



**Austin Travis County Mental Health Mental
Retardation Center**

**Consumer Initiatives
Development Plan**

**Governmental and Community Relations
April 2005**

I. Consumer Initiatives Development Plan

The Consumer Initiatives Development Plan is designed to provide a framework for expanding and enhancing consumer initiatives and activities. The plan is based on the following:

- observations of consumer activities of the Center;
- state mandated activities (e.g., HB 2292);
- consumer input;
- communication with other Community Mental Health Centers’;
- The President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health Report: *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*; and
- The Mayor’s Mental Health Task Force Final Report.

The development plan provides an overview and assessment of: 1) current activities and initiatives; 2) state mandates for consumer education and engagement; and 3) community collaborations.

II. Overview of Consumer Programs and Activities

The Consumer focused activities at the Center consists primarily of the following:

- participation on the Consumer Council;
- participation on the Network Advisory Committee;
- participation on the Citizens Planning and Advisory Committee;
- participation as a volunteer with Center programs and special events; and
- dissemination of the *Consumer Gazette*, quarterly newsletter.

Consumer Council

The Consumer Council is the advisory committee that provides input on service planning, delivery, and evaluation. Participation in the Consumer Council varies, with an average attendance over the last three months of 10 persons. The participation of key consumer stakeholders has improved with consumer representation by members of the Depressive Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) and National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI). The Consumer Council reports to the Executive Director and management staff.

The Consumer Council has operated on a somewhat informal basis with no meeting notes compiled, and few membership applications on file. The Consumer Council does have a designated Chair and Vice Chair whose duties are outlined in the bylaws. Their roles have consisted primarily of reviewing and approving agendas, prior to the meetings and attending the monthly meetings. Meeting notes are now being compiled and members are being asked to complete membership applications. In addition, in keeping with the bylaws the Executive Committee of the Consumer Council has re-established monthly meetings.

The Executive Committee consists of the Chair, Co-Chair and Coordinator of Consumer and Volunteer Initiatives. The bylaws are scheduled for review at the June meeting of the Consumer Council to ensure the Council structure is meeting the diverse needs of consumers as well as the Center.

The Consumer Council is meeting monthly at the Self Help Advocacy Center (SHAC). Meeting at the SHAC provides an opportunity for consumers who are dropping by to participate in the Consumer Council. However, the meeting room at the SHAC is noisy, and meetings are frequently interrupted, as other consumers have to use the area to walk across to the other side of the building and to access the restrooms. In some cases, consumers do not participate in the Consumer Council meetings because they are held at the SHAC. In addition, there is some confusion among consumers in understanding, which activities are SHAC activities and which are Center activities. The feasibility of continuing to use the SHAC as a meeting place for the Consumer Council should be re-evaluated.

Although the Center offers many opportunities for consumer involvement, they have not been fully engaged in all levels of Center activities, most notably planning across Center programs and functions. Including consumers in the initial planning phase may have strengthened the recent internal planning and subsequent policy decision to move to a waiting list. In the future, the Consumer Council should be engaged earlier in the planning process for policy and procedural issues and in decisions affecting them.

Accordingly, an assessment of consumer involvement and identification of activities needing consumer input should be implemented, to ensure consumers are systematically engaged at all levels of planning, decision-making, and evaluation consistent with both the Center Strategic Plan goals and the recently adopted System of Care Core Values.

Advisory Committees

The Citizens Planning Advisory Committee and Network Advisory Committee both report to the Board of Trustees and their membership consists of consumers, family members, and non-consumers. The Texas Department of State Health Services requires the Planning Network Advisory Committee be comprised of 50% consumers and family members. This requirement is being met, and new members are continuously recruited. Management staff should be surveyed on the need for consumer involvement in any agency ad hoc and/or standing committees.

Volunteer Engagement

The engagement of consumers as volunteers has occurred primarily in the context of advisory committees and special time-limited events (e.g., focus groups, special events). Staffing constraints, specifically the absence of a Volunteer Coordinator, have limited the recruitment and placement of consumer

volunteers on a broader and more strategic level. All consumers who have the ability and desire to volunteer should be provided with opportunities to do so.

Consumer Gazette

The distribution of the *Consumer Gazette* is the primary method for the broad dissemination of information relevant to consumers. This newsletter is produced and disseminated separately from the Center newsletter. The Consumer Council has expressed the desire to continue to produce the *Consumer Gazette* as a separate newsletter. A section addressing consumer news or other relevant consumer information should be incorporated into the *Focus* newsletter to more clearly demonstrate the alignment of consumer activities with the Center. The Consumer Council, at the January meeting, also expressed the need to be continually informed of Center activities.

In addition to these activities, the Center has a collaboration with Austin Area Mental Health Consumers (AAMHC) for the SHAC. AAMHC uses a Center building for the SHAC, a drop-in Center for adult consumers. The drop-in Center provides a gathering place for consumers to socialize. The SHAC also provides a variety of free classes and supportive activities to include: art, computer training, support groups, and exercise classes. Members of the Consumer Council support AAMHC and the SHAC by volunteering for various activities and events.

