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Recovery Fact Sheet

Recovery Happens

Many individuals diagnosed with a serious mental illness, including schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders and co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders, are recovering and living meaningful and satisfying lives.

The U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, MD, PhD, addressed the reality of recovery from serious mental illness in his landmark *Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health*: "The notion of recovery reflects renewed optimism about the outcomes of mental illness, including that achieved through an individual's own self-care efforts and the opportunities open to persons with mental illness to participate to the full extent of their interests in the community of their choice."

Defining Recovery

It is generally agreed that recovery means much more than treatment or the reduction or removal of symptoms and improvement in functioning. It is also commonly understood that the concept of recovery does not necessarily mean that all suffering and symptoms are gone and functioning has been completely restored.

While the definitions differ slightly, by and large, there is agreement in the field that recovery includes hope, empowerment, taking responsibility, building on strengths, and perseverance over time. The process of recovery also typically includes biological, environmental, psychological and often spiritual elements. Although similarities can be found in the recovery journey traveled by each individual, it is important to remember that no two people experience recovery in exactly the same way.

Barriers to Recovery

In spite of all the evidence, many people still believe that recovery isn't possible, allowing stigma and a sense of hopelessness to create barriers. Stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness are the greatest barriers to recovery. For instance, the labeling of individuals as "mentally ill" by many in society and the mental health field is, in itself, a dehumanizing and personally stigmatizing practice that is psychologically damaging to those working towards recovery. Additionally, the lack of access to and reimbursement for a wide range of community-based services and supports, such as employment and housing, is also preventing people with psychiatric disabilities from making a successful recovery. Access and choice is critical for individuals with diverse needs.

Self Help Aids Recovery

As outlined in the report *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*, comprehensive care for severe and persistent mental disorders also includes ancillary services—those above and beyond symptom management and rehabilitation. They include consumer self help and advocacy, consumer-operated programs, family self-help and advocacy, and human services.

Consumer Advocacy

Consumers have been playing increasingly visible roles in advocacy. Advocacy enables consumer groups to shape policy and to reform health and mental health care financing. The Mental Health America (NMHA), with over 340 affiliates, works with and supports the efforts of these consumers.

Family Self Help

Family members primarily attend self-help and support groups to receive emotional support and accurate information about mental illness and mental health services. Locally, Mental Health America of Franklin County runs a number of Families in Touch support groups to help family members and friends of people who have a mental illness. Call 614-221-1441 for more information.

Family Advocacy

Family advocacy on a local level might include organizing to improve local mental health service or to redress grievances with service providers. Mental Health America of Franklin County offers the services of an ombudsman who helps people having trouble getting the services they need. Contact the ombudsman at 614-242-4357. On the national level, consumer groups work to influence legislation and to support research and education initiatives.

Human Services

Paramount among these services for those with mental illness are housing, employment and income assistance, and health benefits. For referral to local agencies that provide these services, call Mental Health America of Franklin County at 614-221-1441.

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We help people navigate the mental health system. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; free support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; Pro Bono Counseling Program where underinsured and uninsured individuals can receive free counseling; community and professional mental health education including Get Connected; maternal mental health support and advocacy (POEM); and a quarterly newsletter featuring legislative updates and new happenings at MHAFc. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board, United Way of Central Ohio, individuals, foundations, and corporations. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.