

The OCFA Newsletter

Office of Consumer & Family Affairs
Bureau of Mental Health Services
Division for Behavioral Health
NH Department of Health and Human Services

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Peer Support Agencies Offer Critical Services During COVID-19

In March, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we lived our everyday lives. Peer Support Agencies responded quickly to develop creative ways to continue delivering services to people who need them. Mental health providers continued to provide services during regular business hours by phone and through telehealth, and evening warm lines continued to operate. Technology allowed services to continue with minimal interruption, including check-ins and support groups, which can now take place via Zoom, Facebook Live, and other digital methods.

Leslie Roman, of Hope, Empowerment, Advocacy, Recovery Towards Support (HEARTS), said the COVID-19 emergency has reinforced the importance of peer support as part of recovery. "When the news of COVID-19 hit, my first thought was 'Well, there goes my job,' even though in our communities we are seen as valid and worthy. I could hear it now, 'What's so essential about support?' Not only were my assumptions incorrect, but the peer recovery world has shown we are vital. I really want to thank my peers for showing



how important connection is, and for the patience we have all shown trying to set up virtual supports so quickly. This morning when I went to a Zoom check-in, I realized the significance of our work and I understood that this really is about social change. This is to show gratitude to my state, my job, the many people who still find peer support significant, and all of us who are virtually showing the world how important peer support is."

Peer support became even more important as people grew accustomed to working at home, having their children home because of remote learning, not having the same access to work, friends, and family, and everything else that came with new ways of doing things. New Hampshire Community Mental

Health Centers (CHMCs) also adapted their services quickly to offer remote and physically distanced visits. The NH chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) stood up a central website with resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as where to access services, helpline information, and resources from the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.)

NAMI NH continues to offer many support groups and training opportunities virtually. Thank you to the community providers and agencies across New Hampshire for their rapid response and continued support.

Should OCFA Consider a Name Change?

The Office of Consumer and Family Affairs (OCFA) is considering a name change to better reflect what the office does, while using more person-centered language. *We want to hear from you!*

The OCFA provides information, education and support for children, youth,



families, and adults who are affected by mental illness. Our

goal is to include input from individuals and families with lived experience into all aspects of the State-funded mental health system and the DHHS Bureau of Mental Health Services' planning and policy development.

Please submit your suggestions to Thomas.Grinley@dhhs.nh.gov by September 30th.

What's Happening at the OCFA?

- Exams for *Certified Peer Specialists* have been scheduled for the remainder of the year. Exams are scheduled for September 14th, and December 7th.

All exams are 2-4 p.m. in the Fox Chapel of the Main Building at 105 Pleasant Street, Concord.

For details, or to register, contact Tom Grinley at Thomas.Grinley@dhhs.nh.gov or (603) 271-5045.

- Tom Grinley has continued to do *In Our Own Voice* presentations for NAMI NH, although the presentations are now offered digitally.



Peer Respite in New Hampshire

Peer respite is a statewide resource that provides an alternative to hospitalization. All respite beds are open to peers around the state, regardless of their region of residence. Some who use peer respite report that it prevented them from having a psychiatric crisis.

Stepping Stone

108 Pleasant Street
Claremont, NH 03743
Respite: (603) 543-1388
Peer Center: (603) 543-1388
Toll Free: (888) 582-0920

Monadnock Peer Respite

64 Beaver Street
Keene, NH 03431
Respite: (603) 352-5093
Peer Center: (603) 352-5093
Toll Free: (866) 352-5093

H.E.A.R.T.S. of Greater Nashua

5 Pine St. Extension, Unit 1G
Nashua, NH 03060
Respite: (603) 864-8769
Peer Center: (603) 882-8400

Marty Fuller Receives Advocacy Award

Marty Fuller, former director of the OCFA, recently received the Connections Peer Support Center's first-ever Peer Support Award, which recognizes an individual who has been a strong advocate for peer support centers, either locally or statewide. The Connections Peer Support Center is a private nonprofit organization managed by individuals who have or are at risk of having mental health challenges.

