

June, 2008
News Alert Number 2

Client Empowerment Strategies

Dear CNMHC Member:

Today's news alert is on the topic of empowerment, and it includes a support toolkit as well as a research article. Both focus on empowering mental health clients: the first is intended to empower clients as parents, and the second reports on the empowerment of consumers in directing their own mental health services.

First is a resource called "The Family Support Toolkit." It was developed for both mental health professionals and clients who are parents. This free "family toolkit" is about sixty pages long and is sponsored by a mental health initiative in New York State. The kit is divided into three parts:

- 1) Understanding the needs of parents with psychiatric disabilities
- 2) Helping those who work with consumers who are parents
- 3) Resources

The toolkit is introduced with a history of mental health treatment in New York and a summary of the contents of the toolkit. It includes a list of myths about client parents, a fact sheet, and a list of challenges to be faced. The "Resources" section helps a family outline needs (emotional, social, etc.) and explores community programs that might assist in meeting those needs. There is also a list of websites and phone numbers for clients to access services.

The toolkit is available at the website below:

<http://www.mhanys.org/programs/pwpd/Family%20Support%20Tool%20Kit.pdf>

Second, a research article by J. Campbell (1997), called "How Consumers/Survivors Are Evaluating the Quality of Psychiatric Care," discusses how consumers are being empowered to evaluate their own mental health services. The article explains that as consumers become more involved in making decisions about their psychiatric care, in many cases consulting research and working toward system reform, they have identified factors that they feel contribute to good outcomes.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships, led by consumers, have come together to develop outcome measures, including self-reports and surveys of other kinds. Campbell discusses the evaluation teams that have resulted from these partnerships. The teams have delineated the characteristics of the consumer perspective. In addition, consumer-assisted research has involved focus groups, concept-mapping, and other strategies related to coercion, personhood, recovery, and other empowerment topic areas, which are the major focal points of evaluative efforts.

The article can be accessed at the URL below:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10183288>

Following is a list of three other articles related to consumer empowerment and evaluation:

- “The MHSIP Mental Health Report Card”
- “A Consumer-Oriented Approach to Monitoring the Quality of Mental Health Plans”
- “Determining the Effectiveness of Mental Health Services from a Consumer Perspective”

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