

National Coalition of Mental Health
Consumer/Survivor Organizations

1300 L Street NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005

March 14, 2007 Teleconference

Next teleconference meeting will be April 11, 2007, 4 p.m. EST

Present: GA (Shery Jenkins Tucker), KY (Heather Marcus), MD (Emily Hoffman), NY (Peter Ashenden), SC (Bonnie Pate), TN (Rusty and Erica), VT (Linda Corey), WA (Jill San Jule), WI (Molly Cisco), CONTAC (Kathy Muscari), Mental Health Self-help Clearinghouse (Joseph Rogers), NEC (Daniel Fisher and Judene Shelley), Director of Public Policy (Lauren Spiro).

1. Review of federal administration's proposed 2008 budget and the Coalition's response in Washington

The administration's proposed budget recommended cutting all consumer-run programs (the three TA centers and 19 statewide consumer groups.) Molly, Lauren and Dan spent a productive day on the Hill and met with the appropriations representative from Wisconsin's Congressman Obey, Chair of House Appropriations and Subcommittee of HHS. They also met with Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin from Wisconsin who can nudge him to restore the cuts. Lastly a meeting was held with a representative from the office of Senator Mary Landrieu (LA) who serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

On a separate visit to the hill Dan and Lauren met with representatives from the offices of Sen. Harkin (Chair, Senate Appropriations), Sen. Kent Conrad (Chair, House Budget Comm), Sen. Judd Greg (Ranking member, Senate Budget Committee and Senate Appropriations Committee), and the following other members of the Senate Appropriations Committee: Sen. Daniel Inouye (HI), Sen. Larry Craig (ID) and Sen. Jack Reed (RI).

Lauren had several meetings at SAMHSA including a meeting with Neal Brown (Director of Community Support Program) in which she advocated for more consumer involvement in the T-SIGS/Transformation Grants.

Joseph Rogers is working on "conference language" to be written to restore the funding.

To Do: Joseph Rogers will compose a letter from the MHA of Philadelphia and the Coalition. Lauren and Dan will compose one from the Coalition. They will follow the letters up with visits March 30th.

2. SAMHSA reauthorization

Each of the administration's agencies have to be reauthorized. SAMHSA is going through the process now which occurs every 10 years. We are pushing to have as much consumer input and involvement as possible. Joseph said it would be valuable to have a consumer testify on one of the panels.

To Do: Lauren will contact Kennedy's office to request getting onto the agenda of the reauthorization hearings.

3. Mental Health Parity Act

The house has modeled its bill after the same mental health and addiction care that are included in the health plans Members of Congress use. The Senate bill has no such provision. The legislation closes the loopholes that allow plans to charge higher co-payments, coinsurance, deductibles, and maximum out of pocket limits and impose lower day and visit limits on mental health and addictions care. There are forums around the country about it. If anyone participates in the forums, please let us know. If you send a letter to you congressperson or senator, please let us know or send us a copy.

4. Membership outreach and development: Reaching out to the states that don't have member organizations yet.

Tennessee has joined on the call today as they are considering applying. The membership requirement for the National Coalition has the Board and staff as at least 51% consumers. The membership committee also looks at who is running the organization; is the director a consumer? It was suggested that a higher percentage such as 60 or 75% consumers on the Board and Staff could be the new requirement. People can send their suggestions by email to Judene, j.shelley@comcast.net who will collect them and give the suggestions to the membership committee about possibly raising the percent of required consumer participation. Outreach to other states was discussed.

To Do: Peter will do outreach to Alabama. Sherri will continue to try to talk with the Director of the Maine consumer-run group.

5. Fundraising and incorporation (most recent version of by-laws distributed)

The Public Welfare Foundation may not be able to fund the second year of the Coalition. More than half of the members have paid their dues. When all members pay dues, it will only be about 15% of the current budget.

Discussion followed of a CD product, "Voices of Hope and Recovery," that could be sold with the profit going to the Coalition. A series of CDs could be developed where people tell how they recovered. Marliese Franklin in Oregon could use her public radio station equipment to produce professional quality interviews. Heather said that it is all about spreading the word; providers and schools need to know that recovery is possible. In the

fall, the Clearinghouse can help with time and resources to do this. Bonnie Pate said it would be great to have videos of recovery, too. We should strive to be diverse, particularly in terms of age, ethnicity, and having people from different parts of the country.

Peter Ashenden has been involved in a recovery project; he will send the citation. Most of the videos taken were edited; sometimes things are taken out of context. People would have final say over what goes out; these are the stories of our lives.

Molly Cisco, Chair of the Fundraising Committee, asked for recommendations of Foundations that are possible funding sources. Emily suggested GEHTT Foundation. The fundraising committee has been searching for foundations as possible funding sources. Please send Molly your suggestions: mollycisco@msn.com

The incorporation is moving along. The bylaws were distributed. Please read the draft and send your comments, especially how many board members and how they would be appointed.

6. Alternatives 2007 will be October 10-14, 2007 in St. Louis, Missouri. The website is now available: www.alternatives2007.org

Discussion ensued about possible Coalition events that may occur around the time of the conference. An Open House for people who would like to learn about the coalition might be held. A meeting of the coalition similar to last year's would be good also. If there is not a pre-conference (immediately prior to Alternatives) for the statewide networks grantees, the coalition might plan something for that day.

7. Medicaid: recovery and peer support

Dan is interested in putting together four concrete proposals to Medicaid:

A. Change "medical necessity" to Michigan's criteria that is "community inclusion."

B. All states should be able to adopt a cash and counseling or self-directed care budget as Oregon and Florida did.

C. Personal Care Assistants to be funded for mental health as they are for other disabilities. Molly suggested that we could tap into ADAPT, which also has not recognized that personal care could be used for consumer/survivors. Oregon has 600 PCA's (personal care attendants) hired as mental health assistants. In Washington State, Jill was told that it would be a liability issue. In Vermont, they are covered under the liability of the consumer-run organization. Vermont uses the Safe Haven model for homes.

D. Some way to get Medicaid to fund consumer's organizations without being intrusive.

Discussion ensued regarding the barrier of having a master's level clinician provide oversight. The current medicaid language is a person who is qualified to supervise the Peer Support position, which ends up being a master's level clinician.

To Do: Dan will contact Medicaid's central office to see the best way to translate new regulations under the Deficit Reduction Act into advocacy tools to provide statewide consumer-run organizations.

8. Ways of connecting with a similar Canadian National Consumer/Survivor Coalition

The Canadian coalition is funded by their federal government. They are more progressive. They are interested in reaching out to our National Coalition. A discussion followed about reaching beyond North America to other groups such as the "User's groups in Europe."

To Do: Dan will contact Connie McKnight to see how to proceed with connecting the groups in a manner that respects each group's autonomy.

9. The next meeting will be 4 p.m. EST Wednesday, April 11, 2007.