

## **Current Innovative Models in South Florida's Behavioral Health System**

The following are four innovative model programs that are currently funded through the Department of Children and Families. These programs are consumer-run in nature and provide several peer-to-peer services for persons with mental illness. These programs are viewed as extremely cost effective and provide possible alternatives to expensive hospitalizations. All the programs listed have proven to provide high consumer satisfaction and are viewed by consumers to be positive steps to a more complete state funded mental health system. Consumers throughout the United States, especially in the Broward County area, have expressed that programs such as these help foster recovery and that consumers become more productive in their lives as a result. On the national level, programs such as these are highly recommended for funding considerations due to the several positive impacts they have on the lives of consumers.

### **Office of Consumer Affairs**

The **Office of Consumer Affairs**, located at Broward Regional Health Planning Council, Inc. in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is the only state funded Office of Consumer Affairs staffed by consumers of the mental health and substance abuse services in the state of Florida. The office is unique in that all of the staff are qualified consumer advocates with expertise in dealing with mental health and substance abuse system problems. It represents the "voice" of consumers in Broward County and advocates enhancing the Behavioral Health Care System with the direction it receives from consumers in the community. The office provides continuous valuable input to the local district Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Program Office of the Department of Children and Families regarding program satisfaction levels in local state funded behavioral health care agencies.

The **Vision** of the Office of Consumer Affairs is that:

All consumers of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health System of Broward County are gainfully included and represented on all levels of the Behavioral HealthCare System.

The **Mission** of the Office of Consumer Affairs is to:

Create an atmosphere where consumers that receive alcohol, drug abuse, or mental health services of all ages can be directly involved in the Behavioral HealthCare Delivery System in Broward County. The office is built on the principles of erasing stigma and changing inaccurate perceptions. We believe that we must act justly for people that have

or have had mental, emotional, or substance abuse issues and insure them the right and support to seek recovery from those problems.

## **The Office of Consumer Affairs is established...**

- To administer and coordinate a consumer satisfaction team that assesses consumer satisfaction at all district mental health, substance abuse, and foster care agencies serving both children and adults, including consumer run programs, using small group sessions to obtain feedback.
- To take individual complaints regarding rights issues, program satisfaction and quality of life issues.
- To provide technical assistance to consumer run programs and organizations in their efforts to develop programs and services.
- To participate in a range of initiatives and activities to insure that consumer interests are represented in the publicly funded behavioral system.
- To design training on consumer related issues for district consumers, for mental health agencies, and others involved in program planning.
- To serve as clearinghouse for information referrals and resources including a library with books, articles, as well as audio and videotapes on file.
- To assist with policy development at local, state and national levels.
- To act as a consultant to the Department of Children and Families regarding issues concerning all consumers that receive alcohol, drug abuse, or mental health services from state funded agencies.
- To assist consumers in the foster care system.
- To advocate that all consumers are treated with the dignity and humanity due to all human beings
- To achieve the best possible community behavioral health system for all consumers based upon unique consumer experience and perspective.
- To promote primary and secondary consumer input into the affairs of all behavioral health providers.
- To provide a forum for exchanging information to end stigma in the field of mental illness.

Although all of the above services are not necessarily listed according to priority, activities are constantly subject to change when prevailing events and situations arise.

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For more information contact:

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Link (website currently under construction): <http://www.brhpc.org/oca>

### **9 Muses Art Center**

A project to provide those with mental illness an opportunity for expression and recovery through the arts. Participants are free to choose from a broad array of visual and performance arts. Classes and personalized instruction along with individual studio time allow each artist to create according to his/her own personal "muse."

Artistic expression and community integration at **9 Muses** promote understanding and acceptance both for those with illness and for those without. Together the members make a difference, challenging stigma, embracing expression, and creating opportunity via the arts. Membership, materials and workshops are free for mental health consumers. **9 Muses** is administrated and supported by the Mental Health Association of Broward County, Inc.

For more information, contact:

Mental Health Association of Broward County, Inc.  
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Website currently under construction

## **Silver Center, Inc.**

The **Silver Center** is the only consumer-operated Drop-in Center in the state of Florida focused on the needs of older adults with mental health concerns. Many suffer over the loss of loved ones, income, physical health, chronic pain, self-esteem, adequate housing, and transportation.

**Silver Center's** Program relieves their social isolation by providing socialization, education and recreation for those who are lonely and depressed.

Their **mission** is:

1. To provide a better quality of life for adults age 55 and older who have mental health, emotional and/or substance abuse challenges.
2. To educate the community at large about mental health issues and to reduce the discrimination and stigma attached to persons labeled with psychiatric illness.

### **Objectives**

- To reduce stigma
- To determine the true wants and needs of mental health consumers 55 and older.
- To give them the right of free choice in their decisions while recognizing the rights of others.
- To express the needs of this group to people within the mental health system in order to effect improvements in mental health delivery.
- To advocate for improved funding for mental health consumers on the local, state, and national levels.
- To encourage consumer involvement and representation at all levels of legislation and planning for mental health services.
- To help families and friends of consumers gain the insight necessary to enhance the lives of older persons with mental disabilities.
- To provide speakers, videos and other educational material on the mental health issues of the elderly.
- To broaden the members by providing them with social and educational experiences at the Silver Center that reduces their social isolation.

For more information, contact:

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Website currently under construction

**Peer Center, Inc.** - <http://www.peercenter.org>

**PEER** is an Acronym for “**Personal Empowerment, Education and Recreation.**” participants are busy advocating for consumer rights, utilizing their individual talents, and lending a hand to help others in need.

The mission of the PEER Center is to help improve the quality of life for mental health consumers by providing a unique addition to existing supports and services through the creation of a focal point for empowering the individual through healthy opportunities for education, recreation and interaction in a non-clinical, low demand atmosphere, free of stigma. PEER Center fills the most often expressed need of consumers in Broward County, a drop-in center, a place to belong.

Fundamental to the PEER Center is the concept that it is a consumer-operated drop-in center. All staff members of the PEER Center have lived with the devastation of “mental illness.”

People with “mental illness” often lead lives of isolation, forced to remain silent about their illness. At **PEER Center**, there is no judgment or **stigma**, and consumers have a place where they can be honest about who they are. It is a safe place where people can hold up their heads in pride without fear of prejudice or rejection from those around them.