III. Consumer Communication and Education

The mechanisms for communicating with consumers regarding Center activities consists of:

- monthly meetings of the Consumer Council;
- quarterly dissemination of the *Consumer Gazette*;
- information dissemination (e.g., flyers) via the Self Help Advocacy Center (SHAC) Center service sites;
- information dissemination at the CARE Program Drop-in Center;
- quarterly community forums;
- Center web site; and
- “word of mouth” information dissemination among consumers and family members.

The Center web site has not been fully utilized as an additional means of communicating information. The web site provides information on the Consumer Council, Texas Implementation of Medication Algorithms (TIMA), Consumer Benefits, Consumer Rights and the *Consumer Gazette*. Some of the information is outdated and incorrect and in the case of the Consumer Benefits and Consumer Rights links, no contact name is provided, and while a phone number is provided, it is positioned where it could be overlooked. In addition, while there

are links to other resources, they could be better organized and more easily identified.

There is no health education or recovery information provided for mental health or substance abuse prevention, intervention, or treatment. The web site does include some information that describes types of developmental disabilities. The FAQ section is very brief, mental health focused, and does not broadly address the functions and services provided by the Center. The Consumer Council should be consulted on ways to enhance the web site with consumer information that is easy to access and understand.

In regards to consumer education and support, specific programs and/or clinic sites have established psychosocial education groups. Communication to consumers regarding these groups appears to consist primarily of direct staff communication and informational flyers at the sites. There is no information on the web site about the availability, content, or times and locations of these groups. There is no centralized link describing available support/educational groups across program areas. Staff should be surveyed on the groups/skills training available and the information should be communicated to consumers through the web site, Consumer Council, and *Consumer Gazette*.

The recent consumer focus group conducted for the New Milestones Foundation, indicated some consumers are confused about the state re-organization and consolidation mandated by HB 2292. There is no information on the web site describing the state consolidation or delineating the impact with Center operations. The web site should be updated with information describing legislative changes relevant to Center functions and operations.

IV. State Mandates

HB 2292

The passage of HB 2292 during the 78th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature (2003) mandated the provision of services using disease management approaches for adults with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and clinically severe depression. Requirements of disease management include the provision of treatment services that are:

- on-going and matched to individual needs including type, duration and intensity;
- focused on recovery, and designed to allow the consumer to progress through levels of care; and
- guided by evidence-based protocols and a strength-based paradigm.

There is no information on what is now described as Resiliency and Disease Management (RDM) or the related psychosocial education groups for consumers

or families on the web site. The web site should be updated with an overview of RDM requirements and activities.

Texas Medication Algorithm Project Patient and Family Education Program

The Texas Medication Algorithm Project (TMAP) developed by the former Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation requires the implementation of mental health patient and family education provided by both staff and peers (consumers). Clinical staff have received in-house training to deliver the individual consumer education component.

The required consumer-to-consumer educational component has not been implemented. In order to meet this requirement, the Center is partnering with NAMI Texas to provide Texas Team Solutions, a health education recovery focused consumer education program, which incorporates the state mandated educational component into a more comprehensive curriculum.

The Coordinator of Consumer and Volunteer Initiatives has completed the instructor certification training for Texas Team Solutions, and is conducting consumer education classes with NAMI Texas staff. Plans are underway to begin conducting Texas Team Solutions at the Center in July. In addition, NAMI Texas is seeking approval from the Texas Department of State Health Services for the designation of Texas Team Solutions as an approved alternative to the TMAP Patient and Family Education Program.

V. Community Collaborations

The Center has been involved in a variety of on-going community collaborations in mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities some of which include:

- The Children's Partnership;
- Substance Abuse Planning Partnership;
- Adult Mental Health Issue Area Group;
- Child and Youth Mental Health Planning Partnership; and
- Family Support Cooperative.

Community collaborations with other mental health education/advocacy organizations have been limited primarily to special events and other time-limited projects. Efforts are underway to collaborate with NAMI Texas to provide consumer health education, participate in Mental Health Month activities, Celebration Recovery, and the NAMI National Convention to be held here in June.

VI. Action Plan for Expanding and Enhancing Consumer Activities and Initiatives

An action plan has been developed which includes goals, objectives, and strategies (**Attachment A**) for improving and enhancing consumer initiatives and activities through the end of the fiscal year. The action plan is based on the following:

- information provided in Sections I-V;
- available resources;
- Center Strategic Plan;
- System of Care Core Values;
- Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Final Report; and
- The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health Report: *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America.*

This plan should be viewed as a document that is flexible, and can be revised to meet changing state and local priorities and needs.

