

I. Executive Summary

A recent national co-morbidity survey indicated that 50% of all serious adult psychiatric conditions begin around the age of 14, and 75% of these conditions (including substance abuse, depression, and anxiety disorders) are apparent by the age of 25. With an onset of disease occurring in adolescence, it is important to develop ways to reach out to teenagers. Despite its prevalence, mental illness in adolescents is largely an unseen epidemic. In 2004, suicide was the third leading cause of death for individuals aged 10 to 24 (NIMH, 2004).

The largest challenge the mental health field faces today is overcoming the social stigma surrounding mental health issues, especially for adolescents who are vulnerable to peer pressures and social perceptions. Stigma is the most pervasive barrier encountered by persons living with a mental illness; it has many affects on their ability to lead a normal independent lifestyle. Individuals with mental illnesses are often subject to stigmatization based purely on the prevailing misconceptions perpetuated by the media. Adolescents are at an age where they are just beginning to form their social norms, opinions and values, these beliefs will be with them for life. Adolescence is a critical point in time to develop health interventions to combat stigma.

The ClearView Center in Albany would like to achieve a reduction in stigma across college campuses by countering the stereotype of mental illness. By reducing the stigma attached to mental illness, students experiencing mental illness may be more likely to seek treatment. InSights proposes to develop a peer presentation using a teenaged role model to counter the prevailing stereotype. The role model will be a young individual who has personally lived with a mental illness who can relay their struggles with mental illness in a positive manner.

The limited financial support from the Albany County Department of Mental Health is not enough for The ClearView Center to provide a full menu of services outlined in this request. We are requesting funding in implementing this program, including requests at two 2 different levels of funding, one for \$5,000 and one for \$10,000. The ClearView Center is uniquely qualified to incorporate a new project to reduce stigma. The idea for a role model presentation represents collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation which will continue to support our mission to promote the growth and recovery of individuals living with mental illness and their families. By creating a supportive and tolerant environment, the peer led program will result more students seeking treatment and recovery. The requested funding would allow us to provide the services outlined while we continue to seek outside funding.

II. Scope of the Problem

In 2006, The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reported that 1 in 4 American Adults and 1 in 10 young American children suffer from a diagnosable mental illness in any given year (2006). A recent national co-morbidity survey indicated that 50% of all serious adult psychiatric conditions begin around the age of 14, and 75% of these conditions (including substance abuse, depression, and anxiety disorders) are apparent by the age of 25. With an onset of disease occurring in adolescence, it is important to develop ways to reach out to teenagers. Despite its prevalence, mental illness in adolescents is largely an unseen epidemic. The morbidity of mental illness rarely gains the needed attention; rather it is the mortality of mental illness which grabs media focus. In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 14.5% of US high school students seriously considered suicide and 6.9% had actually attempted suicide at least once in the previous 12 months, with 2.0% of their attempts requiring medical attention. Furthermore, among 15 to 24 year olds, suicide accounted for 12.3% of fatalities (CDC, 2008)). In 2004, suicide was the third leading cause of death for individuals aged 10 to 24 (NIMH, 2004).

Stigma is the most pervasive barrier encountered by persons living with a mental illness; it has many affects on their ability to lead a normal independent lifestyle. Individuals with mental illnesses are often subject to stigmatization based purely on the prevailing misconceptions perpetuated by the media. There are three common misconceptions which are the detrimental to individuals living with a mental illness. The first misconception is often the most damaging; people with mental illness are often perceived to be violent and dangerous leading to a diminishing self confidence, reluctance to seek help for fear of being labeled a criminal, and a reluctance to develop long-term relationships. Furthermore, this can lead to an attempt to self cope and normalize behaviors because they don't fit this stereotyped profile. The reputation of mentally ill individuals as violent and criminally insane is a reputation generally unearned; mentally ill individuals are more often a danger to themselves then they are for the general public. A second misconception is that mental illness is a character flaw or a sign of personal failing. The process of victim blaming is a rationalization that it must be the fault of the person suffering from mental illness and that they choose to subject their family to this experience. Symptoms are sometimes interpreted not as an illness but as a mechanism for attention seeking. It is essential that people understand that mental illness is an indiscriminating disease, striking

without regards to age, race, class, or sex. Finally, a third misconception is that people with mental illness do not have the potential to contribute positively to their community and lack the capability to lead independent lifestyles. With proper medical care and support, individuals diagnosed with mental illness can go on to lead fully independent lifestyles becoming fully contributing member of society.

