

## April 2008 Newsletter

### The Newsletter of the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors

#### In This Issue. . .

#### *NACBHDD Continues to Bring Local Interests to National Attention*

- **Virginia Member Reports on His First SAMHSA National Advisory Council Meeting**
- **NACBHDD Executive Director Attends MacArthur Foundation Conference on Mental Health and Public Policy**
- **California Member Joins Forces with Creative Community to Help America's Veterans**

#### **Virginia Member Reports on His First SAMHSA National Advisory Council Meeting**

George Braunstein, Executive Director, Chesterfield Community Services Board, in Chesterfield, Virginia, is the first NACBHDD member ever appointed to the National Advisory Council of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The National Advisory Council advises and makes recommendations to the Administrator of SAMHSA and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) about agency activities and policies. In addition, the National Advisory Council may review applications for grant and cooperative agreements and may appoint subcommittees and hold workshops and conferences.

Braunstein attended his first meeting of the National Advisory Council on March 11 and 12, and while he says he "is still learning" about the Council, he emphasized that it is clear that the group's function is to advise on SAMHSA's direction for advocacy and funding. And, importantly for those on the front lines of behavioral health, there is a change in Council membership, with more members directly concerned about services at the front lines.

#### **New members on the Council are interested in proactive involvement in policy development.**

There are seven new members on the Council, including Braunstein, a consumer who is now a provider, statewide representatives, and representatives from advocacy organizations, all of whom Braunstein feels are interested in proactive involvement in policy development. "In the long run, this group should be able to establish proactive input into policy."

### New Advisory Council members starting this year:

- Marvin Alexander, a consumer as a child/adolescent and now a provider in Arkansas
- Terry Cross, Executive Director of National Indian Child Welfare Association
- Thomas Kirk, Commissioner of MH and SA for Connecticut
- Judy Cushing, President and CEO of Oregon Partnership-Prevention Services for Youth
- Faye Gary, Professor, Case Western University, Cleveland
- Cynthia Wainscott, Former CEO of Mental Health America
- Keith Humphreys, Professor, Stanford University School of Medicine
- Ed Wang, Director of Massachusetts Mental Health Department Office of Multicultural Affairs
- George Braunstein

### Members leaving the Advisory Council this year:

- James Aiona, Lt. Governor of Hawaii
- Columba Bush
- Kenneth Stark, Director of Mental Health Transformation, State of Washington

### Braustein summarized the meeting:

- **Budget and strategy overview by SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline** including his focus on integrating behavioral health into all sectors of the public health arena. Cline is doing more outreach to other government agencies.
- **Overview of the budgets and strategies by the Directors of CSAT, CSAP and CMHS.** Their focus is based on the Office of Budget and Management's feedback about the efficacy of various programs relative to return on investment for any budget cuts. Each director pointed out that Congress usually restores the Executive branch's cuts. Braunstein pointed out that there was little that was controversial in this presentation.
- **A report from several parts of the country on Eliminating Health Disparities and Cultural Competence.** Reports on clinics serving NNED, a national project which focuses on eliminating health disparities and cultural competence. Reports were also presented from representatives of the Asian-Pacific culture, the Hispanic culture, and the African-American culture.
- **A report on SAMHSA's data strategy,** which seems slow and methodical, despite their awareness that numerous local agencies are either already using, or in the process of beginning to use, Electronic Medical Records.
- **Overview of SAMHSA's Tribal Agenda** which included a clinic director of a site in Alaska (Verne' Qaanaaq Boernor). Because of the special status of Native Americans, they are not always eligible for all the services or funding that others receive. A potential Council meeting will be considered at one of the tribal sites that SAMHSA is targeting.
- **Recommendations and concerns that will be sent to the SAMHSA Administrator for action and response.** At the end of the meeting, the council discussed concerns with the decreasing emphasis on prevention and some other areas that were targeted for major cuts if the budget is adopted as is. Braunstein and Thomas Kirk expressed concern that the Transformation projects do not receive enough respect in DC and recommended that all grant funded efforts have some form of measurable feedback to SAMHSA, so that the benefits derived could be reported and the programs defended.

NACBHDD will report on SAMHSA's National Advisory Council activities again in October, after the Council's September meeting. For more information on SAMHSA'S National Advisory Council, see [www.nac.samhsa.gov](http://www.nac.samhsa.gov).

### **NACBHDD Executive Director Attends MacArthur Foundation Conference on Mental Health and Public Policy**

**Conference emphasizes need for broad new agenda to bridge costly gaps.** NACBHDD Executive Director Ellen Witman was invited to and attended the April 7 and 8 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation conference "Mental Health in the Mainstream of Public Policy" in Washington, DC. As an April 7 announcement about the conference on the MacArthur Foundation website ([www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org)) noted, the conference emphasized that a "broad new agenda for mental health care: research, relationships, and resources [is] needed to bridge costly gaps."

Witman reports that while the conference, for the most part, concentrated on research (see policy briefs below), the overall discussion did point to the "disconnect between research and practice and the need to get this information to practitioners and consumers at the local level."

For example, there was a session on the criminal justice system and mental health, which included a discussion about the lack of evidence that diversion programs are cost effective. While Witman was unable to attend this session, she encouraged conference participants to talk with counties, which are "incredible laboratories of collaboration and innovation."

In addition to representing counties Witman enjoyed the conference, and it afforded her the opportunity to meet some officials in areas that are of great importance to NACBHDD, such as housing. She met an official with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as Joseph Hoeffel, Vice Chairman for Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Witman hopes to follow up with both individuals in the near future.

