

November, 2005 Edition

QUALITY MATTERS

Connecting through Clinical Quality, Recovery,
and Resiliency

Bob Taft, Governor
Michael F. Hogan, Ph.D., Director
Dale P. Svendsen, M.D., Medical Director



Youth and parents in the driver's seat: Building a resiliency-based mental health system from the consumer's perspective

by the Resiliency Workgroup and edited by Terre Garner, Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health and group facilitators Rick Shepler, Center for Innovative Practices and Charlotte Williams

Beginning on January 29, 2005, ODMH convened a workgroup of youth and family members to assist in the development of a resilience-based mental health system for Ohio's children. The workgroup has maintained a strong youth and parent voice throughout the process and has echoed a similar message; "Families and youth need to be a part of directing the help that they get along their road to success." A particular focus of the group is to promote a strong youth presence and to incorporate their vision of resilience. As one workgroup member conveyed, "children have much to contribute, and can help others who have similar problems." The depth and richness of each youth's and family's experience is evident. Each parent and youth has his or her own story of resilience and has been sharing life experiences, wisdom, and stories of hope in the workgroup. One of our youth members stated it well "Resilience is knowing when you are falling, and knowing how to catch yourself."

The youth are clearly well-informed and advocate for such issues as mental health parity, equal rights, and truly individualized plans to meet their specific needs and strengths. According to one of our youth members mental health parity is a key area to address if we are moving toward a resilient mental health system. Another youth member believes that to achieve a resilient mental health system "we need to change people's perspectives and views on persons with mental health disabilities." A different youth member, views empowerment as key to resiliency and believes that youth can be successful when they begin to "set goals for themselves for their own mental health." And one youth member believes in increasing positive community connections for youth and challenges communities to increase the availability of positive structured activities and positive mentors. One of our family members added, "The youth members have really blossomed in this experience. Their self esteem has increased; they are more comfortable talking about their challenges; they feel less stigmatized, and they feel they are part of the solution. They have established friendships that work, and have created strong bonds."

The family members of the group also have articulated key areas of focus for achieving a resilient mental health system. Family members hope that through this process we can promote an understanding of the challenges that youth and families are facing and how to be a partner in providing solutions. The Resiliency Workgroup believes that for this partnership to be successful, youth have to be included at all levels of the planning process and to recognize that children play a critical role in their own well-being. Most important to the family members is that communities understand that children can be successful with the right supports, and can contribute great things to the world.

Recently, youth and parent members from the workgroup presented their stories of resiliency at the Ohio Advocates and Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health Conference in Dayton. The workshops were very well received by the conference participants. In addition, the workgroup submitted the following workshops to the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health national conference to be held in Washington D.C.: 1) In the Driver's Seat (Part I): Youth leading Ohio to a resiliency- driven mental health system; and 2) In the Driver's Seat (Part II): Parents leading Ohio's transformation to a resiliency-driven mental health system, We are excited to report that both workshops were recently accepted. These workshops will include a panel presentation by the youth and family members, and will showcase the workgroup's efforts up to this point, including the following definitions and principles for resiliency.

Resiliency Definition

Resilience is an innate capacity that when facilitated and nurtured empowers children, youth, and families to successfully meet life's challenges with a sense of self-determination, mastery and hope.

Mission Statement

To empower youth and families to expect, define, and experience a lifetime of hope, well being, and achievement with full participation in their communities.

Value Statement

Resiliency is a belief and faith that all children, youth, and families have strengths and are capable of overcoming challenges.

Principles and Values for a Resilience-based Mental Health System for Children

1. Resilience is a belief and faith that all children, youth, and families have strengths and are capable of overcoming challenges.
2. All children have the right to hope and success starting at birth and lasting a lifetime.
3. All communities and systems have a responsibility and make a commitment to nurture resiliency within all children.
4. Youth and families are experts in their experiences.
5. Youth and families have voice and choice in services and supports.
6. A resilience-based mental health system is sensitive to culture, community and the values of the individual youth and family.
7. Services and supports are individualized, flexibly delivered, and tailored to meet the unique needs of the youth and family.
8. A resilience-based mental health system is affirming of youth and family where they are with unconditional acceptance.
9. A resilience-based mental health system invests in our youth as our most valuable resources.
10. Primary focus is on building strengths, while addressing needs.

The workgroup believes that resilience is an expectation for all youth and supports the development of policies and services, from prevention to intervention, that support youth with mental health challenges and their families across the lifespan of the youth. Though resilience is an expectation for all youth, the workgroup believes that resilience may need to be nurtured and facilitated through education, services and supports. Members of the workgroup have developed the following definitions for these terms.

Facilitated Resilience: Shaping the natural environment to enhance each youth's success, and augmenting that with targeted supports and services to maximize the youth's growth, functioning, and achievement.

Nurtured Resilience: Internal qualities and inner strengths that can be cultivated through relationships with those around us (core people: family, close friends, natural supports) to help develop our children's talents, skills and abilities.

The workgroup is very excited to be a part of the development of a child and family-driven mental health system grounded in resilience for all youth and families. Ohio is truly fortunate to have passionately committed youth and parents willing to take a leadership role in this vital endeavor.