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Advocacy

Let's Get Started!



Let's Get Started!

PAIMI Council Leadership Training Institute
May, 2004

The OLRs PAIMI Council Leadership Training Institute

Ohio Legal Rights Service prepared this PAIMI Advisory Council publication, in part, with funding from the Ohio Department of Mental Health, through a grant from the federal Center for Mental Health Services. Additional funding was provided through grants under The Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Act of 1986, administered by the Center for Mental Health Services, United States Department of Health and Human Services.

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May, 2004

The PAIMI Council Leadership Training Institute

Let's Get Started!

The intent of this booklet
is to select a specific advocacy issue
and identify steps
for advocates to follow
to affect change.

This is a companion booklet
to the *Advocacy Guide*.

How

do I get started?

Outlined below are some of the basic planning activities an advocate should do prior to contacting a decision maker:

- 1 Know your rights.
- 2 Select a specific issue - be very narrow in your advocacy approach. Only address 1 issue at a time.
- 3 Knowledge is Power- research your issue and know the facts.
- 4 Simplify facts-make your issue easy to understand.
- 5 Develop a tip sheet- leave the tip sheet with the decision maker.
- 6 Plan ahead-try to identify questions people may ask you about your advocacy issue.
- 7 Share your ideas-meet with other advocates to share your ideas.
- 8 Develop an Advocacy Plan.
 - a. identify other advocates or groups to assist you.
 - b. identify who to contact and how.
 - c. develop a schedule for contacting the decision maker.
 - d. plan to follow-up with the decision maker.
 - e. develop communication plan to up-date network partners.

Let's get Started!

1

Know Your Rights

These four resources* were developed for the Rights and Recovery Campaign. They were designed to assure that people accessing mental health services were aware of their rights.

It's your Right

A rights video produced specifically for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Your Mental Health Rights

This rights handbook is designed to help consumers of mental health services know their rights and how to use their rights to support and protect their recovery.

Rights and Recovery Web site

The Rights and Recovery web site is housed on the Ohio Legal Rights Service's home page at: <http://olrs.ohio.gov>. The Web site provides information about PAIMI Council activities and other mental health issues.

Advocacy: A Bridge from Rights to Recovery

This study reviewed programs from a variety of perspectives and made formal recommendations to improve the quality and availability of Mental Health advocacy services for all Ohioans.

***These resources are available on the Ohio Legal Rights Service Web site: <http://olrs.ohio.gov> or by calling 1 800 282-9181 or TTY 1 800 858-3542.**

You can also find out about your rights in Ohio law.

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5122:2-1-02:

Identifies client rights and grievance procedure.

Let's get Started!

2 Select a Specific Issue

There are a variety of statewide systemic issues one could choose from to begin their advocacy efforts. For this demonstration document, the targeted issue is:

The Quality and Availability of
Mental Health Advocacy Services

Definition: Mental health advocacy services are available to clients who are accessing or receiving mental health services and are provided through a Client Rights Officer or a Client Rights Advocate. These advocacy services include:

- a) receiving and learning about your rights in the mental health system, and
- b) assisting you in resolving problems and filing a grievance, if necessary, and
- c) representing you and your perspective.

Let's get Started!

3

Knowledge is Power

As an advocate, you need to find out as much as possible about the targeted issue, **mental health advocacy services**. There are several sources of information:

- The best source of information is your own experience with the advocacy system.
- Experiences and stories from other clients or families.
- PAIMI Council's Rights and Recovery document: Advocacy: A Bridge from Rights to Recovery.
- Local, state, and national consumer/family organizations.

Let's get Started!

4

Simplify Facts

Based on the PAIMI Council's recently published *Advocacy: A Bridge from Rights to Recovery*, outlined below are the facts about the **mental health advocacy service system** that need to be told to decision makers:

- The advocacy system is inadequate and outdated.
- The role of the advocate in the system needs to be strengthened and better understood.
- There is no statewide certification or training for Client Rights Officer/Client Rights Advocates (CRO/As).
- Most CRO/As have other job duties - some which are a direct conflict with providing advocacy services for clients.
- Advocacy services are a very well kept secret.
- There is a lack of funding for CRO/As.
- CRO/As don't have enough time to effectively advocate for clients.
- There is a lack of consumers in CRO/A roles.
- No one ever asks if clients are satisfied with advocacy services.

Let's get Started!

5

Develop a Tip Sheet

The intent of the Tip Sheet is to help you stay focused on the issue and to help the decision maker better understand and remember your issue. A Tip Sheet for the issue this document targets, **the mental health advocacy service system**, could be designed like the one below.