A longtime Concord resident, Marty has been a passionate mental health advocate for more than 40 years. During her time at DHHS, she re-established the OCFA to bring individual and family voices into all aspects of the state-funded mental health system, as well as planning and policy development.

In addition, Marty developed a statewide self-advocacy



Left to right: Kali Moulton (Board President), Marty Fuller, Greg Burdwood (Executive Director)

empowerment series that she continues to provide as an independent consultant, as well as trainings for the governing boards of nonprofit organizations. She was the co-keynote speaker and a panel member at this year's Peer Support Conference in Concord, NH, speaking on the importance of advocacy, not

only in one's personal life, but with legislators, policy makers, and others whose decisions affect access to mental health services in New Hampshire.

PSA Satisfaction Survey

The results from the recent satisfaction survey conducted by Peer Support Agencies (PSAs) across the state are in. Three hundred thirty-nine responses were received from all 14 New Hampshire PSAs, showing an overwhelming satisfaction with PSA services:

- 87% said their PSA helped prevent emotional difficulties from turning into psychiatric crises
- 74% said the PSA helped them to stay out of the hospital
- 98% said the PSA helped them understand what recovery means to them
- 86% said the PSA gave them hope they could recover from mental illness
- Of those who have used peer respite, 96% said that respite prevented emotional difficulties from turning into a psychiatric crisis
- 98% said the their PSA improved their quality of life
- 98% expressed overall satisfaction with their PSA. The same percentage would recommend their PSA to others with mental health issues

Did You Know?

- **Mad In America** (November 17, 2019), announced the launch of the first Hearing Voices Network online support group for family and friends of people who hear voices (<https://understandingvoices.com>)
- According to **The National Council for Behavioral Health** (December 6, 2019), 66% of New Hampshire voters are more likely to vote for a presidential candidate who promises to do more to address mental health policy issues, according to a new poll by Morning Consult and the National Council. However, only 6% of voters have a detailed knowledge of any candidate's mental health platform.
- In **Frontiers in Psychiatry** (December 6, 2019), researchers looking at premature deaths of those with severe mental illness found that cardiovascular disease was a major contributor to this excess mortality. Further analyses showed that premature death was associated with a longer history of tobacco use.
- According to **The Hill** (May 30, 2020), barriers to mental health care existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, but those challenges are exacerbated now as millions report feelings of stress, depression and isolation. The problem is expected to get worse in the coming months as people begin to feel the emotional impacts of the pandemic, and experts say there may not be enough resources to help them.
- In **Clinical Psychiatry News** (May 21, 2020), results from "the first systematic review and meta-analysis of the psychiatric consequences of coronavirus infection" showed that previous coronavirus epidemics were associated with a significant psychiatric burden in both the acute and post-illness stages. "Most people with COVID-19 will not develop any mental health problems, even among those with severe cases requiring hospitalization, but given the huge numbers of people getting sick, the global impact on mental health could be considerable," co-lead investigator Jonathan Rogers, MRCPsych, Department of Psychiatry, University College London, United Kingdom, said in a news release.



Take Action

Learn more about how you can support your mental health
and the mental health of the people you care about.

Visit www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bbh or www.nami.org/covid-19

10 Ways to Get Along with Anxiety (continued)

run. Ask yourself how much this will really matter down the road – it may give you some perspective.

8. Let the past go.

Easier said than done for sure! But if you are feeling bad about things that have already happened, take time to realize that there is nothing you can do to change these things now. You can take steps to begin letting the past go and making positive choices for your future.

9. Meditate.

Try taking a few minutes out of your day to focus on your breathing or an object like a candle or a pleasant sound. As best as you are able, bring your mind back to the present focus. This can give your mind a little gap or vacation from anxiety and also provide some insight into where your mind takes you. If you have trouble doing this alone, try using a guided meditation, available for free online. Try www.mindful.org.

10. Talk to others.

Connect to a family member or friend and share your anxieties. It can be a great way to gain insight, get advice and alleviate some of your stress by getting support and understanding.

While these tips should help, don't hesitate to seek professional help if you have lived with anxiety for a long time and are having trouble managing on your own. Call your local Community Mental Health Center to make an appointment with a health care professional.

