

ATTACHMENT #1
SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUPS
(BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES)

Lackawanna- Susquehanna Counties
Behavioral Health - Intellectual Disabilities -
Early Intervention Program

2011 Susquehanna County
Mental Health Focus Group

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Introduction

Lackawanna-Susquehanna Counties Behavioral Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention Program sponsors 5 focus groups that are held annually and facilitated by the Advocacy Alliance with individuals who receive adult mental health services, and family members of individuals who receive services in both Lackawanna and Susquehanna Counties. At these focus groups opinions are solicited as to needs/satisfactions/dissatisfactions individuals and/or families feel about services and supports offered in Lackawanna and Susquehanna Counties. Participants are also asked to discuss topics that affect their Recovery. The feedback generated from these groups is included by the Program in their Planning Process for fiscal year 2012-2013.

This report deals with the fifth year focus groups was held for adults who use mental health services and supports in Susquehanna County. Invitations were sent to twenty individuals chosen from a list of Certified Peer Specialists, Recovery Center members, WARM LINE mentors, Consumer and Family Satisfaction Team members, and the Community Support Program members. Fifteen participants attended the focus group that met on February 23, 2011 at the New Beginnings Drop in Center in Montrose. The focus group represented individuals doing well in Recovery. The participants shared their opinions as well as representing invited individuals who could not attend.

The participants, as in previous years, reported feeling this focus group process as being very beneficial and giving a voice to the consumers of mental health services and supports. They were very appreciative of the opportunity presented by the focus group.

Demographics

A total of 15 Individuals participated in the focus group.

Gender		Total
Male	Female	
7	8	15

Age Group				Total
18-25 Yrs	26-35 Yrs	36-50 Yrs	50+ Yrs	
1	2	6	6	15

Racial Background							Total
African American	Caucasian	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	Bi-Racial	Other/Specify	
0	15	0	0	0	0	0	15

Housing			
Lives in a community group home	Lives with family	Lives in own apartment /house	Has been homeless in the past year
1	0	14	0

- Ten participants reported being registered to vote.
- Five reported voting in the last election.
- Ten reported having Identification on them.
- Six reported having a mental health advance directive.
- Nine reported belonging to a self-advocacy group and attending the Consumer Support Program (CSP).
- Three reported working.
- Four reported volunteering.
- Two have used the WARM LINE.
- Two have used crisis services in the last 2 years.

Results

Recovery and Mental Health Services

Mental Health Outpatient Services

The participants' opinions on Mental Health Outpatient Services were mixed. Some of the group feel that services are good and others felt that the doctor 'rushes you out the door and doesn't listen', and prescribes too much medication.

Needs

- All participants feel that more therapists and doctors are needed.

Partial Hospitalization and Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services

Service Improvement

Participants reported that the Montrose Partial Hospitalization Program is not helpful and some added the program in Carbondale is better. A few participants referenced the music therapy program as not being helpful because it doesn't have enough instruments. Most feel the change to a Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program was positive.

Crisis Services

Service Improvement

Participants would like to see the return of the 'full care' crisis home. They reported that staff was there 24 hours to help or just to talk when you needed to talk to someone. They also referred to the admission process in a regular psychiatric unit as being too long and the negative attitudes of emergency room staff at the hospitals. They felt much more supported in a crisis home.

Needs

- Alternative service such as a 'crisis home' should be available and instead of going right to a hospitalization.

Representative Payee Services

Some participants report that it takes too long to receive checks when they request extra monies. Two participants want to get off this service but their doctor feels they cannot manage their own money.

Housing and Transportation

Participants wish there was more choices for housing and added concerns that many apartments are not in good condition. They wish that HUD funded apartments would be inspected annually.

Participants report that Susquehanna County put into place a program where individuals can be hired to transport people for a minimum fee to their doctor's appointments.

Needs

- Housing that is inspected and in safe condition.
- Transportation to community type meetings. Some participants would like to go to counsel meetings to feel like they are more a part of the community.

Recovery and Mental Health Supports

Drop In Center

Participants are very happy with the New Beginnings Drop in Center. They mentioned liking the different groups available at the Center. Participants wish there was funding to hold a state drop in center conference as in the past. Participants report that transportation to the Center is difficult at times.

Needs

- Participants would like to see better transportation to the Center and more computers.

WARM LINE

Most participants did not report they call the WARM LINE, but did report they feel it is a great support for persons who have mental illnesses.

Community Support Program (CSP)

Participants reported that CSP is very active with 15-20 members involved. They are planning on a suicide prevention billboard for this year's grant.

Education and Support Groups

Participants report that they would like to see depression and bipolar support groups along with groups that could help educate them on their diagnosis and their medications.

Needs

- Participants spoke about police needing training regarding mental illnesses and how to best approach someone who has a mental health crisis.

Summary

Participants summed up the needs of individuals with a mental illness by stating they need what every member of the community needs such as good housing and a good transportation system. Most are satisfied with their mental health services although they would like more education and support for their diagnosis, additional therapists and a choice of doctors. Participants also felt strongly about having an alternatives to hospitalization such as a 'crisis home'. They would like to see more training for police and advocating with legislators for mental health funding to continue services and supports.