

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

STRATEGIC PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

DMH Hosts First Parent/Caregiver Training for Peer Support Specialists

Goal 1, Objective 1.6—To utilize peers and family members to provide varying supports to assist individuals in regaining control of their lives and their own recovery process

The first Certified Peer Support Specialists with a designation of a Parent/Caregiver completed their training at the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) this past March. DMH offered the training as part of the agency's continued transformation to a person-centered and recovery-oriented system of care. The Parent/Caregiver designation is an expansion of the Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) Program.

"As a parent, this training opened up new and innovative possibilities and knowledge of what is needed to gear in on what is happening in our communities," said Marshia Moody, Parent/Caregiver Trainer and a CPSS Ambassador. "As a professional, this is a benefit of knowing up to date information, resource centers, acknowledgement of partnerships, as well as changes within the state. This training also teaches us the root information and strategies needed to go out with confidence and reassurance to teach and educate others."

Dr. Joy Hogge, Executive Director of Mississippi Families as Allies, was the other Parent/Caregiver Trainer for this program. She said sometimes parent-to-parent support is seen as an extension of adult peer support, but it is not.

"It is focused much more on supporting resiliency of

families rather than supporting a particular person who is in recovery. It also focuses on all the systems children naturally engage in," Dr. Hogge said.

DMH received a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to develop the Parent/Caregiver designation by creating a customized training for parents and caregivers of children and youth with a mental illness or substance use disorder. The agency contracted with Families as Allies to lead the way in developing the Parent/Caregiver curriculum and training. The results of their efforts are CPSSs who will be able to provide support to parents and caregivers as they navigate the state's mental health system for their children. In order to become a CPSS with the Parent/Caregiver designation, a person must successfully complete the application requirements and the training, which includes an examination.

Although Mississippi has a successful CPSS training program geared toward adults in recovery, this new designation of peers focuses on those who will be working with children with behavioral health issues. The training is a customized, two-day block within the current CPSS training program.

"Parent/Caregivers differ from other peer support specialists as they must be a current parent/

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caregiver with the experience of raising a child/youth between the ages of birth to 21 with an emotional, mental or a behavioral disorder,” said Jackie Chatmon, DMH Division of Children and Youth.

The core tasks of the Parent/Caregivers are to provide information, support, and advocacy; help families navigate the state’s mental health system; help family members understand options and make informative decisions; and promote productive partnerships between parents and professionals. Those tasks can take place in different settings ranging from Individual Education Plan meetings, Making a Plan teams, Programs of Assertive Community Treatment, and Mobile Crisis Response Teams.

“Research indicates that parent/caregiver peer support can have a positive impact for others who have children with serious mental health challenges,” Chatmon said. “It can improve coping skills, increase hopefulness, reduce stress, and increase social connectedness. Peer support may also increase treatment engagement.”

DMH hosts several Peer Support Specialist trainings each year. As part of the Parent/Caregiver designation, the agency has also developed a two-prong proactive outreach plan to target both parents/caregivers who are interested in becoming CPSSs and providers who are interested in employing CPSSs.

The first training held in March was well-received by participants, several of whom were already CPSSs. During the first two days of training, all participants met together in learning modules geared towards all participants. During the final two days, participants split into their respective groups. Several participants attended only the final two days to take part in the new Parent/Caregiver modules and provide feedback for the trainers.

“Families as Allies was thrilled to be selected to develop the curriculum for this program and to train the trainers,” said Dr. Hogge. “It was very touching to train the first group and for them to report that the training addressed the real world needs of families. They were an amazing and spirited group.”



Pictured are participants Marshia Moody, Kizzy Kidd, Ekoko Onema, Wanaki McDuffy, Lois Childs-O’neal, Jessica James, Cheryl Pollock, Jacquelyn Ratcliff, Ramona Russum, Shayonne Thigpen, Stacie Webb, Kimberly Benefield, LaShell Steward, and Dr. Joy Hogge.