



Mental Health News & Notes

Mental Health Association of East Tennessee

August 2008

Mental Health 101 Continues to Grow



The *Mental Health 101* program continues to grow with the outstanding support of local donors, government, United Way, schools and foundation support. *Mental Health 101* is our prevention and education program in schools across East Tennessee. Started at Gibbs and Halls High Schools in 2000, serving 400 students, *Mental Health 101* now reaches 51 schools in 21 counties and served 11,400?? Students during the 2007-2008 school year.

Students are taught the signs and symptoms of mental illness and suicidal behaviors to speed student recognition of symptoms, which often occur during teenage years, to prevent more than a decade of treatment delay. Treatment delay worsens the course of illness causing impairment and disability.

Recent *Mental Health 101* Funding Announcements



We especially pleased to announce a two year **Youth Endowment Grant** from the East Tennessee Foundation to help sustain and grow *Mental Health 101* in East Tennessee.



Representative Joe Armstrong, Chairman of the House Health and Human Resources Committee and newly appointed member of the Lakeshore Board of Trustees, announced a **Community Enhancement Grant** to support expansion of *Mental Health 101* to Knox County Middle Schools.

Smart Business Move:

The Mental Health Association of East Tennessee sponsored the **Mental Health Matters in the Workplace** Conference in May. More than __140 employees__, representing __60__ East Tennessee employers of 64,000 employees participated.

“This participation far outpaces attendance at national workplace wellness conferences and is a tribute to the MHA, sponsor partners and caring East Tennessee Business Community”

- Clare Miller, Director,
Partnership for Workplace Mental Health

Participating employers benefit from ongoing technical assistance provided by the MHA, area EAPs, and the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health. To learn more about mental health issues affecting your workplace and to obtain a **Mental Health Matters in the Workplace Toolkit** call 865-584-9125

Uninsured and Out of Luck?

Count your blessings right now if you have health insurance. Between 800,000 and 1.2 million Tennesseans do not have health insurance. The figure varies depending on the source (**Kaiser Family Foundation & Families USA**) while somehow, the “official” State of Tennessee estimate is around 600,000. About 26% of these neighbors of ours need mental health care in any given year according to the National Institute of Mental Health, yet most cannot get any help at all.

Some folks can't afford the insurance, and others work multiple part time jobs and thus do not qualify for employee benefits. Still others were formally in TennCare and got disenrolled a few years ago. The few mental health providers who serve the uninsured today are swamped with uninsured clients. Emergency rooms see thousands annually for medication refills and still others end up homeless or in jail. *And somehow, it may just get worse.*

Historical Footnotes: Tennessee has for decades downsized state hospitals and developed community mental health services to build and a public and private mental health system that has been responsive to the mental health needs of all Tennesseans. This includes those with commercial insurance, Medicaid / TennCare; those who were uninsured; children or adults.

Tennessee has provided mental health care to the uninsured because it is the right thing to do, even mandated by Title 33 for inpatient care and because it is cost efficient, saving precious state and community resources in the long run. For example, outpatient mental health care for an uninsured person costs less than inpatient care at state hospitals and can prevent costly hospitalizations.

Before TennCare started in 1994, mental health centers received State funding to serve the uninsured. Start up TennCare and those funds disappeared into the TennCare black hole – State funds used to draw down federal approval of TennCare and Medicaid match funding. But the uninsured still flock to mental health centers for treatment and center dollars are stretched to the breaking point – no new clients, no timely appointments.

Crisis services funding, which embedded **Mobile Crisis Units** across the state to serve all Tennesseans – the

uninsured, commercially insured and Medicaid populations, likewise was shifted to TennCare to leverage federal approval of TennCare and the almighty matching dollars. Move the clock forward to today, and a gloomy economic picture has some re-thinking the value of our continuum of inpatient, outpatient and crisis services for uninsured Tennesseans. There is even the wild notion of making Crisis Services only available for TennCare recipients. Like no one else, insured commercially or uninsured might not be in crisis?

