

Self-Help, Advocacy and Education

Self-Help, Advocacy and Education include the following programs and services:

- I. Community Education - Mental Health First Aid
- II. Hope One
- III. Social Club
- IV. Community Companion
- V. Mental Health Resource Network
- VI. Mental Health Faith Liaison Program
- VII. Self-Help Programs
 - a. Exercise Group
 - b. Community Rides
 - c. Advocacy
- VIII. Elizabeth T. Dorl Educational Assistance Fund
- IX. Peer Support to Greystone

I. Community Education – Mental Health First Aid

Description: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a nationally recognized program that trains individuals to recognize signs of mental distress and offer appropriate assistance. Certification to become a MHFA trainer is offered through the National Council on Mental Wellbeing through an 8-hour course. MHA has several staff certified in both adult and youth MHFA and is able to offer trainings to churches, companies, community organizations, or any other group interested in learning more about how to recognize signs of mental distress and how to provide effectively intervene interventions. In addition, MHA provides community education programs to alleviate the stigma of mental illness.

Personnel: The department is staffed by one Master’s Level Program Director (who also coordinates MHFA for the agency), one Master’s Level Coordinator, one Associate Level Case Manager and four part-time drivers. All three full time department staff are certified Adult and Youth MHFA Instructor. There are an additional 10 MHA employees from other departments who are also Adult MHFA Certified Instructors and 9 who are Youth Mental Health First Aid Certified Instructors.

Data and Highlights: Throughout this fiscal year, MHA conducted 30 separate 8-hour Mental Health First Aid classes in the Adult or Youth Module and trained over 420 individuals as Mental Health First Aiders. In addition to providing resources and services, MHA provided trainings and presentations to approximately 13,000 attendees, from The Rotary, RYLA, NJ Sharing Network, YMCA, corporations, homeless shelters, schools, houses of worship, healthcare agencies, police officers, public library staff, community providers, senior programs, support groups, rehabilitation programs, MOCHA, County College of Morris, Vision Loss Alliance, LEAD Morris and Women in Business of the MCCC. MHA also participated in community festivals, fairs and family events in the fiscal year which included events at various clubs, 5K run/walks, Stomp Out Sigma Free, Mental Health Walks, Table of Hope, People’s Picnic Table, Stigma Free Walk, Mental Health

Matters, Community Day, Connecting Dover Fest, Resource Day, National Night Out, Pride Day, Happy Wellness Expo, Canal Day, Family Night Out, and Overdose Awareness Day.

Self-Help, Advocacy and Education participated in presentations and trainings for the community, organizations, houses of worship, businesses, etc., including live and virtual panel discussions, presentations, webinars and trainings that addressed a variety of topics and issues. Some of the titles and topics were: Overview of Mental Illness, De-escalation Techniques, Recognizing Crisis Situations, Suicide the Truth, Warning Signs, Self-Care, Mental Health Matters, Let's Talk About Mental Health, Resources that Can Help Save a Life, Cultural Humility, Homelessness and Mental Illness, Mental Health and Senior and How to Cope with Loss.

This fiscal year, the People's Picnic Project completed and installed its final 3 contracted tables. The People's Picnic Project is a collaborative social art project and public 'event/happening' created (by artist 'Uncle Riley' and social cause organization, ŪMEWE), to inspire optimism and community connection. It was conceived to brighten communities while raising awareness of and funding for mental health associations and organizations. The project consists of International Optimism Yellow (INTO-yellow) wooden picnic tables placed throughout the community, to serve as both a visible marker for mental health awareness and a 'tool' to inspire positive conversations of hope, resilience and optimism. ŪMEWE partnered with the Mental Health Association of Essex and Morris (MHA) and Team De-Stig of Thrive Morris' Health & Wellness Committee of the Morris County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) to foster The People's Picnic Project to help raise awareness of and funding for MHA. The first table was placed at the MHA headquarters in Montclair, NJ and the second one in Central Park of Morris County in Morris Plains, NJ (the former location of Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital).

During the fiscal year, the 3 picnic tables were painted and are housed in Boonton, Jefferson High School and Pequannock High School. Thirty-three tables resulted from this project and housed throughout Morris County.

Outcome: 100% of Mental Health First Aid participants report overall satisfaction with the training.

II. Hope One

Description: Hope One is a mobile outreach vehicle that travels around Morris County offering access to mental health, addiction and recovery services. The Morris County Sheriff's Office partnered with the Center for Addiction Recovery Education and Success (CARES), the Morris County Department of Human Services, and the Mental Health Association in this combined effort to combat the opioid epidemic and help individuals struggling to maintain their mental health. Hope One is able to provide clients immediate access to services and treatment facilities, putting them on the road to recovery and wellness. In addition, NARCAN training, Narcan, and harm reduction kits are provided at no cost to family members and friends of those suffering from opiate addiction.

