

The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County

Providing education, advocacy, and support services since 1954



Annual Report 2019

***Celebrating 65 years of working
to raise awareness and end stigma.***

The MHATC is an affiliate of Mental Health America and the Mental Health Association in New York State

Located at 301 S. Geneva St, Ithaca NY 14850
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A special thank you to retired member Jack Reid who served on the MHA Board for 8 years.

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Melanie Little, **Education and Youth Services Director**

Charles Niven, LMSW, **Peer Services Director**

Donna Nedrow, **Jenkins Center Coordinator**

Ashleigh Warrender, **Peer Specialist**

Amanda Kelly, **Community Outreach Coordinator**

A Brief History of MHA

Mental Health America (MHA) was established in 1909 by former psychiatric patient, Clifford W. Beers. During his stays in public and private institutions, Beers witnessed and was subjected to horrible abuse. From these experiences, Beers set into motion a reform movement that took shape as MHA. The efforts of Beers and other early pioneers of this movement set a course for reform, to the point where today, and increasingly, if treatment and support are provided, recovery from mental health and substance use conditions is the expected outcome for many people with lived experience of mental health conditions.

Today 1 in 5 Adults have a mental health condition. That's over 40 million Americans. The work of the MHA is driven by a commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, integrated care, services, and supports for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.

MHA is committed to the principle that every individual with a mental health or substance use condition can enjoy recovery and wellness. Individuals must define for themselves what recovery means to them – what their personal goals are, what it means to live a fulfilling and productive life, and how to manage their condition effectively.

There are currently 200 affiliates of Mental Health America in 41 states. The Tompkins County chapter of the Mental Health Association (MHATC) is a not-for-profit organization established in 1954, to work to end the stigma against mental illness, to promote mental health wellness, and address the mental health needs of the Tompkins County community.

The MHATC's annual budget is funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYS OMH), the New York State Office of People With Developmental Disabilities (NYS OPWDD), The United Way, individual grants, and private donations.

The MHATC works to fulfill its mission through four major program areas: Adult Advocacy, Youth and Family Services, Peer Support and Community Education. Programs provide training, education, advocacy and support programming, as well as connecting individuals and families to other community resources.

Our Mission

“The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County (MHATC) is committed to developing and supporting the active involvement of ordinary people (including providers, family members and recipients of mental health services) in all aspects of mental health. These include the definition of needs, the promotion of community, and the provision of services. We also support the human and civil rights of people who use mental health services, and will educate the community on all perspectives concerning mental health and mental health disabilities.”

The History of the MHA Bell



“Cast from shackles which bound them, this bell shall ring out hope for the mentally ill and victory over mental illness.”

In the not-so-distance past of mental health treatment, persons with mental illnesses confined in asylums were frequently restrained with iron chains and shackles. Mental Health Association founder, Clifford Beers, endured and witnessed this abuse during his own treatment, and after recovery dedicated himself to the reform of mental health services and social attitudes about mental illness. In the early 1950's, the MHA sent out a call for the then-discarded chains and shackles across the country, which were melted down and cast into a 300-pound bell. The bell remains our symbol of hope, freedom and victory for those battling mental illnesses, as well as for the continuing improvement and reform of mental health treatment and the surrounding social attitudes about mental health.

**This bell will ring for hope,
This bell will ring for freedom,
This bell will ring for victory.**

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Find us on  The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County

Spotlight on Education

The most important aspect of addressing mental health is providing education. The MHATC provides persons with psychiatric disabilities, their families, mental health professionals, human service providers and the general public with evidence-based mental health education, information and support.

The trainings we offer engage the community in conversations about mental health and mental illness. We are also able to prepare and present information concerning specific topics and areas of interest as requested by individuals, groups and organizations.

Here are some of the trainings we offer:

Mental Health and Wellness 101

A 1-hour introductory presentation on mental health - framing mental health as an integral part of overall health and wellness, and highlighting signs and symptoms to help participants better identify potential mental health challenges. This is a great tool for educating the general public, professional development, and for community organizations.

Mental Health First Aid

This 8-hour course teaches a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to people with the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or in a crisis, and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self-help care.

