

# What's Working Well



...In the Employment of People with Lived Experience of Mental Health Challenges, Parents and Family Members to Transform California's Public Behavioral Health Workforce

What's Working Well

<http://workingwelltogether.org/dnn/>

Volume 1, Issue 3

Winter, 2012

## Working Well Together

Training and Technical Assistance Center

The **What's Working Well Quarterly News brief** is produced and edited by Karin Lettau, MS, CRC of the California Network of Mental Health Clients for Working Well Together, and is funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in partnership with the California Department of Mental Health.

Working Well Together (WWT) is a collaborative project comprised of the California Network of Mental Health Clients, NAMI California, United Advocates for Children and Families, and the California Institute for Mental Health. Funded by the MHSA and the Department of Mental Health, the WWT Training and Technical Assistance Center supports the vision of the MHSA Act to transform systems to be client and family-driven. As such, WWT supports the sustained development of client, family member and parent/caregiver employment within every level of the public mental health workforce.



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## Nation's Oldest Peer Org. in Contra Costa

By Roberto Roman, Contra Costa Mental Health Office for Consumer Empowerment

Contra Costa County, with a total population of over one million, provides its community an array of mental health resources both from within the county health services department, (serving approximately 20,000 clients annually at its six mental health clinics) and through community-based organizations (CBO's). As a measure of commitment to promoting wellness and recovery, opportunities for employment have grown over the last 15 years for consumers, family members, and parents as providers in the mental health field. Members of each of these stakeholder groups provide services to their respective peers in the county system of care work under the classification of Community Support Worker (CSW).

There are currently 20 CSW's employed with Contra Costa Mental Health (CCMH) who work with adult and older adult consumers. That number will rise to 27 by year's end. These CSW's provide peer counseling support, independent living

skills training and support to adults and older adults with lived mental health experience. They also help with advocacy to improve the mental health system of care. CCMH Office for Consumer Empowerment (OCE) assists in coordinating advocacy efforts and facilitates the Service Provider Individualized Recovery Intensive Training (SPIRIT), which prepares consumers to work either as CSW's or in a paid or volunteer capacity at a CBO. The 30 CBO's with whom OCE collaborates to implement SPIRIT include Mental Health Consumer Concerns (MHCC), the oldest peer-run organization in the country, operating Wellness and Recovery Centers throughout the county. Recently MHCC hosted a five day Copeland WRAP Facilitator Certifica-

tion training to most of the people pictured below.

Robert Thigpen currently works at Central County Adult Mental Health as an Adult Family Support Worker, a family member who is trained to navigate the county mental health system. He provides confidential assistance, information, education and support for family members who have loved ones who are receiving services from the county. "As a family member who has a loved one with a serious mental illness," says Thigpen, "I understand the problems and difficulties families face. With this knowledge comes empowerment, resulting in an opportunity to give back in the community."

CCMH also employs Family Partners in Child and Adolescent MH Services— ten family partners countywide. As family members who act as formal supports for Wraparound teams, they act as a mediator or bridge between families and agencies and can accurately portray the family viewpoint in many venues.



**Employees in Contra Costa with lived experience above.** 1st Row (bottom) Left to Right: Christi, Renee, Kiki, Jeanine, Jennifer, Stephen Mary, 2nd Row (middle): Peggy, Robin, Brenda, Trina, Maria, 3rd Row (top): Kevin, Roberto, Bernadette, Jami, Nayyirah, Cindy

## WWT Spotlight: Certification of All Peer Support Specialists Project

WWT partners have made certification of people with 'lived experience', youth, family, and parents a priority by including the certification project in the WWT CNMHC contract for the next two years. The objective is to research certification standards to harness and empower diverse stakeholders to form recommendations for statewide certification.

CNMHC recognized the need to formally legitimize the valued practice of peer support services with the formation of the CA Peer Support Coalition last year. Currently some 25 other states have state certification for peer specialists and agencies. With this WWT project we expand our focus to include youth, family and parent support services. Please join monthly stakeholder teleconferences on the 4th Wednesday each month from 12-1pm (1-800-430-1833, passcode 443 4088).