Tip Sheet

Mental Health Advocacy Service System

Clients accessing Mental Health services in Ohio are very concerned about the availability and adequacy of the **Client Rights Advocacy System**. Concerns revolve around:

- Clients fear retaliation if they file a complaint.
- Clients don't know the role of the Client Rights Officer/Client Rights Advocate (CRO/A).
- There is no formal training for CRO/CRAs.
- CRO/As are seen as being part of the organization and thus are viewed as advocating for the system more than advocating for the client.
- CRO/As perform a variety of job duties within the organization, sometimes even the CEO is a part time CRO/A.

Decision makers need to take a closer look at the advocacy system in Ohio.

Contact information: Your name, phone, email, address

Let's get Started!

6 Plan Ahead for Questions

Try to identify some of the questions a decision maker may ask you regarding your issue. Potential questions about the **mental health advocacy system** could include:

- What are your recommendations to improve the advocacy system?
- How much would it cost to change the system?
- How do other mental health advocacy groups feel about this issue?
- Is this a problem statewide or just in your area?
- What other decision makers have you discussed this issue with?
- What facts do you have to substantiate your claims?
- How urgent is this issue?
- What have other states done to address this issue?

Let's get Started!

7

Develop an Advocacy Plan

An Advocacy Plan serves as a blueprint to identify who will be doing what, when. These activities are conducted after you have identified the specific advocacy issue. There are five steps in this plan:

- identify network partners (other advocates or groups) to assist you.
- identify what decision makers to contact and how.
- develop a schedule for contacting decision makers.
- plan to follow-up with decision makers.
- develop a communication plan to up-date network partners.

8a

Who can Assist?

Even though a single advocate can be very effective, the most efficient way to influence decision makers is to network with other clients, consumer and family organizations, or agencies who share your vision and passion for improving **mental health advocacy services**. Highlighted below are some of these potential networking partners.

- Other clients,
- Local consumer and family groups,
- Statewide consumer and family groups,
- Ohio Advocates,
- NAMI,
- PAIMI Council, and
- Ohio Legal Rights Service

"One of the most valuable things we can do
to heal one another
is to listen to each other's stories."

Rebecca Falls

8b

Who should I Contact?

To be an effective advocate, it is important to target your advocacy efforts toward the proper decision makers. In this document, **mental health advocacy services** is the target issue. For statewide change to occur and advocacy services improved, the following decision makers should be contacted:

- Director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health.
- Chief Clinical Officer (CCO) of Ohio Department of Mental Health.
- Director and CCO, Mental Health Provider Agencies.
- Executive Director and CCO, County Mental Health Board.
- Director, Board and Provider Associations.

Note: Some of the addresses for these decision makers are available through the OLRs Web site.

8b How do I Contact Decision Makers?

Advocacy requires you to make contact with decision makers. There are many ways to contact decision makers who were identified in the Advocacy Plan. However, the PAIMI Leadership Training Institute encourages people to become involved in advocacy activities at their comfort level - either through direct or indirect contact.

■ Indirect contact:

- email,
- letter,
- fax,
- post card,
- voice mail,
- text message.

■ Direct contact:

- phone call to decision maker or his/her assistant.
- personal visit to decision maker/assistant.

Imagine the impact of your letter and the letters and faxes and emails of your networking partners. Decision makers do pay attention when the concerns of consumers are voiced!

Networking partners should develop a schedule for contacting decision makers and select a variety of ways to contact them. It is not as effective for all to send an email or all to send a post card - - it is better to inform and educate the decision maker in as many ways as possible including written material and personal contact.

- In the Advocacy Plan, advocates should identify how and when they plan to contact the decision makers.
- The Advocacy Plan should also identify a specific time frame when the contacts should be completed.

8d Follow-up with Decision Makers

It is imperative that you follow-up with the decision maker to:

- thank him/her for meeting with you.
- to see if she/he has any questions regarding your issue: **mental health advocacy services**.
- to provide additional information on questions you needed to research.
- inform him/her that you would be happy to be a resource for them on mental health issues.

It is important for you to develop a communication plan with your networking partners. This plan could include the use of email and/or Web site technology or be as simple as telephoning members to up-date them on your progress.

It is necessary to communicate with your networking partners to:

- keep all advocates up-dated on the progress of the advocacy efforts.
- avoid duplication of efforts.
- motivate other advocates.
- thank them for their advocacy efforts.
- plan future advocacy strategies.

**Effective communication
improves the efficacy of your advocacy efforts!**

Let's get Started!