The stigma of mental illness can lead to many issues in daily life, including overt discrimination. The lack of community involvement and social engagement due to mental health issues begins in childhood or early adolescence. Childhood mental health problems represent a precursor to problems experienced in adulthood. In adulthood, many mental health consumers and their care givers reported issues including, troubles in obtaining employment, reluctant landlords unwilling to rent to individuals living with a mental illness, an inability to form trusting and supportive long-term relationships, and a lack of connection to the community.

Peer and family norms represent a considerable influence on adolescent perceptions of mental illness. Teens make important health related decisions during adolescence, the decisions they make are highly influenced both positively and negatively by their peers. Similarly, parental views on mental illness and treatment seeking represented an immense influence on an adolescent's willingness to seek a diagnosis. It is reasonable to assume that in a supportive and positive environment teens are more likely to recognize signs and seek treatments. In a study on teens being treated for depression, research found that a supportive experience with family and peers made for a positive experience with treatment, while teenagers experiencing resistance were slower to seek treatment and more likely to feel that treatment was working. Even if an adolescent does receive a full diagnosis, the adolescent and their families have been exposed to public stigma of mental illness up until that diagnosis. The psychiatric label of the disorder has been shown to cause adolescents to "self-stigmatize" where they apply the negative stereotype towards themselves. This self-stigmatization can lead to many negative side effects including, lowering self esteem, social isolation, and reluctance to continue seeking help and depression. Teens were reluctant to label themselves as having a mental illness because they feared being socially ostracized.

III. Project Description

The largest challenge the mental health field faces today is overcoming the social stigma surrounding mental health issues, especially for adolescents who are especially vulnerable to

peer pressures and social perceptions. Adolescents are at an age where they are just beginning to form their social norms, opinions and values, these beliefs will be with them for life.

Adolescence is a critical point in time to develop health interventions to combat stigma. By reaching out to adolescents in this critical point, there is more opportunity to combat the damaging exaggerations of the media and instill understanding, empathy and tolerance.

Project Rationale

In order to engage the adolescent population it is crucial that we involve and engage them in developing health campaigns. It is necessary to build culture of participation in adolescents by allowing them to be involved and work with adults to improve the quality and effectiveness of health service. A comparative study of peer-led health education programs and adult led-interventions in schools found greater changes of positive health behaviors and higher levels of knowledge change when using the peer-led educational programs. Furthermore, it was found that peer leaders were in fact easier to train because they possessed fewer preconceived notions, and because peer leaders are likely to change year to year, the novelty of peer-leaders was less likely to wear off (Mellanby, et al, 2000).

Exposing adolescents to accurate information in order to reduce stereotypes must be done through presenting a counter to the common stereotype of mental illness. As teens are so vulnerable to the perceptions of others, it is important to provide them with the opportunity to see that persons living with mental illness are in many ways very similar to them. In order to effectively educate the public about mental illness involves integrating educational messages through the strategy of exposing the community to an individual who has a mental illness. This method of countering the stereotype is a direct way to expose adolescents to oppose the prevailing concept of mental illness. Past studies, including a research on educational presentations on suicide and depression using a peer “counter-stereotype” show a positive increase in attitudes relating to help seeking behaviors. Upon seeing the educational presentations and having contact with persons identified as having a mental illness, adolescent attitudes toward mental illness and help seeking exhibited favorable attitude changes.

Project Goals

The ClearView Center in Albany would like to achieve a reduction in stigma across college campuses by countering the stereotype of mental illness. By reducing the stigma attached

to mental illness, students experiencing mental illness may be more likely to seek treatment. Furthermore a tolerable community environment will guide students to be more empathetic and accepting towards mental illness as they shape their social norms and values for the rest of their lives. Finally, The ClearView Center seeks to link students to care and assist them into the recovery process.

Proposed Project

Based on our extensive research in relation to adolescent mental health and stigma reduction, The ClearView Center proposes to develop a peer led presentation to incorporate into our already successful InSights Program. The InSights program has been meeting the need of mental health services among the college student population for the past two years. InSights proposes to develop a peer presentation using a teenaged role model to counter the prevailing stereotype. The role model will be a young individual who has personally lived with a mental illness who can relay their struggles with mental illness in a positive manner. The presentation will entail a candid presentation of daily life with a mental illness, struggles with stigmatization, and stories of personal success. This presentation will also allow students to ask questions in a non-judgmental and open setting. By incorporating a personal story component into our InSights program, we hope to enable young college students to relate with our young role model. We hope to break the cycle that usually comes with a lack of personal experience of mental illness by showing that people living with mental illness can lead productive, successful and happy lives.