<http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/>

Youth MHFA, MHFA for Older Adults, MHFA for Higher Education, MHFA for Veterans and Service Members.

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)

This is a self-designed prevention and wellness process that anyone can use to get well, stay well and make their life the way they want it to be. It is now used extensively by people in all kinds of circumstances, and by health care and mental health systems all over the world to address all kinds of physical, mental health and life issues. <http://mentalhealthrecovery.com/wrap-is/>



MHATC PROGRAMS

Program: Jenkins Center

Coordinator: Donna Nedrow

Email: JenkinsCenter@mhaedu.org

Additional Program Staff: Asleigh Warrender
Alex Dennis
Adam Tierney
Eric Schissel
Thor Hubbell
Colleen Kelly
David McElrath
Vern Middleton



Funding provided by: NYS Office of Mental Health

Annual Amount: \$124,966.00

The Jenkins Center is a recovery center for people who have or are currently dealing with a mental health issue. The original goal of the program was for people receiving mental health treatment to have a place to meet and share experiences and information. The Center has gone through many changes and membership has increased. We offer programs and groups that are designed to help individuals take an active role in their recovery. We have also added activities that can help enhance daily wellness and encourage development of support networks. The Jenkins Center also offers meals, computer access, a relax room and TV room. Life is hard and particularly when you struggle with symptoms of a mental illness. We realize that sometimes you just need a place to just be safe, a cup of coffee, someone to listen or a place to relax.

The Jenkins Center serves mental health consumers over age 18 and provides a safe environment where these consumers can relax, socialize with peers, and share information and support. The Jenkins Center is open Tuesday through Friday 9am to 6 pm and Saturdays from noon to 4 and is currently staffed by 7 peers and 2 peer volunteers. An average of 27 people visit the Jenkins Center daily. Special events often attract more members.

The center and its staff provide weekly classes, groups, and activities as well as a weekly Thursday lunch. Our members and visitors come to us by peer recommendation, the Tompkins County Mental Health Clinic, Cayuga Medical Center, area therapists, local psychiatrists, and personal physicians.

Program: Family Support Services

Director: Pat Vincent, FPA

Email: PVincent@mhaedu.org

Additional Program Staff: Charles Niven, CPS, FPA

Funding provided by: NYS Office of Mental Health

Annual Amount: \$109,960.00

The Family Support Services Program is focused on the needs of families who have a child or children with a social, emotional, behavioral, developmental or a mental health disability. FSS provides services to support and empower families so they can improve the quality of their lives and help their children to achieve their full potential within the family network and community. FSS provides a wide range of no cost services to help support the entire family.

Family Peer Support Services

A Family Peer Advocate works across a variety of systems to provide peer support, education, advocacy and information and referral. A Family Peer Advocate will work closely with parents/guardians in a strength-based relationship to enhance family skills to promote positive youth functioning and their child's ability to be successful. A Family Peer Advocate will be available to collaboratively work with and on behalf of families to assist them to obtain needed services and supports to promote positive outcomes. The most important advocacy concept of FSS is that of being "Effective Parent-Professional-System partnerships".

Parent Support Group

MHATC offers a parent-driven support group consisting of parents/guardians and a FSS peer advocate who share similar experiences. The group provides a forum where parents can exchange information, share past experiences and create positive techniques and skills to enhance their family unity. FSS schedules a variety of educational workshops which have included such topics as: Mental health assessments, transition services, special education laws, nutrition and a medication presentation by an area pharmacist.

Parent Trainings

The Family Peer Advocate provides training for parents/guardians of children with mental health needs so they can gain specific information about mental health disorders and their treatments, the mental health care system and services and school system options.

Program: Youth Services

Director: Melanie Little

Email: Info@mhaedu.org

Additional Program Staff: Respite Providers, Skill-Builders and Camp Counselors

Funding provided by: OPWDD, OMH, Pathways (Medicaid), United Way, Legacy Foundation, Community Foundation, TCDSS, Private Donations, and fee for service

Annual Amount: \$66,226.00 and Fee for Service

Youth Services offers a wide array of programming that focuses on youth. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10 to 24. We know that most people who will develop mental health disorders experience symptoms by age 14. Identifying these early signs and providing appropriate supports can improve the child's life, mitigate worsening symptoms, and improve mental health in the future. Programs are designed to serve children and youth who are having emotional disturbances and/or significant behavior problems.