Personnel: One Peer Recovery Specialist (from CARES), one Sheriff Officer (from Morris County Sheriff's Office), and one mental health professional (from the Mental Health Association) and an occasional volunteer and/or intern.

Data and Highlights: Hope One continues to make significant strides in combating the opioid epidemic throughout Morris County and the State of New Jersey. This fiscal year, the truck has made 1476 stops and 10,072 community contacts. From the truck, nine people went to rehab/recovery services, 136 people received mental health services, 2,315 people were NARCAN trained and several hundred more received other services, were given brochures, gift cards, toiletries, and food. In addition to those services, Hope One provides PAARI (Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative) which gives law enforcement support, resources and assistance for individuals who are struggling with addiction and mental health issues. Twenty five police departments participate in PARRI within Morris County. Hope One has assisted eight other counties/cities in NJ (Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Newark, Passaic and Warren) to launch their own Hope One Van.

Hope One also hosted its third annual Hope One Symposium, bringing all the Hope One partners and treatment providers together with the goal of increasing knowledge regarding substance use and mental health on the state level.

In 2021, the Hope Hub was launched as an extension of Hope One. The primary goal of the Hope Hub is to provide services to the “at-risk” population. These individuals are without support and may need additional substance use disorder treatment and mental health services. To date, 475 individuals have been enrolled in Hope Hub.

The Hope One team provided education, linkage, and meals to the community at local food pantries, soup kitchens, and churches. Hope One goes out into the community 5-6 days a week to provide services, education and trainings to the community.

III. Social Club

Description: Social Club provides low to no-cost activities for individuals experiencing homelessness, are at risk of hospitalization, or have a history of hospitalizations, and are residents of Dover, Morristown, Boonton and surrounding areas. The Club allows individuals to meet people, make friends, and take part in social events. It promotes health and wellness and provides a social support network for mental health consumers. The program operates every Tuesday evening and Saturday afternoon. There are central meeting spots to pick up individuals and additional pickups are available.

Personnel: Four part-time Drivers, one Master’s Level Coordinator, and one Master’s Level Director.

Data and Highlights: This fiscal year, The Club held 97 group sessions and 1,092 consumers were served.

Outcome: 100% of consumers report satisfaction with Social Club.

Social Club groups are held face-to-face, introducing consumers to low or no-cost activities. Groups consist of trivia games, fun facts, Jeopardy, Bingo, ice cream socials, shopping outings, fairs, carnivals, outdoor concerts, zoo trips, holiday events, etc. Consumers are also encouraged to participate in all of the wellness groups hosted by the nurse at MHA. Consumers are provided with education/support surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, preventative illnesses, vaccination, boosters, sun risk, and medication.

IV. Community Companion

Description: The Community Companion Program provides one-to-one companionship and assistance in daily living for people with mental illness. The goal of the program is to increase socialization and general wellness. Volunteers visit the client at least two hours a week, participating in mutually agreeable activities. Together they find new socialization opportunities and share in a supportive friendship. Volunteers commit to being paired with consumers for three months. They can then decide if they would like to extend the pairing or be paired with someone else.

Personnel: Three Volunteers.

Data and Highlights: This fiscal year, three consumers were paired with two volunteers, and over 200 meet-up hours were completed. Companions of the program work with their matched consumers providing companionship/support weekly via face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations.

V. Mental Health Resource Network

Description: Mental Health Resource Network consists of over 45 houses of worship throughout the counties that partnered with MHA to provide support and resources to consumers served.

Data Highlights: Throughout the year, houses of worship provide resources to consumers that they may not be able to afford. Some examples of items provided are: air conditioners, microwaves, furniture, cleaning supplies, bedding, pots, pans, bookcases, coats, gloves, food, clothing, shoes, and vacuums. St. Andrews Lutheran Church donated feminine hygiene products for consumers and their daughters. Church of God in Christ, located in Morristown, provided 25 consumers with gift cards to purchase items for the holidays. The Presbyterian Church of Chatham Township provided consumers with gift cards, toiletries, bedding, and household items for the holidays. Pine Brook Jewish Center filled the PATH pantry with food on three separate occasions, which helped our consumers enormously throughout the fiscal year. In addition, Pine Brook Jewish Center, Community Church of Mountain Lakes, and First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon hosted or provided dinner socials for clients.

Self-Help, Advocacy and Education worked with several houses of worship from the Mental Health Association Faith Resource Network to help meet the food needs of our consumers. Donations stocked our food pantry with non-perishable food, toiletries, socks, feminine hygiene products, etc. Rotary 7475 and Notre Dame of Mount Carmel Church continues to provide prepared lunches on Hope One's homeless outreach days. Pine Brook Jewish Center hosted a Carnival themed brunch full of games and fun. Parishioners have donated over \$7,000 to Self-Help, Advocacy and Education to meet other needs of our consumers, i.e., shopping cart, fans, air conditioner, shoes, etc.