The existing InSights program combines individual and family supports to help students rise above their mental health concerns. InSights provides an array of services including family support, student to student support, individual support and linkage to care. InSights also provides resident assistants (RA) with the background to discuss mental illness with their residents and identify possible signs they might otherwise miss. InSights is already implemented on multiple college campuses including Hudson Valley Community College, Sage College, and St. Rose College. All aspects of InSights are provided under the supervision of a trained mental health professional. The proposed peer led presentation would be incorporated into already scheduled programs at the schools requesting InSights services. The ClearView Center will be identifying possible role models to approach about working on this project.

The Peer Led Program will incorporate the following measures:

1. Peer led presentation at participating colleges including Hudson Valley Community College, Sage College, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.
2. A basic education of signs, symptoms and how to look for help. Provide information on various mental illnesses, treatment and health and wellness education.
2. Pre and post evaluation methods to determine the students' knowledge and perceptions of the program.
3. Coordination with SUNY Albany's Middle Earth Program to develop the peer led program.
4. The ability to link students to various levels of care including: A 24 hour hotline, trained mental health professionals to provide support, and if necessary a referral to emergency services.
5. The ability to provide students with various levels of support including: multi-family group meetings with the student and their family, student to student support groups led by mental health professionals, and online discussion boards monitored by mental health professionals.

Anticipated Outcomes

First and foremost, The ClearView Center seeks to benefit the students, their family and the campus community by providing students with a peer led presentation, they will gain a basic knowledge of mental illness, preparation to recognize symptoms, and information on how to seek care. The project seeks to reduce the stigmatization of mental illness within the campus community by allowing the students to develop a sense of empathy and identification with a positive role model and their struggles. Through the achievement of stigma reduction, ClearView expects to see students more likely to seek treatment.

By providing students with treatment services, ClearView expects to see an increase in benefits for the students. Students will have increased opportunity to seek care and avoid hospitalization. By maintaining the psychiatric stability of the students, they will also be better equipped to stay in school and complete their studies. Treatment programs will also assist student's families in developing techniques for problem solving and providing positive support for the student. ClearView also would expect a reduction in the incidents associated with psychiatric instability (e.g. suicide attempts, deaths, and harm to others).

The Campus Community will benefit from the presence of another mental health service that is uniquely able to provide support to students and other community members. The program will be able to assist in the event of a shortage of services. It will contribute to a more positive, empathetic and tolerant campus experience for the students living or attending school there. By receiving funding, The ClearView Center can increase the outcomes and breadth of this program.

Evaluation and Sustainability

The collection of pre and post evaluation administered before and after the peer led program will enable us to determine the effectiveness of the presentation. Knowledge gained from the program, prevalence and belief in common stereotypes, and student reflections of the program can all be measured using this evaluation tool. The evaluation tool will be used to refine future peer led programs. We also anticipate collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation in the future. As part of our evaluation process we would include intend to use the quality assessment program we have in place now. We are in the process of negotiating a billing process in the schools whereby we would be able to bill the students insurance for some of the services provided, thereby providing sustainability for the program in the future.

IV. Budget

The limited financial support from the Albany County Department of Mental Health is not enough for The ClearView Center to provide a full menu of services outlined in this request. Incorporating an additional component to the InSights program will increase the demands for resources including staffing, fringe benefits, role model incentives, and production costs. In order to effectively operate the additional component we will need to pay at least one to two employees part time to supervise and train the role models. Other staffing costs include the addition of work for the data analyst's position. This would increase the data analyst's responsibilities and increase the time spent completing data collection and entry. Included in the calculation of costs is the amount requested for employee fringe benefits. In addition to employee costs we will need to provide a monetary incentive for the role models willing to give up their free time. The amount requested also includes production costs such as printing costs, postage costs, brochure reproduction costs, and minor office supply costs.

We are including a request for two different levels of funding, the first budget requests a total of \$5,000 (Appendix A) and the second budget requests a total of \$10,000 (Appendix B).

