

OMHSAS ANNOUNCEMENT

May 11, 2007

Community Integration Project Request for Proposals

Helping People with Serious Mental Illnesses To Succeed in Utilizing Existing Community Resources

Background

One of the prevailing mandates of the Commonwealth's mental health program is to increase the level of community integration for people with serious mental illnesses. The Commonwealth seeks both to remove the remaining barriers to participation in the life of the community and to develop broader supports so that individuals with serious mental illnesses have the same opportunities in life as anyone else. This proposal offers assistance to County MH/MR programs interested in a planning process to expand the degree to which those individuals with mental illnesses can participate fully in the life of their local communities.

At the heart of the proposed activity is the concern that while community mental health programs have grown in size, effectiveness, and responsiveness to consumers, many of the supports and services offered today are provided by the mental health system itself, with too little use made of existing 'mainstream' resources. A wide and highly-valued array of programs are offered by community mental health centers and psychosocial rehabilitation services, for instance, that are designed specifically for those with serious mental illnesses: group living and independent apartment programs; supported employment and job placement services; in-house educational opportunities; social and recreational events; etc. These are all critically important programs for many consumers on the road to recovery, and, in time, such programs have great potential to lead to more independent lives and greater consumer participation in the mainstream.

This initiative, however, focuses specifically on helping consumers to increase their participation in their community; that is, to make greater use of the variety of local programs sponsored by other non-mental health community organizations and designed not for those with disabilities but for the general public. Expanding specialized services remains an important goal, but so too does the need to insure that consumers are enabled to draw on community resources that other citizens rely upon: public housing, community colleges and vocational and technical schools, local sports clubs, civic associations and religious congregations, etc.

For many communities, this remains a significant challenge, and OMHSAS has asked the UPENN Collaborative on Community Integration, a national-scope research and training center (funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research) to provide assistance to a number of counties in Pennsylvania to move forward the process of planning for this type of community integration. The counties selected through this process will receive intensive technical assistance in framing a planning process and then ongoing facilitation for the planning process as a coalition of county mental health officials, local mental health provider agencies, consumer and family representatives, and community members work together to frame new strategies to promote community integration in local settings.

Local Project Activities

In each of the selected sites, a core agency – the county office, a local provider, a consumer group – or a coalition of agencies would have responsibility for the proposed planning project. Each site would select one area – or possibly more – in which they would like to expand the use of mainstream community resources by persons with serious mental illnesses, including consumer participation in:

- mainstream job training programs and educational programs;
- public housing supports and neighborhood development initiatives;
- civic associations and social or recreational services and community events;
- religious congregations and other spiritual supports of their choice; and
- other community resources to be identified by the ‘core agency.’

The core group, with the support of the UPENN Collaborative, will develop a broader planning committee – composed of representatives from the County MH Office, local MH provider agencies, consumer groups, and community organizations – to develop and implement, over a two-year period, a plan for enhanced community integration.

The UPENN Collaborative has undertaken similar planning initiatives in several sites in Pennsylvania and other states, and we have asked them to utilize the same broad approach in helping the selected County sites, which will:

- identify a local sponsoring agency or collaborative;
- develop a core group of agency, consumer, and community members;
- survey available community resources;
- connect with those community resources to explore their perceptions of the barriers to participation of people with serious mental illness;
- develop recommendations – at policy, program, and practice levels – to address the identified barriers and provide supports to consumers as needed; and structure and implement a plan to enhance community integration.

The UPENN Collaborative will further assist with defining and tracking measurable outcomes in each selected project. No direct funding will be awarded by the OMHSAS. Rather, selected projects will be provided with technical assistance to identify community resources, and develop well-defined strategies for assisting consumers in participating more fully in the life of their communities. Any ancillary costs including meeting space, food, travel, etc for participants must be provided by the applicant.

Applicants are expected to identify priority areas of interest, to identify staff and consumers who will participate in the proposed project, and provide an initial indication of support and interest from both the mental health community and the community organizations most likely to be impacted by the proposed initiative. A Final Plan – to include implementation steps and commitments from participating partners in the planning group – will be developed for action.

SEE APPLICATION FORM AND QUESTIONS ON THE NEXT TWO PAGES

APPLICATION FORM

The OMHSAS Community Integration Project

Name of County or Joinder:

County MH/MR Administrator:

Address:

City / Zip Code

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email:

Lead Person for Project Coordination:

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email:

Signature of County MH/MR Administrator

**ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY June 29, 2007
AND SENT TO:**

**CAROL WARD-COLASANTE
OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES
21 BEECH DRIVE- 2ND FLOOR
PO BOX 2675
HARRISBURG, PA 17105-2675**

Please Answer Each of the Following Questions (in no more than 6 pages combined total)

- 1. Please describe the area(s) in which your coalition will seek to enhance community integration: discuss the current circumstances in your county, list or identify proposed project area(s) in order of priority and importance. List types of community integration activities that have already been initiated.**
- 2. Please describe the agencies and individuals who have agreed to cooperate in the proposed planning process, highlighting the participation of the county office, provider agencies, consumers, and community organizations that are likely to be impacted by the proposed project.**
- 3. Describe the planning process you would hope to initiate: who will be its participants, how often will groups meet, what barriers do you anticipate, and over what period of time will planning and implementation take place?**
- 4. What costs do you anticipate for either the planning process or the implementation activities, and how will those costs be met? (OMHSAS award pays for consultant expenses, only. There are no cash awards)**
- 5. How would you intend to use the consultation and facilitation resources offered by the UPENN Collaborative on Community Integration, as well as any additional resources you will draw into the project? (Please identify additional resources from your county)**
- 6. Describe the community integration outcomes you anticipate from the project, and how you plan to go about measuring and reporting on those outcomes.**