

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF SOUTHEAST FLORIDA/ FLORIDA INITIATIVE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The recently completed fiscal period marked the 67th year of MHA service to the community. We are honored to have acquired Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention (FISP) officially in 2021 just as the pandemic started to change how we provided services. I am pleased to report that our future continues to look bright, indeed.

Our financial picture is the robust and our team took the opportunity to apply for and be awarded a number of new grants and contracts.

We are appreciative of our funders, BBHC, Broward County, United Way of Broward County, Children Services Council of Broward and Child Net for their support and guidance over the years.

This report will outline many of the efforts and outcomes over the past year that MHA/FISP has been proud to produce resulting in exceptional service to our community.

The efforts of the Board and staff have been tremendous in supporting the mission. **The Mission is to promote mental health and victory over mental illnesses and related challenges through education, prevention, advocacy, research and empowerment.**

While the Board continues to guide the organization's goals and future, the staff and volunteers work tirelessly to bring the vision to life. We are proud of their achievements and the impact that their efforts have made in advancing the mission.

MHA/FISP – SERVICE BY THE NUMBERS

CHILDREN'S PREVENTION: Listen to Children and the Thumbody Programs:

- Our long time LTC/Thumbody Director retired early in 2022 and we thank Helen Leitch for her dedication and creativity in making sure this program continues.
- Due to changes in the school district, we were unable to provide any services to children this year as the district changed how to provide the services and required a new contract which as of this date has not yet been delivered back to MHA.
- For the first time in a long time, MHA was receiving funding from United Way to provide the services until the services were unable to be provided.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS WITH STUDENTS WHO HAD LISTENERS

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COMMENTS FROM SCHOOL COUNSELORS ABOUT LISTENER PROGRAM

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COMMENTS FROM PARENTS/CAREGIVERS ABOUT LISTENER PROGRAM

CONSUMER SUPPORT SERVICES:

9Muses Art Center made the 2021-2022 fiscal year into a year of expanded programming, services and outreach. Our organization saw the challenge posed to us by the pandemic and used it as an occasion to increase service availability and create educational opportunities in the community. Our service

expansion was accomplished through multiple approaches and sectors: inclusivity, technical expansion, and educational outreach, while maintaining the same great, peer-driven services we are known for.

Our technical adaptations and rebranding initiatives resulted in an upgraded website and more accessibility for the community. In order to continue services during the pandemic, wellness and arts classes shifted online to skype. This allowed for individuals who may already face barriers to care through transportation and physical limitations to access our services from the comfort of their home. The use of perpetually open Skype chats for the classes meant that individuals could participate in continued discussion off-hours that was then moderated by the instructor. This digital environment fostered a community focused on continued wellness, mutual support, and co-learning.

The transition to Skype classes allowed former members who had moved out of the area to engage in classes and support. The nationwide shut-down established an unforeseen opportunity to reengage with members who have moved out of our service area and even established new formed relationships from as far away as the United Kingdom, Ireland and Canada.

This digital expansion also provided a learning opportunity for members. Staff often aided and taught members with little technical fluency how to access these classes. This included helping members and guests learn basic, necessary skills in how to create an e-mail account, how to create a skype account, how to use search engines, and more. This digital expansion has been so successful and positively received, we have opted to conduct classes both digitally and in-person while reopening to the public.

Our new website updated our collective image and made much of this technical adaptation possible. c. This years-long endeavor celebrates 9Muses history and also aids our continued branding efforts to reassert ourselves as an essential, dynamic, and unique, peer-run service center. We've made all links and course descriptions easily available on the website, and our matching social media efforts have garnered community engagement and increased program interest.

Our other community-support programs also adapted to the challenges and likewise saw an expansion due to increased interest in mental health services. Power of Peers also moved towards telehealth, aiding in developing client technical fluency as well. Although the program has moved back into in-person services, the POP program still provides Telehealth services as well.

The Sethline experienced an immediate increase in callers due to the pandemic. First time callers reporting they never experienced feelings of anxiety, isolation and even depression. In order to stop the spread of misinformation, 9Muses included cited Covid-19 wellness information that was easily, publicly available. Sethline volunteers were also given verifiable information to disseminate to callers.

While our community was adjusting to a new process of living safely we watched our membership become more engaging and empowered. 9MusesArtsCenter reopened twice with safety precautions in place only to close again as the pandemic numbers increased in our community. Now, fully opened to our member we will maintain the virtual platforms established during the pandemic and form new relationships while providing opportunities for those who may not be able to make it to the center. 9MusesArtsCenter has established a calendar of activities on its website that provides hybrid opportunity for services.

We look forward to our continued efforts to make our services more accessible and beneficial to the public at large.

643 individuals completed member applications and engaged in services provided by 9MusesArtCenter.

24 different peer facilitated support groups are hosted at 9Muses both in person and virtually.

119 established a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)

486 individuals participated in individual and group peer mentoring activities

6,134 Adult Mentoring contact units were delivered in 2021

4,200 unduplicated callers were supported by the SETH Line Warm Line

178 individuals were enrolled in the Power of Peers Program from In-Patient Mental Health facilities in Broward County.

9MusesArtsCenter started in February 2022 in providing operations at Forest Park drop-in center on the grounds of the state hospital

1,234 Empowerment and training hours were contributed to 9MusesArtCenter by five different universities.