Contact/Report Form

As an advocate, it is important to keep records of your discussions/ contacts with decision makers. This form will help you organize your advocacy efforts.

Your Name: _____

County: _____

Phone Number, Fax, E-Mail: _____

Name of Decision Maker, Member of the General Assembly, or staff you contacted: _____

Issues Discussed: _____

Decision Maker, Member or Staff's Comments on Issues Discussed

Materials Provided: _____

Follow-up Needed: _____

Thank you for completing this form. Please share the results with your networking partners.

Let's get Started!

Sample Contacts

Samples are provided to show you how to make contact with a decision maker. Please be creative when you design your own, unique approach. Written material loses its impact when everyone writes exactly the same message. The following pages include samples of:

- letters,
- emails,
- post cards,
- phone messages, and
- personal contacts.

Let's get Started!

Sample Contacts

email

From: "Advocate" <your email address@fuse.net>
To: "Provider" <provider address.oh.us>
Subject: Mental health advocacy services
Date: Sat, 24 May 2004 09:52:05 -0400
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook Express 6.00.2800.1123

Dear (name of director of agency),

I am writing to tell you about my experience with the CRO while I was in your facility. On both issues I presented to her, it appeared she viewed my issues from an administrative perspective and not from the perspective that her role is to help me. Based on my experiences, I feel that CROs should be required to attend mandatory training to gain a better understanding of the vital role they serve. I was also interested in knowing if you ever hired any clients to act as CROs in your facility. I think clients would make perfect CROs. Please respond to me via my email address noted above. Thank you, Your name and phone number.

post card

Your name
Address

23 Cent stamp
for post card

Michael Hogan
Ohio Dept of MH
30 E. Broad Street, 8th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Director Hogan,

I am a consumer in the mental health system in Ohio. My experiences with the Advocacy System has been very negative. I feel that CROs and CRAs need to assist clients more proactively. Many clients don't even know the role of the CRO/CRA and how they can help the consumer. I feel there should be formal training for all CRO and CRAs in the state of Ohio and that there should be more clients serving as CROs in the system.

Thank you for listening to my concerns,
your name
phone and/or email address

Let's get Started!

Sample Contacts

letter

The Honorable NAME
The Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

May 12, 2004

Dear Representative NAME,

I am a registered voter who lives and works in your district. I am writing to inform you about the Mental Health Advocacy System in Ohio. As a consumer of Mental Health services, I have first-hand knowledge of this system and understand the value and need for an effective advocacy system.

My personal experiences with the advocacy system

In closing, I hope I can count on your leadership and support to improve the Mental Health Advocacy System in Ohio to assure that people's rights are respected and recovery becomes a reality. If you have any questions about my experiences with the advocacy system, please contact me. Also, I would be pleased to act as a resource person for you on any other mental health issues that you encounter during the legislative process. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Address
Phone number
E-mail address

Let's get Started!

Sample Contacts

personal visit

Introduction

Hello Representative _____. I am _____, a voter from your district. Discuss what part of his district you are from and other home town highlights.

Reason for visit

I am here today to discuss an issue that is very important to me- - the mental health advocacy system. Here is a "tip sheet" that outlines my concerns. Include why this issue is important to you - - your experience in the mental health system and dealing with the advocacy system.

Question/Answer period

The Representative may have questions about the advocacy system. Respond to the questions- - if you don't know the answer, inform the Representative you will research that question and get back to them.

Request for support

Request the Representative's support with your issue.

Contact Information

Be sure to leave all your contact information. Inform the Representative that you could be a resource for him/her with any other mental health issues.

Thank the Representative for listening

voice mail

Hello, this is a message for Director _____ at the X county mental health board. My name is _____. My home number is _____. I am calling to educate and inform you about an issue consumers in the mental health arena are concerned about - - the mental health advocacy system. We feel that there should be several changes to the system to make it more effective for clients. We feel that CROs should receive training before they become advocates for clients and we also feel there should be more clients hired as CROs. I will be sending you a "Tip Sheet" that outlines our concerns. I ask that you consider our request and support our initiative. I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you.

Let's get Started!

Summary

The next steps are up to you ...

... the individual advocate!

This *Let's Get Started!* document was designed to show steps to effective advocacy and to demonstrate that advocating for an issue that is important to you does not need to be a daunting task. The guide targeted **mental health advocacy services** as the focus ...

but there are other individual and systemic issues requiring advocacy activities to improve the world of mental health

"How wonderful it is
that nobody need wait a single moment
before starting to improve the world."

Anne Frank