Most states provide crisis services for all, especially the uninsured. No state provides crisis services to only a select population, thereby stopping to ask first if the suicidal person is on TennCare.

Have Blue Cross Blue Shield? We can't help you. Have Cigna? Sorry Charlie, you are out of luck. Uninsured? Fahgedabout it as they say in Jersey!

What has caused this madness? Sadly a nasty combination of causes – TennCare changing the way we serve the uninsured (which they served because those funds went into the pot to leverage the Federal money) without giving the funding back to Mental Health: new managed care contracts for TennCare; increasing numbers of uninsured; and lastly, the fact that Tennessee does not have a realistic public policy and plan to serve the uninsured mentally ill is the biggest reason of all.

Sadly, our leaders in Nashville are considering eliminating crisis services for the uninsured and cutting outpatient treatment for the uninsured.

This is penny wise and pound foolish to say the least, yet in a tight budget year these are real considerations. Some want to shift resources from an already under funded, under staffed and under resourced mental health system and continuum of services. “Robbing from Peter to pay Paul” sets up a domino affect which will destroy the essential continuum of services in place today.

What we need is for the Governor to become “the Mental Health Governor” and enact a *real* policy to serve the uninsured. CoverTN is not affordable. Crisis services need to serve the uninsured too, and if it can't be done through TennCare, put the money back in the Mental Health budget. We need inpatient and out patient services to be fully funded and embedded in communities across TN. And dust off PC812 – the plan to serve the uninsured mentally ill in Tennessee – and make it State policy.

Campaign Short of Goal!

The good news is we are closer to our membership campaign goal of \$50,000. The bad news is we have a long way to go. No contribution is too large or too small. Donations support our education & client assistance programs and advocacy work.

Remember, twenty six percent of the population needs mental health care. Those you help with your gift are your family, your friends, your neighbors and your coworkers. Help them because they would help you.

Send your check today!



Your gift of ...

\$50 – Will provide educational materials to 200 people.

\$100 – Will provide mental health screenings for 30 people suffering from unrecognized symptoms of depression, anxiety or an eating disorder

\$250 – Provides client or family services by helping 10 persons access the specialized mental health care they need.

\$1000 – Provides *Mental Health 101* to 500 students

Membership Campaign Donors

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Reminder!

Double the Gift!

Your contributions can be **doubled** if your employer has a matching gift program.

\$100 becomes \$200 to the MHA!



A Special Note of Thanks to Our Funding Partners!

- United Way Allocations**
- United Way Designations Donors**
- AmeriChoice**
- Representative Joe Armstrong**
- Eli Lilly & Co**
- Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities**
- Farragut Presbyterian Church**
- Mental Health America**
- Knox County Government**
- Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion**
- Region IV Office on Women's Health**
- Windsor Medicare Extra**
- Volunteer State Health Plan**
- Astra Zeneca Pharmaceuticals**
- Cariten Assist EAP**
- Forest Phramaceuticals**
- Cornerstone of Recovery**
- Janssen Pharmaceutica**
- Blount Concern EAP**
- Bradford Health Services**

**Mental Health Association
of East Tennessee
P.O. Box 32730
Knoxville, TN 37930-2731**

Fall Psychiatric Symposium

Knoxville Convention Center

September 11-12, 2008

Knoxville, TN

This annual conference for physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, pharmacists and other allied health professionals will be one you do not want to miss. *Attendees receive up to 9 CME or CE credits* from our accreditation partners.

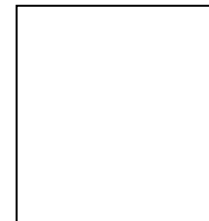


Register Now – Call 865-584-9125

Early registration Deadline Approaching!



You can support the **Mental Health Association** with a designated or undesignated contribution to the **United Way of Greater Knoxville** and through the **Combined Federal and Campus Chest Charitable Giving Campaigns.** *Thanks!*



**Mental Illness:
Real, Diagnosable, Treatable**

**A United Way Agency Partner
An Affiliate of the Mental Health America**

