individuals who were consumers of DMH services. The second day included speakers presenting information on advocacy efforts including self-advocacy as well as advocating for the rights of a group or

classification. There was also planning time set aside for smaller groups to identify topics, speakers and other logistical information for the conference to be held in 2009. It was interesting to see the uniformity of issues and topics discussed which were of interest and concern to ALL of the participants, regardless of which division they were representing.

DMH has set up a web page to continue the consumer input and participation through the conference planning process. The conference was well attended by a variety of individuals from all across the state and it gave individuals the opportunity to express their concerns regarding stigma, barriers encountered when seeking help, discrimination issues, and much more. The staff of the Department of Mental Health did an excellent job of choosing the participants as well as preparing for and hosting this summit and their efforts are to be commended.