

May 4, 2007 Teleconference

Participating: (AZ) Ann Rider from Recovery Empowerment Network; (NY) Peter Ashenden from Mental Health Empowerment Project; (TX) Beverly Pratt from TX Mental Health Consumers; (VA) Bobbie Hepner and Ann Benner from VOCAL; (WA) Lorie Benton from Washington Health Empowerment Network; (WI) Molly Cisco from Grassroots Empowerment Project Inc.; Dan Fisher, Judene Shelley, and Erin Bolles from National Empowerment Center.

1. MEMBERSHIP:

Peter Ashenden reported that the Advocacy Initiative of Maine application has been recommended by the Membership Committee and has been sent on to the Steering Committee. The Oklahoma Mental Health Consumer Council is the newest member accepted by the Membership Committee and the Steering Committee. Two letters have been sent to youth groups asking about interest and Peter will follow up with them. Dan reported that Iowa has had several teleconferences, and Magellan funded an organizing meeting where 18 leaders were selected and a name was chosen - Iowa Advocates for Mental Health Recovery. Molly Cisco in Wisconsin participated in the organizational meeting and is close to provide ongoing support.

Tennessee still seems reluctant to join. Joe Rogers will be visiting and will offer to talk with their board. Dan Fisher is also waiting to hear if they want to talk further with him

Alabama: Peter did outreach and we are waiting to hear back from them. Indiana needs more outreach.

Oregon has been doing a lot of grassroots work. There is a statewide grant, but they haven't brought their leaders together yet.

2. VIRGINIA TECH TRAGEDY:

Since the last general meeting, coalition members who were interested worked on a press release (4/20/07) expressing our sympathy to the families and friends of those killed and injured at Virginia Tech. A second document of Talking Points was completed today (5/4/07) and has been distributed.

Dan and others expressed concern about the possible creation of a national list of everyone who has ever been in a mental ward. Dan said that Alison Malman of Active Minds on college campuses wants to network. He talked about contacting college administrators regarding peer networks on campuses.

Judene suggested that if people know of conferences happening, we should try to get on the schedules and be a consumer voice. People agreed.

Ann and Bobbie from Virginia's consumer organization, VOCAL, gave an update of their work in Virginia since the tragedy. They have set up a forum on their webpage, and have put up the Coalition's press release and talking points. Since the tragedy there has been a heightened sense of fear and concern about stigma and about losing rights; many people with trauma in their past have been shaken. The proximity of the tragedy is difficult for people; some have had old symptoms reemerge. Between that vulnerability they have had requests from the press for comments, but some articles released have shed a bad light on consumers. VA's governor is going ahead and making adjudicated names public nationally. We need to pull together on this issue and take care of each other and ourselves. This is an opportunity to make statements and be heard. VOCAL's conference is coming up and they will be addressing the tragedy, affirming strengths and resources. They are trying to think of a symbol to wear in solidarity with other consumers. VA's governor appointed a panel to investigate every aspect of what happened and VOCAL wants to get consumers appointed to the panel or at least attend the meetings.

Peter met with the Commissioner of Mental Health (Reinhardt), and he is very much in favor of not looking at outpatient commitment. Peter is afraid of a knee-jerk reaction to the VA Tech shootings and said that E. Fuller Torrey is already making the case for more forced treatment. VA should talk with other states who have successfully fought involuntary outpatient commitment. The statistics show that minorities are disproportionately affected by Involuntary Outpatient Commitment (IOC). We should take a proactive position to prevent other states having "Kendra's Laws" from going into effect.

Ann asked if there a shortened version of the Coalition's name as it is too much of a mouthful! Other said they referred to it as the National Consumer Coalition, or just the Consumer Coalition.

3. FUNDRAISING REPORT/FOUNDATIONS:

We have received one more year of funding from Public Welfare Foundation. We are grateful, even though it is less than they had originally planned to give. Dan, Lauren and Molly have been searching for additional foundations. Letters of Interest are being prepared and sent to several foundations. Molly is looking for additional members to be on the Fund Development Committee. Please email her at: mollycisco@msn.com

Dan wants to do a debate on topic of forced treatment regarding what place it has, if any? The possibility of a debate at the Visionary Art Center in Maryland was suggested. Some wondered about showing, "King of Hearts" a movie about a real situation in France.

4. MEETING OF NATIONAL COALITION DURING ALTERNATIVES CONFERENCE IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, OCTOBER 2007:

Mike Halligan volunteered to find a location for an off-site Coalition meeting during the Alternatives Conference. Dan and Lauren submitted a workshop or institute on the evolution of the consumer movement.

5. SAMSHA REAUTHORIZATION: The final draft was circulated to the coalition members. Connie Gardner at Senator Kennedy's office asked for recommendations. Lauren continues to talk to staff of Senators. They are asking for \$2 million to fund at least 19 state consumer organizations.

THE NEXT TELECONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL COALITION WILL BE ON THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2007 AT 3 P.M. EST.