**Policy briefs released at conference address critical policy areas and resources.** The MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Mental Health Policy Research released 11 issue briefs at the conference that focus on the critical research, relationships, and resources necessary in addressing mental health in public policy. (The MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Mental Health Policy, developed in 1999 and directed by Howard Goldman, MD, conducts research and analysis in health policy. Goldman served as a consultant to the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, was vice chair of the *DSM-IV* Multiaxial Work Group, and is currently Director of Mental Health Policy Studies at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.) The 11 issue briefs, authored by network members in diverse fields, are:

- [Competition and Mental Health System](#)
- [From Lab to Clinic: Expanding Evidence-Based Practice in Child Mental Health](#)
- [Integrating Mental and Physical Health Care to Better Identify and Treat Depression](#)
- [Mandated Community Treatment: Applying "Leverage" from the Social Welfare and Judicial Systems](#)
- [Mental Health and Education Policy Research -- Issues and Future Directions](#)
- [Mental Illness, Work and Income Support Programs](#)
- [New Models of Collaboration between Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems](#)

- [Putting Housing First, Making Housing Last: Housing Policy for Persons with Severe Mental Illness](#)
- [Reducing Mental Health Disparities: General vs. Behavioral Health Policy](#)
- [The Structural Political, and Administrative Complexities of Stewardship](#)
- [Why so slow to adopt certain proven treatments? Gaining a better understanding of how advancements in mental health care are disseminated](#)

For more information on the conference and to access and read the issue briefs, see [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org). For more information on the MacArthur Mental Health Policy Research Network, see [www.fundamentalpolicy.org](http://www.fundamentalpolicy.org).

### **California Member Joins Forces with Creative Community on Integrated Learning System to Help America's Veterans and Their Families**

The February 27-29 Legislative Conference featured a special session on veterans' concerns, entitled, "Helping Americans Veterans." Among the panelists at the session were filmmaker Dan E. Weisburd, Executive Producer, who created the concept for the *Another Kind of Valor Learning System* and directed its nine half-hour vignettes, and Kevin Smith, who produced the Learning CD. NACBHDD recently spoke with Kevin Smith and Sandra Naylor-Goodwin, Ph.D., Executive Director, CIMH and a NACBHDD Board member, about the detailed plans for what they describe as an "integrated learning system."

Both Smith and Weisburd have prior experience with this type of project. Weisburd, himself a veteran, is a film and television writer ("COMBAT," "Medical Center," "Laverne and Shirley), director, and producer, as well as a past president of the California NAMI and family member of an individual who suffered from mental illness. The two were both involved in a previous training project for CIMH, "On Your Watch," which focused on suicide prevention for individuals in custody. And, Weisburd has made other films for CIMH, including one on women's mental health and one on depression. Goodwin described Weisburd as a "guy who took his frustration with his son's mental illness and put it to good use." Smith noted that Weisburd had talked extensively for several years with NAMI and the VA about the tremendous need for mental health services for veterans and their families, especially in regard to post-traumatic stress disorder.

"Another Kind of Valor" is modeled on "On Your Watch," which Goodwin characterized as "very successful" and "a high quality, very different type of learning – observing vignettes that tell the whole story of a person." Smith describes both "On Your Watch" and "Another Kind of Valor" as integrated learning systems, in that there is a DVD component with vignettes and a learning CD component in a plug and play format for those doing a class with training of trainers.

The target community for "Another Kind of Valor" includes mental health professionals, community partners such as teachers and judges, and family members. Users can insert the CD into the computer and have immediate access to a Table of Contents, which shows one button for mental health professionals and one button for family and community partners. Smith says, "We wanted to put these tools into the hands of those dealing [directly] with veterans and their families." There are nine half-hour vignettes, and each shows a therapy session in which war issues, marital issues, and family issues are discussed. Cards with information on the signs of traumatic brain injury and information on suicide prevention are included.

The information for family members and community partners includes extensive mental health resource information for families. In addition to this valuable resource, there is expert topic information that users can access. Weisburd helped Smith find subject experts across the country who are knowledgeable in relevant issues, and conversations with these experts are captured in brief audio interviews. Smith says these experts offer “some outstanding, sage advice” in areas that professionals often confront when working with veterans and families, including traumatic brain injury, homelessness, domestic violence, how to engage the veterans, and PTSD vs. characterological issues.

A Preparing Facilitators component of the project is the final section of the integrated learning system, and will include vignette learning points and recommendations about which expert interviews are recommended listening for the different vignettes.

Goodwin and Smith say the project will be piloted in the very near future to audiences who are expected to have some knowledge of the issues themselves. Different structures are needed for families and professionals, and they will work on finding facilitators who can facilitate the learning process for each type of audience.

Goodwin described the distinct nature of “Another Kind of Valor,” “It is not your typical training film. The quality of the direction and production are amazing. Dan Weisburd called on all his resources in Los Angeles and Hollywood. There is some footage from the war itself, so that viewers see the war time experience and trauma, not only the aftermath.” Weisburd, in an email, further explained critical contributions to the quality of the project, “We got excellent support from the Pentagon Video Library, as well as Spiegel TV in Germany, and the outstanding videographer Diego Bunuel at CAPA Paris.”

Smith and Goodwin say that the project will be rolled out in CIMH first, then they hope to make it available all over the country, and they may invite facilitators in from other states for training.

For more information, contact Sandra Naylor-Goodwin at [sgoodwin@cimh.org](mailto:sgoodwin@cimh.org).

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