



A Word from the President

Brian Merrick and I attended the AMCHA Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. It was exciting and informative. There were Presidents and President Elects from nearly every state in the union. It was a great learning experience to learn how to complete the role as president, and to network with other LMHC's or LPC's from the different states. Dr. Moose, the Beltway Sniper Communication Coordinator, was the keynote speaker. He was very complimentary of LMHC's, and felt LMHC's had a lot to contribute to police and prisons.

He has authored several training sessions for police officers to work with persons with mental health illnesses. Brian was invited to become a student representative to AMCHA. He has resigned his student representation for IMHCA, and is busy assisting with planning the 2005 conference in Philadelphia and is very excited at being a part of the planning. The theme of the conference is The Art of Counseling: Offering Hope in a Changing World.

The board meetings for this next year are February 5, May 7, August 6, and November 5, in Marshalltown, at the Iowa Veteran's Home at 10:00 a.m. The state conference in September is still being planned and your input would be appreciated. Anyone who would like to join us at a board meeting would be welcome!

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MENTAL HEALTH INSURANCE PARITY IS COST-EFFECTIVE

-No state that has enacted parity legislation has ever repealed it, despite initial concerns about cost.

-Untreated/under treated mental illness costs employers.

Treatment works and saves employer costs.

-Studies show that proposed federal mental health insurance parity legislation to be less than 1% of the

group premium, which suggests an increase of \$1.00 - \$1.50

-Passing a non-discriminatory insurance statute would be an act of legislative leadership to protect Iowa citizens.

Upcoming Events

A letter is being composed and will be sent to the president of BC/BS, so that it can be looked into of why we should be included in the 3rd Party reimbursement. If interested in being a part of this meeting, please send e-mail to president@imhca.net.

We will be having the Annual State Conference: "On the Cutting Edge" in the Spring of 2005. The exact date will be announced.

Again, this year, there will be a second year of Mental Health Awareness. There will be a signing of the proclamations by Sally Pederson and Thomas Vilsack to continue to educate the public. A special bulletin will be sent out if this is a public signing.

The thrust of this year will be the support of the creation of a Mental Health Awareness Postage Stamp and the promotion of the positive, progressive nature of recognizing and promoting Mental Health. All citizens are encouraged to support THE YEAR OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS CAMPAIGN.

The 2005 Parity Day is scheduled for Tuesday, February 22, 2005. Volunteers scheduled to promote LMHC, please contact president@imhca.net.

PRIORITIES ARE:

Insurance: Assure equity in insurance coverage for biologically based mental illnesses.

Preferred Drugs: Retain open access to all psychiatric medications.

Medicaid: No cuts to Medicaid and Mental Health services currently in the state budget.

Public Policy and Legislation Update **by Linda Nebbe**

Hawaii Licensure Law Enacted!

Hawaii has become the 48th state to license professional counselors! Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle approved the licensure bill passed by the state legislature, S.B. 2595, on July 13th. Passage of the licensure law is an important, hard-won victory for the Hawaii Counseling Association (HCA) and the state's counselors, and brings the profession one step closer to achieving licensure in all 50 states.

The law makes particular note of the cost-effectiveness of counselors, and states in a preamble that "Regulating professional mental health counselors makes good economic sense for the State and demonstrates a compassionate concern for the mental health needs of Hawaii's citizens."

The law establishes the title of "Licensed Mental Health Counselor," and defines the practice of mental health counseling to include "the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of, and counseling for," both mental and emotional disorders as well as substance abuse and conduct disorders. In order to be eligible for licensure, counselors will need to have completed at least a 48-semester hour master's degree including specific core course work listed in the law, complete 3,000 hours of post-graduate counseling work within a 2-year period, and pass the National Counselor Examination (NCE). An article regarding the new licensure law will appear in Counseling Today.

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (October 21, 2004) -The National Mental Health Association applauds the enactment of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, which authorizes funding to support state strategies to create or expand suicide prevention programs. The President signed this legislation into law this morning.

"In enacting this legislation, federal policymakers have acknowledged that it's time to address a wholly preventable tragedy - adolescent suicide," said Michael Faenza, MSSW, NMHA President and CEO. "Each year, an estimated 500,000 American teens attempt suicide, and nearly 2,000 die as a result. Needless to say, this devastates both families and communities."

Although effective mental health interventions exist for youth, only one-third of youth with mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety, receive any mental healthcare. And,

even fewer receive adequate care.

"Now that the Garrett Smith Act is law, Congress and the President must go one step further by funding the programs it authorized," said Faenza. "At the same time, much more needs to be done to address the unmet mental health needs of children and adults in America, and to make real the vision of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health."