The difference in funding levels reflects the amount of time will be able to sustain the project, with \$10,000 the pilot project can last longer and reach more students. With more funding we may be able to increase the number of role models and personal stories the students will be able to reflect on. The itemized budget requests can be found in the Appendix (A and B). The requested funding would allow us to provide the services outlined while we continue to seek outside funding.

V. Organization

The ClearView Center is a local nonprofit organization with a long and distinguished history of serving the Albany community since 1947. Our mission to promote growth and recovery for people and families living with mental illness has been our legacy for the past 62 years. The ClearView Center first began as the Child Guidance Center providing treatment and family support for individuals living with a mental illness. Since then the ClearView Center has expanded the services as the need increases. The ClearView Center now serves over 1,400 clients a year with 14 different programs throughout 7 different locations. We employ over a 100 employees dedicated to assisting individuals living with mental illness through the recovery process in a positive and holistic manner.

We offer 2 levels of clinical treatment including the Intensive Outpatient Program and the Outpatient Clinic which provides clients with mental health screenings, medication education and management, case management and counseling in both the individual and group settings. Having both levels of clinical treatment allows clients to reduce their level of treatment gradually. We also provide and operate 4 residential programs in Albany county, all certified by the Office of Mental Health. Our residential programs provide housing for clients living with mental illnesses or developmentally disabled, clients recovering from an addiction to alcohol and drugs, and an apartment program for clients transitioning back into the community preparing them to lead a more health, independent and productive life. Our supportive Case Management assists clients in building skills in budgeting, household management, using public transportation, and symptom management. Through our case management services we provide advocacy services for clients involved in the legal system and make regular home visits. We offer vocational assistance including resume and interview skills, computer skills, and on the job training program at GreatFinds Boutique and Jazzy Java in Albany. These services allow clients to develop customer service skills and other skills needed for the working environment. Our

social clubs provide our clients with pre-vocational training, informational speakers, nutritional education, the opportunity to develop positive social support networks, and other valuable activities.

As we embark on our 62nd year of providing services to Albany and its surrounding communities, ClearView is looking to move forward. We would like to continue to develop and offer new services that meet the needs of our community. The ClearView Center is uniquely qualified to incorporate a new project to reduce stigma. The idea for a role model presentation represents collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation which will continue to support our mission to promote the growth and recovery of individuals living with mental illness and their families. By creating a supportive and tolerant environment, the peer led program will result more students seeking treatment and recovery. The existing InSights program was developed on our Family Resources Program which has been in operation at The ClearView Center for over 15 years and achieved national recognition. Our InSights program is completing its second year working with Colleges to provide their students with mental health services. Recognized as the first of its kind in the nation, InSights can assist students in the recovery process through the support of their friends and family. Furthermore, The ClearView Center has the resources to make the additional component a success that other agencies may not have. The ClearView Center has already established the necessary connections and programs in colleges around the area. Additionally, ClearView's long history of service to the community has afforded us the connections and opportunity to link individuals to the care should the need arise. Our ability to provide in-house screening, diagnostic, and treatment services enables us to be the provider of services students may need. We also have the connections and client base necessary to identify possible role models.

VI. Conclusion

In short, adolescents with symptoms of mental illness are exposed to the societal perceptions and stigmatization. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to societal perceptions; the fear of deviating from societal norms makes help seeking very difficult for adolescents. Stigma represents the most significant barrier to help seeking behaviors. It is important to develop campaigns for adolescent to combat stigma. Research shows it is more effective to engage adolescents in the development of an anti-stigma campaign whereby, students would be

exposed to an individual with mental illness with the ability to counter the perceived stigma of mental illness.

A candid presentation of the daily life with a mental illness is a sobering point of view which students would benefit from hearing. By presenting a positive role model to counter the common stereotype of mental illness, students can develop an empathy and understanding of mental illness. A role model of similar age will enable the students to identify with the role model in a very personal way. Through this program, we hope to create a culture of tolerance and compassion on each campus we touch. Evidence has shown that such presentations are effective in encouraging adolescents to seek early treatment. This will lessen the burden on the schools and soften the crises experienced by each help seeking student.

Recovery and personal growth are the foundation of our beliefs and mission at The ClearView Center. We are uniquely qualified to operate this project because of the quality and range of clinical treatment programs, and opportunities for support that we offer. Our staff is compassionate and dedicated to providing clients with the tools and support they need to recover and live healthy independent lives. We are seeking your assistance as fellow agency who advocates for the well being of those living with a mental illness. With your support, we can deliver an effective and sustainable program.