

City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County
Task Force on Disability
Monday September 16, 2013
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members in Attendance: Dr. Katherine Seelman, Paul O'Hanlon, Janet Evans, Joe Wassermann, John Tague, Richard McGann, Aurelia Carter-Scott, Sarah Goldstein, James C. Noschese

Task Force Members Absent: Jeff Parker, Liz Healy, Linda Dickerson, Milton Henderson

Also in Attendance: Shirley Ebriola, Richard Meritzer, Latika Davis-Jones, Megan Hammond, Amy Hart, Varun Viswanathan, Annie Bontempo, Sylvia Denys, Charles Morrison, Mary Esther Van Shura, Joy Dore, Lynda Marnowi, Larry Hockenberry, Curtis Upsher Jr., Robin Smith, Mike Gruber, Randy Whitehair, Lester Bennet

Welcome and Introduction:

Paul O'Hanlon

Mr. O'Hanlon began the meeting by introductions of Task Force members and other individuals in attendance.

1. **Review and Approval of the June and July Minutes**

Paul O'Hanlon

The June and July Minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

2. **Presentations: Recovery Month**

(a) William Boyce

Mr. Boyce is an African-American male, a dedicated parent and coach, a mental health professional of thirty years, and an individual who lives with mental illness. He spoke to the Taskforce and audience about his ongoing journey with depression. He informed us that he has overcome the times when he believed his depression was a weakness, and now is proud of his entire identity. He provided the group with several suggestions for eliminating the stigma surrounding mental illness. First, mental illness should be discussed openly in the private and public spheres. Next, we should support each other in getting help. Third, we should use people-first language and respect each other in their journeys. Lastly, we should advocate for accessible and affordable mental health care for each other.

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(b) Margaret Park

Ms. Park is a scholar, a teacher, and a spiritual leader. In 1995, each member of her immediate family battled cancer. Her mother, father, and brother passed away leaving Ms. Park in deep grief. Doctors diagnosed her with clinical unipolar depression that would not respond to antidepressants.

Around the same time as the deaths in her family, Ms. Park hit a financial struggle during the economic downturn of 2000 and her investment in the stock market. As a result, she ended up on SSDI. Prior to the economic crisis, she lived an upper middle-class lifestyle. However, SSDI offered her \$671 dollars a month which left her nearly living in poverty. Ms. Park attempted to apply for various jobs, but was not hired due to her mental health medical history. She felt that she was becoming her diagnosis.

Ms. Park became highly involved in spiritual and religious life. Her prayer life was vibrant. The church community was where she found happiness and a motivation for living again. Through her involvement in the church and her education at the Pittsburgh Seminary, Ms. Park's life has flourished again and she has found happiness.

3. Proclamation from Mayor Luke Ravenstahl

Paul O'Hanlon

Mayor Luke Ravenstahl issued a Proclamation honoring Recovery Month 2013. The proclamation placed importance on behavioral health as essential part of overall health and wellness. In order to achieve healthy lifestyles, prevention and treatment of behavioral health issues such as mental health and substance abuse disorders are essential for people in our region and around the world. The City of Pittsburgh is committed to inclusion and equality for all residents including those in recovery or those struggling with behavioral health issues.

4. Proclamation from County Executive Rich Fitzgerald *Mary Esther Van Shura*

County Executive Rich Fitzgerald proclaimed September as National Recovery Month in Allegheny County. He emphasized that Recovery Month helps to emphasize the many ways that people can prevent, seek treatment, and recover from behavioral health issues. Behavioral Health is an essential part of an individual's overall wellness. When behavioral disorders are left untreated, mental and substance use disorders can lead to more deaths than traffic accidents, HIV/AIDS, and breast cancer combined. As a result, Allegheny County will act to support behavioral health and Recovery Month.

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5. **Presentation: Recovery Oriented Systems of Care**
Michael Gruber and Latika Davis-Jones

Latika Davis-Jones, Administrator for the Office of Behavioral Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services, and Michael Gruber, Systems Transformation Coordinator presented on Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) and Allegheny County. The presentation explained ROSC and why Allegheny County should want this system, as well as explained the ROSC process within Allegheny County.

Due to the high relapse rates in Drug and Alcohol Treatment, we are moving away from an acute-care model into a chronic-care approach towards treatment of these disorders. ROSC is a value driven approach to delivering care and services. ROSC is a coordinated network of community based services. It supports the person in the perspective of individualized care while building on the strengths and resiliencies of individuals, families, and communities to achieve abstinence and improved health, wellness, and quality of life for those with or at risk of drug and alcohol problems, or mental health conditions. When you think about ROSC, it speaks to the issue of culture and it includes things such as religion, spirituality. ROSC creates a mechanism in the community for sustained support of recovery, and promotes hope.

In Allegheny County, several activities are supporting the ROSC framework. *UPMC Mercy Detox Project* in partner with the *Center for Spirituality, Prevention Point Pittsburgh, Tadiso, Inc.*, and *ONALA* all support the ROSC framework.

Mr. Gruber and Dr. Davis- Jones have begun to educate themselves and community organizations about the challenges to improve outcomes for individuals in long-term recovery. They have formed a ROSC Transformation Leadership Team and are working together to implement ROSC within Allegheny County. Dr. Davis-Jones can be contacted at 412 350 3857.

6. **Vox Pop**

Thanks to all of the presenters, as well as to the FISA Foundation for the refreshments.

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A motion to adjourn the Task Force Meeting was made, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote.

The next meeting will be held October 21,2013.