



NEW DIRECTIONS

"By, for, and about consumers of behavioral health services."

Volume 5, Issue 5

Dec. 2008- Jan. 2009

NW Affiliation Regional Consumer Forum

The Northwest CMH Affiliation (NWA) Regional Consumer forum met in August through video connection from various offices. Their next meeting will be in February with video conferencing from West Michigan and Northern Lakes offices.

The group received updates from the PIHP (Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan) as well as reports from the Quality Oversight committee and Customer Service.

The real work of the forum was in continuing to go over the bylaws and to review the purpose statement. Presently the Mission and Purpose statement have been completed with consensus on them. They are as follows:

Mission

Our mission is to work collectively as a group of panel members in training and advocating for others by sitting on committees and giving valuable input and information from our experiences to promote improved: communication, legislation, opportunities, services, education, and supports for all consumers.

Purpose

The purpose of the Regional Consumer Forum is to provide broad, regional consumer perspective and partnership with the Northwest Community Mental Health Affiliation in a meaningful and valuable role.

Continued on page 2



Recovery Band

"Living Well"

The Living Well conference was held in Cadillac and was well attended by consumers who receive services from all of the NLCMH offices as well as a guest from Benzie County who has been attending the learning communities.

Ike Powell and Larry Fricks presented on Peer-led Whole Health Recovery. Larry shared some of his story and health issues that his doctors weren't willing to address as they were focused on symptom relief. He spoke about the Relaxation Response and how that can immediately address the metabolic disorder. All attending the conference received a CD that had several options for relaxation/meditation to assist them in this. Relaxing just 20 minutes a day through meditation, guided imagery or other methods can reduce the build up of belly fat caused by stress and the release of hormones (cortisol) produced by the flight or fight response.

Ike presented on the pilot training that occurred in Battle Creek with two peer groups. It has 12 sessions and they began each session with a mini relaxation. The peers who took part in this training had to be thinking about a health issue they wanted to address. Michigan will begin training peers to work with consumers on Health Management goals in 2009.

The Recovery Band came and performed at the conference. The Recovery Band is made up of peers from the Detroit area. The band was started by Gerald Butler after training and working as a peer support specialist. Gerald was in the first group of peers to be trained along with several peers from Northern Lakes. He is also on the State

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Peer Support Specialist
- 2 Clubhouse briefs
- 2 Medicare Part D
- 3 Learning Communities/ Recovery Council
- 4 Bipolar Children
- 4 Upcoming Events

Recovery Council and was in the first group of Peers to be Certified as a peer support specialist by Michigan.

PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

Who are peer support specialists and what do they do? Peer Support Specialists work with case managers to serve consumers with goals from their person-centered plan. Peers have the unique qualification of having lived with a mental illness and walked many of the same paths that you as a consumer are walking or have walked. Peers are living their recovery and can assist others in their goals toward recovery in a unique way compared to others who have not experienced a mental illness. Peers work in many fields. You have most likely heard about peers helping peers when they are diagnosed with cancer or other medical diseases.

Peer supports specialists have been working at Northern Lakes since 2004. Prior to that, there were case manager assistants, and some of the peers at Northern Lakes began in this position prior to the merger between Great Lakes CMH and North Central CMH in October of 2003. Peers have been volunteering across the country and truly the world as facilitators in support groups (AA is a well known area for this). In mental health they have run groups for Schizophrenia Anonymous, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, NAMI CARES (now NAMI Connection) and many others.

Peers can work with you to develop a WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), in Pathways to Recovery groups, and can help you work toward independence and much more. If you think you might like to work with a peer, ask your worker for more information or contact Mary Beth Evans, Recovery Coordinator, or Customer Services for more information.

Note: Not all services are available to all consumers. CMH Serves many people with various areas of need, your worker can help you determine if you qualify for Peer Support Services.

TRAVERSE HOUSE

Traverse House is having an Open House on Thursday, December 18 from 3-7:00 p.m. A holiday celebration. Refreshments will be served.

Club Cadillac

Club has many new leads on employment and is increasing their T.E. (temporary employment) opportunities. Membership has increased with many new and young members coming to Club. On December 19 the Club will have its Christmas party from 6-8 p.m.

Members of this forum will serve as an advisory group and will partner with the NWA to:

- Provide ongoing consumer perspective to aid the NWA in region-wide performance improvement efforts.
- Receive and share information between local affiliate consumer groups and the Regional Consumer Forum in order to aid the NWA in informing and educating our broad consumer population.
- Serve as a voice of consumer advocacy to other local, regional, state and national groups, bodies and legislatures in an effort to continue to reduce stigma, raise awareness regarding mental illness, development disabilities, recovery and political issues such as parity and budgets.
- Assist the NWA in ensuring ongoing compliance with consumerism guidelines.