Alternative Life Center Program Expansion

Kevin A. Rodwell, Assistant Director, Alternate Life Center

The Alternate Life Center (ALC) has created memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the Lincoln Police Department and Littleton Regional Hospital to increase the availability of on-call peer support services in New Hampshire's Mental Health Region I.

The pilot, known as the Community Crisis Diversion Program (CCDP), aims to solidify peer support as a viable resource that complements other mental health services in northern New Hampshire.

The ALC is now providing 24/7 on-call peer support services, which allows our organization to work more closely with the communities we serve and to



effectively carry out our mission to provide a sanctuary where people learn to create a personal vision leading their own recovery.

The ALC hopes to expand the program to its other locations in Conway, Berlin, and Colebrook.

Laura Mekinova and Kevin Rodwell of the ALC will serve as Peer Community Outreach Specialists during the pilot program. Laura and Kevin are both Intentional Peer Support (IPS) trainers and want to represent our organization in the best way possible while maintaining the integrity of the IPS model and mission statement.

The ALC's objective, using the IPS model, is to establish critical support services and replicate them statewide. We are recruiting staff and members for training to maintain the long-term viability of these partnerships.

NAMI New Hampshire Updates

NAMIWalks NH 2020

Join us at New Hampshire's largest mental health and suicide prevention event! The 18th annual NAMIWalks New Hampshire will be a virtual walk held on Saturday, October 10th.

Visit www.NAMIWalksNH.org to learn more, register, or donate.

Participate in NAMIWalks NH through social media by using the hashtag #NAMIWalksNH.

Questions? Send an email to walks@NAMINH.org or call 603-225-5359, x 349.

NH Suicide Prevention Conference

The 17th Annual NH Suicide Prevention Conference is scheduled to take place at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord on Thursday, November 12, 2020. For more information, contact Elaine deMello at edemello@naminh.org.

Interested in Volunteering for NAMI New Hampshire?

NAMI NH has many volunteer opportunities including the Walk Committee, community outreach, and office support.

For more information, contact volunteer@NAMINH.org.

Looking for Support?

NAMI NH support groups are a place to make important connections with others who:

- Understand the challenges you face and the opportunities ahead
- Feel the same way you do
- Have had the same experiences
- Will help you learn new coping skills
- Will share their successes and strategies with you

Through affiliates around the state, NAMI NH offers support groups to individuals living with a mental illness and family members and parents who have a loved one with mental illness. Visit www.NAMINH.org/find-support/support-groups/ to find a support group near you.

NAMI New Hampshire's Online Groups

NAMI New Hampshire offers several Facebook groups where people can find peer support, share experiences, offer encouragement, and pass along resources:

- **Life Under Construction**
This group provides a place for youth whose lives are

affected by mental illness to share ideas, concerns, and questions they have about planning their future.

- **Family and Friends of Adult Loved Ones with Mental Illness**
This page is intended to be a place to find support, information and to meet other family and friends of adult loved ones with mental illness.
- **Parents and Loved Ones of Children with Social/Emotional Challenges**
This page is intended to be a place to find support, information and to meet other parents, primary caregivers and loved ones of children, adolescents and young adults with serious emotional disorders (diagnosed or not).
- **NH Veterans and Military Families Supporting Each Other**
This group is intended to be a place to find support, information and to meet other veteran and military families in NH.

These closed Facebook groups require an add from admins. Please contact info@NAMINH.org if you have trouble locating these groups.

Want to stay up to date on what's going on with NAMI New Hampshire?

Sign up for NAMI's bi-weekly E-news at <https://www.NAMINH.org/about-us/enews-sign-up/>

See the NAMI NH COVID-19 Resource page at <https://www.naminh.org/resources-2/covid-19/>

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Recovery is the Goal!

BBH is on the Web

www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bbh/

Don't forget to
"Like" NH OCFA
on Facebook.



If you would like to be put on the mailing list to receive this newsletter, email

Thomas.Grinley@dhhs.nh.gov

or write to the OCFA at the address above.

NH Department of Health & Human Services

Mission Statement

To join communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence

Lori Shabinette
Commissioner