HCBW Respite and Skill-Building Services is considered the highest level of care available before residential placement, available to youth up to age 18. MHATC, contracted through Pathways, Inc., provides Respite and Skill-Building for youth enrolled in the waiver program. Respite and Skill-Building is done by our highly trained staff in children's homes and in the community. During Skill-Building the provider works with the child on a series of goals based on their specific needs. Respite provides a break for the family from childcare and engages the child in recreation and leisure

Teen and Young Adult Groups meet every week and are similar to the psychosocial club model. The groups provides a safe space for participants aged 13-17 or 18-26 for peer support, skill-building, resource information, building connections, and activities. A typical session includes dinner, check-in, discussion, games/crafts/outside play.

KIDS FIRST Summer Day Camp is a 6-week day camp every summer for children with behavioral/mental health/developmental challenges. Our referrals frequently come from other camps in the area, who tell us their program is unable to provide the level of attention and skilled care that the child needs due to their diagnosis and symptoms.

Program: Peer Support and Peer Training Program

Director: Charles Niven, LMSW, CPS, FPA

Email: CNiven@mhaedu.org

Funding provided by: NYS Office of Mental Health

Annual Amount: \$58,733.00 (ADV) \$6,388.00 (AFS)

In all areas of life, we know relationships and connection are crucial to well-being. We call friends in hard times, visit family members when they aren't feeling well, and often see support groups for individuals who've experienced similar challenges like chronic disease or loss of a loved one. In the same way that we reach out to someone who we think will understand, peer specialists can provide that understanding during a time when many feel alienated and hopeless. They provide an important connection and hope that recovery is possible.

The MHATC introduced its Peer Support and Peer Training Program in late 2016. The program makes available peer support while also providing training and supervision for those working toward their Peer Specialist Certification.

Peer support programs provide an opportunity for consumers who have achieved significant recovery to assist others in their recovery journeys. Peer specialists model recovery, teach skills and offer supports to help people experiencing mental health challenges lead meaningful lives in the community. Peer specialists promote recovery; enhance hope and social networking through role modeling and activation; and supplement existing treatment with education, empowerment, and aid in system navigation.

Peer support services have been shown to:

- Reduce symptoms and hospitalizations
- Increase social support and participation in the community
- Decrease lengths of hospital stays and costs of services
- Improve well-being, self-esteem, and social functioning
- Encourage more thorough and longer-lasting recoveries

Regardless of the setting or role, we know that peer supporters actively involved in a person's recovery can make all the difference.

Program: Adult Advocacy Services

Director: David Bulkley

Email: DBulkley@mhaedu.org

Funding provided by: NYS Office of Mental Health

Annual Amount: \$58,733.00 (ADV) \$6,388.00 (AFS)

Individuals receiving mental health services are among the most vulnerable in our community. The nature of their illnesses often results in a variety of peripheral problems ranging from well-meaning slights and stigma, to disregard of basic civil rights. Part of the long history of psychiatric hospitals and hospitalizations is unfortunately the recurring problem of patient abuse and neglect. Although deinstitutionalization has resulted in resolution of many such problems, every solution has its own price. Deinstitutionalization caused a new set of problems, such as homelessness, lack of adequate follow-up treatment and support, and simple loneliness. The MHATC addresses the stigma and discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems. Additionally, we advocate for new and improved mental health services locally and at the state level.

Adult Services provides information and assistance to people using mental health services and to their family and friends. It can help people connect with local therapists, assist in coordinating services, help provide answers to questions concerning individual rights in different mental health environments, assist in resolving problems among people and systems, and help provide direct assistance to arrange referral to legal or other resources. Adult Services provides various training sessions to mental health recipients who are residents of Tompkins County. These trainings are free of charge and teach many skills which are useful in establishing a more productive and hopeful relationship with the world. The program seeks to develop in people a positive, progressive attitude toward personal responsibility.

Adult Advocacy Program of the MHATC has the responsibility of monitoring mental health services and responding to individual and group concerns. It is this program that serves as a “watchdog” and advocates for the improvement of mental health services.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS!

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