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Attachment A Consumer Initiatives Development Plan Action Plan

Goals	Objectives	Strategies	*Relevant Supporting Documentation	Timeline	Measurement
<p>1. Improve and enhance communication to and by consumers.</p>	<p>1.1 90% Consumer satisfaction with improved communication strategies.</p>	<p>1.1 Update Center web site with health education, recovery, substance use, developmental disabilities, and resource information.</p> <p>1.2 Provide consumer information in <i>Focus</i> newsletter.</p> <p>1.3 Conduct a focus group on preferred and current communication strategies/efforts.</p> <p>1.4 Produce quarterly <i>Consumer Gazette</i>.</p>	<p>Strategic Plan-/G1, G4: G1: Promote independence through accessible, culturally competent and effective treatment and support services responsive to the individual's needs and preferences.</p> <p>G4: Participate in community efforts to eliminate stigma, instill hope, and champion the voice of those served through advocacy and education of all stakeholders.</p> <p>System of Care Core Value 1: Significant and meaningful consumer and consumer family involvement and participation at all levels of the System of Care.</p> <p>Mayor's Mental Health Task Force-Criteria T4, T8: T4: A mentally health community partners with consumers and families to promote, hope, recovery and self-determination. T8: A mentally healthy community provides training to promote optimal mental health emphasizing systems of care, hope, and recovery.</p> <p>President's New Freedom Commission-G2 G2: Mental health care is consumer and family driven.</p>	<p>Progress report by 06/05</p> <p>Completion by 08/05</p>	<p>1.1 Updated web site.</p> <p>1.2 Consumer information in one (1) <i>Focus</i> newsletter.</p> <p>1.3 Documentation of focus group/feedback.</p> <p>1.4 Two (2) <i>Consumer Gazettes</i> distributed.</p>

Goals	Objectives	Strategies	*Relevant Supporting Documentation	Timeline	Measurement
<p>2. Increase the involvement of consumers in Center activities.</p>	<p>2.1 Increase the involvement of Consumers in Center activities by 20%. **Baseline=In progress</p> <p>2.2 Increase membership in the Consumer Council by 50%. **Baseline=6</p> <p>2.3 Implement TIMA/health education program for MH consumers.</p>	<p>2.1 Identify and recruit consumers for standing committees (e.g., CPAC, NAC), ad hoc committees and special events.</p> <p>2.2 Partner with NAMI Texas, DBSA, TMHC, Advocacy Inc. and/or other relevant MH advocacy/education groups in engaging consumers.</p> <p>2.3 Partner with NAMI Texas and/or other MH education organizations in developing the program.</p>	<p>Strategic Plan-G1, G5 G1: Promote independence through accessible, culturally competent and effective treatment and support services responsive to the individual's needs and preferences.</p> <p>G5: Develop and expand resources by partnering with individuals, families and community stakeholders to improve the quality and availability of resources.</p> <p>System of Care Core Value 1: Significant and meaningful consumer and consumer family involvement and participation at all levels of the System of Care.</p> <p>Mayor's Mental Health Task Force-Criteria T4, T8: T4: A mentally health community partners with consumers and families to promote, hope, recovery and self-determination.</p> <p>T8: A mentally healthy community provides training to promote optimal mental health emphasizing systems of care, hope, and recovery.</p> <p>President's New Freedom Commission-G2 G2: Mental health care is consumer and family driven.</p> <p>Strategic Plan G5: Develop and expand resources by partnering with individuals, families and community stakeholders to improve the quality and availability of resources.</p> <p>Core Value 4: Local community involvement in all aspects of planning, design, development, use and</p>	<p>Progress Report by 06/05</p> <p>Completion by 08/05</p>	<p>2.1 Number of new consumers compared with baseline.</p> <p>2.2 Three (3) new Consumer Council members.</p> <p>2.3 Documentation of implementation of Texas Team Solutions/TIMA health education program.</p>
<p>3. Increase community collaborations with key stakeholders.</p>	<p>3.1 Develop two (2) collaboration activities/initiatives with key stakeholders.</p>	<p>3.1 Partner with NAMI-Austin, DBSA, TMHC, Advocacy Inc. and/or other relevant advocacy/education groups in engaging consumers.</p>	<p>Strategic Plan G5: Develop and expand resources by partnering with individuals, families and community stakeholders to improve the quality and availability of resources.</p> <p>Core Value 4: Local community involvement in all aspects of planning, design, development, use and</p>	<p>Progress Report by 06/05</p> <p>Completion by 08/05</p>	<p>3.1 Documentation of two collaborative activities/initiatives.</p>

Goals	Objectives	Strategies	*Relevant Supporting Documentation	Timeline	Measurement
			<p>evaluation of resources.</p> <p>Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Criteria-T07, T08 T07: A mentally healthy community increases awareness that mental health issues affect all of us—"it is us"—and promotes the concept that mentally healthy lifestyles and a mentally healthy community are shared values.</p> <p>President's New Freedom Commission-Goal 2: Mental healthcare is consumer and family driven.</p>		

*Identifies relevant goals, criteria, core values, from the following documents:

- **Strategic Plan:** Austin Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation Center Strategic Plan 2005-2007
- **System of Care Core Values:** Austin Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation Center Core Values-February 2005
- **Mayor's Mental Health Task Force:** Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Final Report: Fittest City in America Initiative-January 2005
- **President's New Freedom Commission:** The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health Final Report: *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*-July 2003

**Represents the number of consumers involved in Center committees and the Consumer Council as of January 2005.