The President's Commission noted that the mental health system is in "shambles" and requires major transformation to provide the quality services that people with mental health problems, family members and communities deserve. NMHA urges Congress and the President to actively support other legislation - such as the widely-supported Paul Wellstone Mental Health Parity Act - designed to help achieve this transformation. NMHA also urges Congress and the Administration to increase resources for mental health services, which are struggling under the weight of severe funding shortages.

NMHA looks forward to working with Congress and the Administration to ensure Americans with mental health problems and their families have adequate access to the treatments they need.

The National Mental Health Association is the country's oldest and largest nonprofit organization addressing all aspects of mental health and mental illness. With more than 340 affiliates nationwide, NMHA works to improve the mental health of all Americans through advocacy, education, research and service.

Resource for Grieving

Holidays can be very difficult when there has been a loss of death, especially if this is the first holiday season to traverse through:

GRIEF.... A TIME OF HEALING

Grief is a feeling of loss over someone or something you have cherished. When someone dear to you dies, it affects your whole person - body, mind, and spirit. You feel deep pain. Your emotions can be uncomfortable and overwhelming, with unexpected highs and lows. You will need to tell the stories of our loved one again and again. Only gradually will you notice these feelings decreasing. As the feelings decrease, healing is taking place. It will resurface in intensity at anniversary, birthdays,

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FIRST REACTIONS:

The first reactions to the death of someone you love are usually emotional and physical shock. You simply cannot believe it. Shock is a natural "buffer" protecting you from the impact of overwhelming, painful facts. You may feel numb, bewildered, or in a daze. You may feel like crying or lashing out. You may become illogical in your thinking. Months later you may not even remember how you felt or acted during this initial time.

GRIEF: AN INDIVIDUAL PROCESS

Your own life experiences, previous losses, family influences, spirituality and many other factors will influence how you grieve and cope. Each of us is unique and we go through the healing process in our own way, at our own pace. Each individual reacts differently and with differing intensity. No person experiences the one who has died in the same exact way. Claim your own unique relationship and grief.

CHARACTERISTICS

Grief has many characteristics, including lack of concentration and fatigue. Sounds, aroma, and images can remind you of your loved one. Sadness, loneliness, and tears may come unexpectedly. You may long to hear your loved one's voice, or wait for her or his regular call or visit. These are perfectly natural grief reactions. They will eventually lessen. Some feelings may be difficult to understand. You may feel helpless, angry, guilty, lonely, insecure, or relieved. You will need time to cry and talk. It takes courage to risk feeling the depth of the loss, but it is vital. Despite the discomfort of grief, it actually serves a purpose. This is the way to healing.

SUPPORT

Support groups provide opportunities to talk about your feelings and experiences in a safe place. You need not be ashamed of your reactions and needs. You help each other. Recounting your feelings and experiences in a journal can help you sort out your feelings and thoughts. Going to see a counselor can also be a place to talk and grieve. Physical exercise, such as walking, running and swimming help alleviate grief and depression. Turning to your faith can bring healing and deepening faith.

GRIEF: A TIME OF SOUL-MAKING

A loved one's death forces us into "soul-making" like no other experience. Confronting death sometimes feels like getting hurled into a

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deep pit. The future looks like a blur, the present unbearable and dark. Tending to emotions and thinking patterns, even seeking new companionship, may not be enough. A deeper part of you needs attention also: your soul, the very essence of whom you are. Spirituality is a vital part of a full life. As death calls you to ask questions of life's meaning at a deeper level, you may be reminded of the brevity and preciousness of life. As you reconsider your spiritual relationships and with other people, what legacy do you want to leave behind?

A book that can be recommended to clients, at your discretion, is ***THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN***. Mitch Albom, the author of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, has written a possible heaven that can bring comfort to a grieving client. This book was on the best-sellers list, thus is highly recommended. It can be a source of comfort for anyone who needs to be comforted about death and dying.

Petition to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee

American Mental Health Counselors Association
801 N Fairfax Street Suite 304
Alexandria, VA 22314

PETITION TO THE CITIZENS' STAMP
ADVISORY COMMITTEE for a Mental Health
Awareness Commemorative Postage Stamp

We, as citizens of the United States of America, by signing below, petition the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee of the United States Postal Service to approve the issuance of a commemorative postage stamp emphasizing the importance of Mental Health Awareness to the everyday life of citizens of this great country. Recognition needs to be given to the impact that good mental health has on people's lives. The basic characteristics of mental health include courage, integrity, tenacity, and inspiration.

Please sign this petition urging that Citizens'

Stamp Advisory Committee to approve the United States Postal Service issuance of a stamp promoting MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Name

Address

Signature

1. _____
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18. _____

Send the partially or completely filled petition to
AMHCA at the address above.