The forum will continue to look at Vision, Membership, Ex-Officio Membership, Meetings; Regular Meetings, PIHP Sub-Committee/Workgroup, Decision Making Process, Conflict of Interest and Basic Ground Rules as well as Amending the Bylaws.

Medicare Part D

It is once again time to look at the prescription plans available in Northern Michigan. What you receive (Medicare, Medicare and Medicaid, or a health plan) will determine what you need to think about and or do to make a change if necessary. Letters were sent out the last week of October if you were being reassigned to a new plan. These letters were on light blue paper and gave you information regarding the switch and coverage exceptions for the beginning of 2009.

For persons who have Medicare only, this is the only time that a new plan may be chosen. This may be necessary as medication needs change and/or plans change. The deadline for enrolling in a new plan is Dec. 31, 2008.

For people who receive both Medicare and Medicaid (dual eligible) or receive extra help, the plan you had may not be available any longer. This is a good time to review plans and choose a new one that best meets your needs. The plan that will be reassigned to you may not be the best plan for you as they are randomly assigned. If you do not choose a plan and your plan is no longer available you will be assigned a new one. Only by checking will you know if the new plan assigned to you covers all of your medications. Although you can change at any time, planning ahead may save you stress and inconvenience. For more information contact Leslie Sladek, Customer Service, or you can use the

Learning Communities

The Learning Communities continue to meet each month at each office, sharing recovery moments, learning and experiencing some of the items that can assist in a whole health outlook. Many consumers find themselves so involved in their mental health that they forget to look after their general health or “whole health”. The dental appointments are forgotten, they eat what is in the refrigerator or pantry (the easiest), not what is healthy or nutritious. Getting out and exercising is difficult to do; symptoms, motivation or many other reasons deter them. Relaxation, eating healthy, exercising, socializing...all disappear.

Learning about nutrition and how to read labels on food, trying a relaxation technique, and visualization are just the beginning of what they do at learning communities. November brought information on dealing with stress and the holidays as well as some tips for coping with stress. **Recipes are still needed for the cookbook.** *Elements needed in the recipe are: title, list of ingredients, prep time or list of things needed to do ahead of time, actual recipe, (directions), nutritional facts (if known), and cost to prepare (if known).*

Ten Tips on Coping with Stress and Anxiety

Anxiety is a signal our mind and body gives us that danger is near. The danger may come from internal or external sources. We feel the press of living through the stresses we experience. Stress is cumulative, as it draws upon our personal and physical resources. Different people have individual tolerances for higher-than-normal levels of stress and anxiety. When feeling over-burdened, excessive stress and anxiety can lead to lowered self-esteem and depression. In such a situation, the goal of psychotherapy is to validate your emotional experience, adjust the negative self-assessment engendered by emotional overload, and help you find the path of support and positive developmental change. Often, anxiety and stress are heightened by being caught between untenable choices in life, or between people we love (or even, sometimes, fear). These problems can be explored and understood in psychotherapy.

Below are some tips about what many have found to be at least temporarily useful coping skills for living with stress and anxiety. They are not foolproof. If you are feeling very distressed and your life is suffering, there is no substitute to talking with a professional.

1. Be flexible. Know what you can change and what you can't, go with the flow, be open to changes.
2. Laugh more. Watch a funny movie, tell a joke, read the comics.

3. Breathe slowly, deeply, and well. Relaxation begins with slow, deep breathing from your diaphragm.
4. Learn to say "no". It's hard to say no sometimes, but recognize you can't do everything. Pace yourself.
5. Go ahead and make mistakes. No one's perfect. The only way we really learn is from our mistakes. Accept them as the natural process of growing in wisdom.
6. Play... with a lover, a friend, a child, a pet. Having fun is the natural way of lowering the body's stress hormones. Stress tenses, play loosens.
7. Get active. Exercise brings out the body's endorphins, natural pain-killers and pleasure-producing substances produced inside every one of us.
8. Eat well and avoid stimulants. A healthy diet makes the body strong and increases a sense of well-being. Watch those double-lattes. Caffeine and nicotine put more stress on our musculature and nervous system.
9. Talk to others. Sharing life's difficulties and problems with another person, whether a co-worker, friend, spouse, lover, or counselor, allows one to shed the weight of burdens shouldered alone.
10. Face your difficulties. Problems have a tendency to mount quickly, until there can seem so many as to be overwhelming. Tackle them one at a time. Set achievable goals. Your day will seem appreciably lighter after even one dreaded task is tackled.

