

# Consumer Directed Mental Health Agencies and the Role of Advocacy

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# Study Purpose

- To determine who these agencies are?
- Understand their Mission
- What do they do?
- Who do they serve?

# The Study

- Sample
  - A Review of 61 Consumer Directed Agencies in NYS
  - Responses from 31 of 55 eligible programs (59%)
- Methods
  - Survey by mail
  - Telephone follow-up interview
  - Meeting with directors of 4 of the agencies

# Brief Review of Results

- Organizations
  - Budgets range from \$75,000 to \$1.4 million
  - Primarily funded by contracts from NYS and local government agencies
  - A few receive foundation money or are funded by Medicaid
  - Some charge member fees often tied to money the client gets from other funding sources, such as Medicaid
- Who is served?
  - 20 to over 3000 individuals served per year
  - Located in areas ranging from a large city (New York) to small towns throughout every region of the state

# More Results

- Who runs the agency ?
  - Not-for-profit organizations
  - Consumer run with a majority of board members consumers ( 51% or more)
  - Members having an active role in planning activities of the organization
- Mission
  - Promote the right of individuals
  - Provide support
  - Improve the quality of life of persons with a serious mental illness
  - Reduce stigma
  - Promote self-help
  - Assist with employment, housing, and educational opportunities

# Rank Ordered Activities

- Advocacy
- Peer Support
- Education
- Outreach
- Stigma Reduction

# Advocacy

- Espousing
- Supporting
- Recommending

# Explore the Advocacy Role

- Expousing
  - Media contact to advocate or educate
  - CDP to other agencies as well as governing bodies to advocate for consumer service needs, issues, and policies
- Recommending
  - CDP to other agencies for a specific consumer or group of consumers
- Supporting
  - CDP to other parts of the health care system
  - Consumer to consumer



# Media contact to advocate or educate

- Presentations, workshops at conferences, colleges, hospitals, vocational rehabilitation programs
- Newsletter
- Research and publication of findings in Mental Health News and other places
- Survey Research

# CDP to other agencies as well as governing bodies for service needs, issues, and policies

- Changes in policies and practices—barriers to employment and re-entry—Legislative Day in Albany
- Meetings with local or state legislators
- Speedy authorization by vocational programs and state agencies
- Voter registration

# CDP to other agencies for a specific consumer or group of consumers

- Participation on the Consumer Advocacy Council as an agency representative
- Certified registered business school that contains a Computers Applications Training Center, One-Stop Workforce Training, SSA Ticket-to-Work Employment Network, VESID Job Development/Placement Services

# CDP to the rest of the MH System

- Member of Multicultural Awareness Committee
- Member of Federation of DOMH and OMH
- Member of Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies
- Member of Empire State Pride Agenda
- Representatives working with other agencies, local governments (cities, counties, towns)
- To other organizations (hospital emergency rooms, inpatient and outpatient programs)

# Consumer to Consumer

- Access to health and mental health care
- Obtaining housing, food stamps employment and other assistance
- Computer training and career counseling
- Mentoring—parenting to at-risk families
- Resource library
- Use of internet, fax, phone, office supplies
- Referrals
- Adult respite programs
- Provision of a healing environment

# Mission Statement

- One statement described the agency mission:
- “...a grassroots not-for-profit organization providing mutual support for the recovery of people with psychiatric disabilities; through advocacy, education and the establishment of healing environments, we work to create community, promote individual responsibility and protect our rights and dignity.”

# Our recommendations

- Continue the individual and system efforts to access care
- Evaluate the role of CDP's in the local community
- Establish interventions that can be flexibly adopted in local areas that target stigma reduction as a major priority for CDP's
- Finally, we believe – the focus of this intervention is best targeted toward health and mental health professionals.

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