

NAMI NH Child and Adolescent Network
Challenges and opportunities for transitioning from children's
mental health services to adult mental health services
November 2007

Description of the Issue

Youth and Families who were members of the NAMI NH Child and Adolescent Network shared their experiences of having difficulty moving into the adult mental health system and that in many instances the level of services and supports received in the adult system was not as extensive and available. They shared their concern that the developmental needs of young adults were not being addressed. They wanted to do something to bring this issue into the forefront.

Process

The NAMI NH Child and Adolescent Network began to explore this issue in June of 2005. The group met every other month and did work between meetings. Tools used were research, satisfaction surveys, presentations, readings and personal stories. Contact was with providers within the children's mental health system and the adult mental health system, families and youth.

A Satisfaction Survey was developed and distributed to youth and families who were accessing mental health services in New Hampshire. The survey was distributed in several different venues in the fall of 2005 and 125 youth/families provided input. When the survey was reviewed the following were key areas of concern for youth and their families:

- Lack of Child Psychiatric Services
- Need for Family Education and Support Services
- Lack of access to mental health services
- Lack of Parenting Education and Support Services
- Inadequate Medication Evaluation Services
- Lack of school based Educational Services

The NAMI NH CAN members developed an Informational Survey to be given to providers of children and adult mental health services. Members conducted these surveys by contacting providers by telephone. The information from the survey process was gathered, analyzed and summarized by the group members. The top key issues identified by the survey include the following:

- No standard practice for youth transitioning from children's to adult mental health system
- No identified trained staff to coordinate the transition process
- Lack of services for individuals who do not meet the adult eligibility criteria
- Lack of insurance coverage (public or private) for youth and young adults

In January 2007, The Endowment for Health and NAMI NH partnered to host statewide focus groups to collect the thoughts, observations and attitudes towards NH Children's Mental Health Service System from youth and their families. Through that process the topic of Transition Planning was addressed. There were 206 parents/primary caregivers who participated in this process. Based on their answers, it appears that there is no standard process within the mental health system to plan and implement a transition plan. The role of youth and their family's involvement in the planning process varies from one site to another.

The NAMI NH CAN members realized they needed to have a more solid knowledge base of how the current system worked and what supports or services were available to assist with this transition. The first speaker was Karl Boisvert from Riverbend Counseling Center, who presented an overview of the Adult Community Support Eligibility criteria, the intake process and if found eligible what supports and services were offered to the individual with a serious mental illness. The next presentation was by Ray Barrett, Genesis Behavioral Health who presented on the eligibility criteria for children's community support services and how the services can be accessed. It was highlighted through these presentations that eligibility for children's CSP is less restrictive; however, both systems are challenged by workforce capacity issues. Insurance is another barrier for some individuals to access services in the adult system.

The next step was to identify private organizations that provided services or supports to assist youth and their families in this transition. The school supports and services were discussed and the IDEA rules and regulations that affect transition were reviewed. Louis Shedahl, from the Granite State Independent Living presented on their philosophy of working with youth in transition and what supports and services they provided. Rob Rodler, DCYF presented on the program DCYF is using to support youth in foster care who are transitioning out of the system. Deb Sosin, Children's Director from Community Council of Nashua presented on the Young Adult Program they offer. This however, did not address specifically "mental health" but a more general overview.

In an effort to further broaden the knowledge base of the group, articles about transitioning in the mental health system were provided for individual study. Group members were also provided a copy of the resource/guidebook "TRANSITION: A Manual For Young People With Disabilities & Their Families".

The group member used the information that had been gathered to support the issues they had identified and came to consensus on recommendations to improve the delivery of services for this population. Together they developed the outline for a report and identified the audiences they would like to share the information.

The group members determined the report would be initially distributed to key stakeholders including: youth, families, NAMI NH Public Policy Committee, NH State Mental Health Planning and Advisory Board, Bureau of Behavioral Health, CMHC Administrators that included Executive Directors, Children's Directors, Adult and CSP Directors. It was agreed that members of NAMI NH CAN would be identified to present the report to the identified stakeholders. The report would also be posted on NAMI NH's website.

Recommendations

The NAMI NH CAN membership recognized the current system has numerous strengths with the talent and commitment of staff being most recognized and acknowledged. The recommendations are submitted to be used to begin a dialogue and targeted to improve the current policies and practices.

These are the recommendations:

- Develop and implement a standardized process among community mental health centers for the transition of this population
- Maintain consistency of clinical providers during the transition period
- Develop and implement "Best Practice" models for transition
- Enhance the coordination of comprehensive community services
- Continue Intensive Services through Children's Services after the age of 18
- Develop an eligibility category for youth/young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age to address the unique needs of this population
- Adapt an integrated health approach when working with this population

Acknowledgements

It is important to recognize the youth and family voices that contributed this initiative which included members of the NAMI NH Child and Adolescent Network: Pam Banks, Nanci Collica, Maggie Doughty, Alicia Faciliglia, Kathy Fongeallaz, Christine Gerhardt, Hilary Gilbert, Hilary Gilbert, Emily Huff, Roxanne Marsh, Michael Moore, Ruth McQuade, Deb Sosin, Deb Stevens, Karen Stevens, Steve Warner and Ray Barrett and Claudia Ferber, co-facilitators.

NAMI NH Child and Adolescent Network membership looks forward to working with others to address these critical issues that impact our youth in transition and their families.