NLCMH Recovery Council

Dimension 1 – Design

The Recovery Council took an in-depth look at what is needed to address holistic wellness and recommended a focus on activities connected to “Mind, Body, Spirit.” Sampling classes on various aspects of wellness have been incorporated into Learning Community meetings; a Living Well consumer conference was held on October 14, 2008, designed to focus on these issues as well. Some of the classes we intend to develop and offer through the new Anti-Stigma and Recovery block grants will focus on various aspects of wellness and chronic disease self-management. In addition to having trained Pathways to Recovery facilitators in each office, we now have trained and certified WRAP (Wellness, Recovery, Action Planning) facilitators to provide WRAP classes in each office. We will be adding capacity to provide classes in the MI-PATH (Personal Action Toward Health) Self-Management Program which helps individuals manage their chronic health conditions

continued on page 4

Recovery Council continued from page 3

and live a healthier lifestyle. We will be participating with the state roll-out of a new peer supported whole health program.

Dimension 2 – Evaluation

A workgroup including Recovery Council volunteers are planning for implementation of the REE (Recovery Enhancing Environment) evaluation tool at NLCMH. This is the tool the Michigan Recovery Council has chosen to measure both individual recovery and recovery orientation of programs in our state. Northern Lakes will be one of two CMHSPs who will pilot the REE in Michigan. The results from this evaluation will be used to guide some of the changes for Northern Lakes.

***Dimensions 3-9;** Leadership, Management, Integration, Comprehensiveness, Consumer Involvement, Cultural Relevance and Advocacy.

Dimension 10 – Training

A recovery training video has been completed and a facilitator manual is being written. A next step is to revise the training plan to include recovery as a mandatory training for all staff and to include components for consumers and contract providers. The video is being piloted in Traverse City in December. As mentioned earlier, facilitators were trained and certified to provide WRAP in all offices.

***Dimensions 11-13;** Funding, Access and Change Management.

*More information on these dimensions may be found at www.northernlakescmh.org in the Virtual Recovery Center. See the article entitled “Highlights of Transformation Accomplishments” click on Blueprint Summary, dated Nov. 4, 2008, or get a copy from the Recovery Tower in your local office.

Electronic Distribution!

Receive *New Directions* through the email. If you would like to receive New Directions electronically please submit your email address to Leslie.Sladek@nlcmh.org writing “New Directions” in the subject line. Your address will be used solely for distribution of *New Directions*. It will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

Contributions!

If you would like to contribute to New Directions please contact The Editor, Leslie Sladek, at 231 933-4907, or email Leslie.Sladek@nlcmh.org.

Medicare Part D, continued from page 2

Medicare toll free number (800) 633-4227 or web site www.medicare.gov. If you need to apply for extra help, the Social Security Administration has application or you may do this on the web at www.ssa.gov.

Bipolar Children Website

<http://www.bpchildren.org/index.html>

Providing HOPE for children with bipolar disorder and their families.

Welcome! Our mission is to help young people and adults understand more about childhood bipolar disorder. Our books and booklets bring knowledge to the mind, courage to the heart and hope to the spirit. Please join us in erasing the stigma and easing the burden one child at a time. This site contains newsletters, book reviews, sites specific to children and teens with tips from others who live with bipolar as well as information teachers and much more for those who need a bit more information in dealing with this diagnosis personally or as a family member.

Upcoming Events

- **Dec 2 - Recipient Rights Advisory Committee**
2:30-5:00 pm in Traverse City with Video conferencing available to Cadillac or Houghton Lake upon request.
- **Dec 10 - CAC (Consumer Advocacy Council)**
1:30 pm meets in Traverse City with Video to Houghton Lake
- **Dec 18 - NLCMH Board** meeting in Traverse City at 6:00 p.m.
- **Jan 14 - CAC (Consumer Advocacy Council)**
1:30 pm meets in Traverse City with Video to Houghton Lake
- **Jan 15 - NLCMH Board** meeting in from 6:00pm

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

- 2nd Tuesday** –Dec. 9 & Jan. 13 from 12:30-2:30 pm in Houghton Lake
- 2nd Wednesday** –Dec. 10 & Jan. 14 from 1-3:00 pm in Grayling
- 2nd Friday** –Dec. 12 & Jan. 9 from 10-12:00noon in Cadillac
- 3rd Tuesday** –Dec. 16 & Jan. 20 from 1-3:00 pm in Traverse City

NLCMH Recovery Council

- Dec. 19- 1-3:00 pm in Traverse City
- Jan. 23- 1-3:00 pm in Cadillac

This Newsletter is produced with support from Northern Lakes Community Mental Health