Self-Help, Advocacy and Education has also connected with other organizations that provided needed items to consumers and/or MHA programs:

- Riverdale Home Depot provided discounted tables for People's Picnic Project.
- Holiday Express hosted a holiday dinner with live entertainment for 150 consumers. .
- Operation Holiday provided over 1000 gifts for consumers and their children.
- Habitat Restore provided furniture and/or household items.

- Salvation Army

VI. Mental Health Faith Liaison Program

Description: Clergy are on the front lines in addressing mental health in the community but often feel ill-equipped to address the issues that come before them. In response to requests from area clergy members for added support in addressing the mental health challenges that arise among their congregants, the Mental Health Faith Liaison Program was created. The program includes three components:

1. **Direct Clinical Support** – Once a faith leader identifies a mental health challenge in their congregation, they can refer the congregant to MHA through a written referral. Depending on the need, the MHA will send a licensed therapist, addiction specialist, or geriatric care manager to meet with the congregant for up to 10 free sessions. These sessions are meant to diagnose the problem and provide a clear pathway to resolution.
2. **Information and Referral** – Offering information and referral to clergy, individuals, and families to mental health programs and a variety of community resources.
3. **Education About Mental Health Issues:**
 - a. **Mental Health First Aid** - an 8-hour training that teaches people to recognize the symptoms of a mental health issue and utilize appropriate strategies to intervene.
 - b. **Speakers, Roundtables and Presentations** - designed to meet the needs of your group or congregation. Some topics include stress management, addiction, mental health, suicide, etc.
 - c. **Mental Health Faith Resource Network** - an opportunity for congregations to provide material support to the consumers of the MHA.

Personnel: Three Licensed Consultants, one Licensed Geriatric Care Manager Consultant.

Data and Highlights: This fiscal year, MHA provided over 25 presentations and groups, and thirty Mental Health First Aid training. In total, there were over 3,000 attendees during the presentations and groups which focused on mental health education, self-care, health relationships, services and resources, grief, and suicide awareness. Thirty people were trained in Mental Health First Aid from a house of worship (420 total this fiscal year). Funding for clinical services ended, however, three consultants volunteered their services to the program to assist five individuals. Other referrals from 19 houses of worship were linked to programs within the agency or in the community.

VII. Self-Help Programs

Description: Consumer Advocacy Program provides opportunities for mental health consumers discharged from psychiatric hospitals to have companionship, socialization, personal wellness and mobility as a way to help them integrate into the community. Several self-help groups are facilitated allowing people with mental illness to develop skills necessary for independence and to have normal, healthy lives that include socialization and recreation. Groups and activities include pet therapy, art therapy, and monthly presentations lead by a medical professional.

Personnel: One Master's Level Program Director, one Master's Level Coordinator, and four part-time Drivers.

Data and Highlights: Consumers were excited to resume in-person activities again and look forward to participating each week. This fiscal year we introduce a boxing class that was well-received and loved by the consumers. According to the annual consumer survey, 100% of consumers believe their overall health and well-being has improved as a result of the CAP Self-Help & Wellness activities.

Outcome: 100% of consumers report overall satisfaction with Self-Help Programs.

- a. **Exercise Group** focuses on physical wellness through exercise. This fiscal year, 69 sessions were held with participation by 270 consumers.
- b. **Community Rides** facilitates independent living for people who have been discharged from psychiatric hospitals by helping them to meet their basic needs in the community. This year, 660 hours of trips were provided to 358 consumers.
- c. **Advocacy**, commonly known as CAP, is a self-help and consumer advocacy group. Eighty-two CAP consumers were active and vocal in helping to create a mental health system that is more responsive to their needs.

VIII. Elizabeth T. Dorl Educational Assistance Fund

Description: MHA recognizes that a large percentage of people living with mental illness develop their illness during their young adulthood, a time when many are seeking to further their education or begin their careers. The onset of mental illness can be such a detriment to those afflicted, that many are never again in a position to fulfill educational and vocational goals and dreams.

Data and Highlights: The MHA Educational Fund allows eligible consumers of mental health services to receive an Educational Certificate valued up to \$1,000. First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon provided over \$3000 towards the scholarship fund. In FY2024, this fund allowed MHA to assist five consumers in funding educational pursuits such as professional certification classes, educational classes to obtain GED, a trade, driver's license, and/or a college degree.

IX. Peer Support to Greystone

Description: The Peer Support to Greystone program provides mental health consumers, who have successfully transitioned from the hospital into the community, the opportunity to speak to those currently hospitalized to share experiences and provide hope.

Data and Highlights: Due to the pandemic, visits to Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital had been suspended until further notice. As of June 2023, services resumed, allowing over 300 patients from Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital to take part in an MHA discussion/group.