Consultants of *Inspired at Work*, Debra Brasher and Lucinda Dei Rossi, have taken on this project, and their research on peer certification is nearly

complete. Quite interesting is what has come to light in California's unique Medi-Cal billing which may not be common knowledge. Under the State Plan peer providers technically *can* (and do) bill for specialty MH services within their scope of practice, under the category of "other qualified providers" and can use the same Medi-Cal codes as licensed providers. The state plan requires "other qualified providers" to be 18 or older and hold a high school diploma or equivalent. In fact each individual MH Director is personally responsible for compliance with all state billing regulations and is liable for all county MH services billed. So, MH Directors individually determine who falls under "other qualified providers" in their county and set the standards and requirements for the qualifications. Hence the lack of uniformity in the state for peer provider billing.

Next, five regional certification forums will convene in the spring to review the research, and use a

workgroup model to discuss critical issues: developing curriculum, certification authority, policies and procedures and small county issues. Here are the regional dates and locations for you to attend:

### Regional Certification Forums

Central	3/23	Sacramento
Bay Area	4/6	San Jose
Far South	4/13	San Diego
South	4/20	Culver City
Far North	4/27	Williams

Findings from the regional forums will be summarized in a report, discussed on the monthly teleconferences, and the project will culminate next year with a statewide forum to make recommendations to the State for statewide peer certification.

The WWT website is being updated and will include a button on the home page with access to all project information. Stay tuned for more details!

### WWT Regional Activities & Trainings

employees in the Superior Region became certified as Basic WRAP Facilitators through a WWT Superior Regional Training event. They became adept at leading WRAP groups, and applying WRAP to their interactions with others on an individual level. Many became more in tune with their own plan for individual wellness and several noted that the training had renewed their own personal sense of empowerment and possibilities! In May 2012, these individuals will have the opportunity to apply to participate in Training of Trainers via an Advanced WRAP Training. Others, previously trained, may opt to continue their focus on the direct work of leading WRAP groups. In either event, the Superior Region is harnessing the spirit of WRAP to further wellness and empowerment in the sixteen rural communities! For more information, contact WWT-TAC, [Donna Matthews](#), (916) 379-5353

#### Superior Region

In 2010, 18 county

NAMI and the **Central Region** is pleased to gain the expertise of a new, bright WWT-TAC, [Ron Shaw](#), MA., who is passionately committed to advocacy in the mental health arena. Ron has 20+ years working with mentally health challenged individuals and mentoring of transitional aged youth. His specialties include cultural competency, delivery of program services, and family education/support coach. Ron has already been a very busy bee outreaching to all the counties he now serves in the Central Region. A warm welcome, Ron! (916) 567-0163 x107



**Southern Region** In December, "Overcoming Trauma...for Bliss at Work" was a regional training hit. Now WWT-TAC has provided some technical assistance to all of the southern counties, and more plans with Imperial County are progressing nicely. WWT-TAC, [Karin Lettau](#), (619) 246-7797

#### Greater Bay Area Region

WWT-TAC, [Deborah Van Dunk](#) is working with the Greater Bay Area Workforce, Education & Training Collaborative to respond to the impact of the changing landscape due to healthcare reform. (916) 643-1530 ext. 105

**Los Angeles Region:** With LA County Quality Assurance, all WWT TACs are facilitating a series of 'Labs' on maximizing documentation skills and success for employees with lived experience in service areas 2 and 4.

#### WWT 2012 Webinar Series: Empowering Community Wellness

1. "How to Build a Successful County WRAP Program" with BJ North of Conscious Educators on Feb 8, 2012 10:30-12
2. "Getting Answers to Questions about Juvenile Justice, CPS, & Special Education" in March
3. "Welcoming Lived Experience into the Workplace" in May

