

ACCESS News

MARCH 26, 2009

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first issue of **ACCESS News**, a newsletter we plan to distribute on a monthly basis to keep the community informed of the work of Monroe County ACCESS Initiative to transform the system of care for children and youth with mental health challenges and their families. Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the six year grant focuses on children and youth with Significant Emotional Disturbances (SED) from birth to age 21. The grant places a special emphasis on children of color as this segment is viewed as having differential access to services as well as differential outcomes when the services are provided.

Strategies that are being employed to support the transformation include: improving outreach and access to services; changing practice; creating services; engaging families, youth and other stakeholders; creating partnerships; practicing cross-systems work; and evaluation. In the months to come you will hear much more about these important areas of focus for ACCESS.

ROCHESTER YOUTH'S POSTER IS CHOSEN TO REPRESENT MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

Attendees at the National Federation of Families annual conference chose a poster created by 15-year-old City of Rochester resident Angela Colon to represent the 2009 National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. The conference was held in Atlanta, Ga.

This year's competition was focused on artwork that, from a child's perspective, represented mental health in a positive light. Colon's artwork was one of over 50 submissions the conference received. Colon, a member of the SWAT (Spreading Wellness Around Town) Youth Council, received a \$500 dollar cash award and the honor of having her artwork used as the official campaign poster for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week.

It was an opportunity for others to see my work and to encourage other youth to realize there is hope and you can achieve your dreams," said Colon. In response to what she plans to do with her winnings, Colon replied, *"I'm going to save some of it and get art supplies."*

Jerard Johnson, the Youth Coordinator of SWAT, praised Colon's recent accomplishments and developments. *"We are very proud of Angela. Being acknowledged nationally for her artistic talent is a positive experience that will always stay with her and remind her that she has a gift to share,"* said Johnson. *"Younger kids can look up to her and see what she has accomplished and feel hope for their situation."* ..Susan Gilchrist, ACCESS Social Marketing Manager.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Racial & Ethnic Disparities in Behavioral Health Care Conference:

April 7 and 8 at the Radisson. Call (585) 613-7622.

ACCESS Monthly Family Roundtable:

April 16 from 6—8 pm. Call (585) 753-2699.

ACCESS Youth Council: Every Tuesday from 3:30 until 5:00. Call (585) 753-2699.

Community Collaborative:

April 21 from 4:30 until 6:00. Call (585) 753-2699.

Children's Mental Health Awareness Conference:

May 1 and 2—Holiday Inn Airport. Call (585) 753-2699.

THE ACCESS EVALUATION

The transformation of the System of Care for children with mental health challenges involves a lot of effort and resources. It would stand to reason that no one would go these lengths without knowing how well it's working. That's where evaluation comes in. The evaluation is not about assessing families, though they provide most of the information, it's about assessing the system of care services in Monroe County.

The evaluation of Monroe County's ACCESS transformation of mental health services is being conducted by Children's Institute, and you, to see how family outcomes change over time and to learn how to improve the quality of service. Our interviewers are people who come from the community, all of whom have had direct experience with emotional challenges either in their own families or through the work that they do. We try to make these interviews as convenient as possible for families by scheduling interview times (and places) convenient for them. After families provide their written, informed consent, we administer 26 questionnaires (caregivers and youth 11 and older each have their own sets of questionnaires from the 26) to see what families think.

We continue to interview these same families every six months until three years later, even if they have long since stopped receiving services for any reason. To assure confidentiality, we interview the caregiver and youth in each family separately from each other. In addition, neither administrators or providers know what any one family has told us since we only provide fully de-identified information.

There are about 100 families currently participating in the evaluation and we expect this to grow to 300. This information will be used to provide information to improve the access to and the quality of mental health services in Monroe County. As we gather more data and begin to report what we find, caregivers from the community will be encouraged to offer their perspectives about the results. ...Stephen Fielding, Evaluator.

THE FAMILY VOICE ...

In this first installment of "The Family Voice" we would like to start by laying the foundation for all that is to come. Family-driven is a term that is heard in our system and a concept that many people believe in. What we in the family movement have learned is that many people don't have a clear definition of what "Family-driven Care" is or what it looks like. We will answer those questions here.

The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health has provided a working definition of "Family-driven Care" it reads as follows:

Family-driven means families have a primary decision making role in the care of their own children as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, state, tribe, territory and nation. This includes:

- Choosing culturally and linguistically competent supports, services and providers;
- Setting goals;
- Designing, implementing and evaluating programs;
- Monitoring outcomes; and
- Partnering in funding decisions.

The federation has also offered guiding principles to assist communities in making family-driven operational. Those principles appear below.

- Families and youth, providers and administrators embrace the concept of sharing decision-making and responsibility for outcomes.
- Families and youth are given accurate, understandable, and complete information necessary to set goals and to make informed decisions and choices about the right services and supports for individual children and their families.
- All children, youth, and families have a biological, adoptive, foster, or surrogate family voice advocating on their behalf and may appoint them as substitute decision makers at any time.
- Families and family-run organizations engage in peer support activities to reduce isolation, gather and disseminate accurate information, and strengthen the family voice.
- Families and family-run organizations provide direction for decisions that impact funding for services, treatments, and supports and advocate for families and youth to have choices.

MAY CONFERENCE

**Thriving in Our Community.. The Monroe County Children's Mental Health Awareness Conference
May 1 and 2, 2009– Holiday Inn Airport**

We may all have different stories, but for 2 days we'll all stand on common ground.

Join us to learn more about services and supports available for children and youth with mental health challenges and their families.

For registration information, contact Annette Powell at (585) 753-2699

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- Providers take the initiative to change policy and practice from provider-driven to family-driven.
- Administrators allocate staff, training, support and resources to make family-driven practice work at the point where services and supports are delivered to children, youth, and families and where family and youth run organizations are funded and sustained.
- Community attitude change efforts focus on removing barriers and discrimination created by stigma.
- Communities and private agencies embrace and celebrate the diverse cultures of their children, youth, and families and work to eliminate mental health disparities.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

We would love to hear from you!

Please contact us with your questions, comments ...or ideas for future articles.

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