PARENT-FAMILY SERVICES:

- 144 individuals participated in Child Net or Court directed parenting education classes or groups. 11 families have engaged in Child Parent Psychotherapy.*
- 103 referred and community-based families participated in parenting, co-parenting, anger management and fatherhood classes.*
- Co-parenting referrals have increased by over 50% this year. Being able to deliver services via Zoom allowed us to include clients residing out of county. This has served as a benefit to co-parents living in different states who are trying to comply with court orders. Zoom will continue to be utilized to serve this population.*
- 90% of Child Net referred parents who completed the program had no indicators of abuse/neglect in the 12 months following their participation.*
- PEPS educators have collectively logged in over 300 hours of professional training to enhance their ability to deliver quality services.*
- PEPS continues to offer an array of services, including anger management classes, supervised visitation, Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), Co-parenting and Divorce, Circle of Security, Fatherhood groups and classes for parents with development delay. Classes are offered in English, Spanish and Creole.*
- 95 Kinship families have been served in our program that supports families raising children who are not their own. Families receive a vast array of services such as case management, in-home parenting, legal assistance and respite care. They also attend family building events and bi-monthly activities at no cost to the family thanks to this grant from the Children Services Council.*
- PEPS staff have received training in 24/7 Dad through Fatherhood Initiative, Nurturing Parenting, Circle of Security Parenting, Co-parenting and STEP. Instructors are certified to teach these programs. Three of the*

PEPS staff are Certified Family Life Educators that deems them experts in 10 areas of Family Life including child growth and development, internal dynamics of families, family resource management, parent education and family law.

- The Parent and Family Department continue to serve families via virtual platform. We have recently revamped our playroom to conduct supervised visitations and observations in person.
- We continue to collaborate with **Fellowship Living Facilities, Inc.** to provide fatherhood and anger management classes to their residents while they are receiving substance treatment. We have engaged a Peer Facilitator from Fellowship to assist with class registration and teaching. He was in our inaugural class and embraced the concepts taught and showed interest in getting more involved. The participants have responded well to his input. This year the Batchelor Foundation awarded a grant to partially pay for this service and we are currently working with AD Henderson for additional funding.
- Our **CSC Funded Kinship Cares Program** staff continue to provide families needed supplies, food and household items. We have regularly scheduled caregiver support groups, as well as in-person events for Kinship families in the program. We also had a Drive-by Holiday party where we gave away toys lovingly collected by **The Silver Liners**, gift cards for family dinner and masks for the family. Families have a private Facebook group for added support and information sharing. Emails go out several times a week to keep families informed regarding resources in the community. We continue to utilize **Listener's** from the Children's Department for our Kinship kids. We are planning a "Summer Toy and Household item giveaway" for Kinship families this summer. Also being planned in September 2021 is a Kinship Caregiver Celebration in appreciation for Kinship caregivers across Broward County. MHA partners with all of the Kinship service providers in our county for this event. It includes Weekly Zoom Café's on pertinent topics, food giveaways and Caregiver Recognition Awards.

Parenting client comments in response to parenting classes:

- "I am extremely grateful that I found this class and instructor. She always had the time and patience to listen to us and gave the best ways to look at our current situations. Thank you-this has opened my eyes to move forward in my future as a mother."
- "My teacher taught me a lot. She really took the time to help me master the new skills"
- "I received help and support from parenting that was so helpful at a time when I felt judged and misunderstood by everyone. My instructor explained things clearly to me and I was treated with respect"
- "My teacher was my only sanity during this time; she really helped me to understand my children better. I learned so much!"

Parenting Responses after receiving Parenting Classes:

- That there are different styles of parenting and the styles affect how our kids act
- To accept my child for whom they are
- How to cope with my children's behavior and how to give them options and how to talk to them instead of being angry with them
- Spending time with your child is the best way to build a bond with them
- Physical discipline is not the answer
- That I want to raise my children differently than I was raised
- Consistency and routines make sense for kids
- I learned there is always more to learn
- To be proactive with my parenting.

Kinship Responses:

- "Thank you so much for having a program that supports me as a grandparent! I've felt so isolated and scared about being there for my young grandson as he grows. Now I know that I am not alone."

- *“Having activities and support have made all the difference to me! I have more hope for the future having these kind and caring people in my life!”*
- *“Having someone to go with me to the lawyer to help me with the complicated legal issues that comes along with taking custody of my grandchild made all the difference to me.”*
- *“Having financial help has been invaluable. I couldn’t have done it without you!”*

OUTREACH/EDUCATION:

- 13 Professional Education Seminars were hosted with 712 attendees confirmed
- 34,612 received training including staff training and CEU’s
- 4,435 participants attended health fairs or resource fairs at which MHA services were featured
- 523,987 received e-mail outreach via Constant Contact (est)
- CEO elected to represent the community as the Chair of the Provider Advisory Council reporting directly to the BBHC Board.
- Multiple trainings offered by staff and peers in the community.
- Community boards and networks include, House of Hope Board, Broward Coalition on Aging, Pompano Beach Chamber of Commerce, Tobacco Free Partnership, BPHI, among many others.

MHA SERVICE IMPACT

Numbers tell only a part of the story. Far more important is the impact of our efforts on those we serve. Here are but a few examples:

COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS WHOSE STUDENTS HAD LISTENERS

- *“(Child) was helped tremendously from having a Listener. Not only did he look forward to her visits every week, but I definitely observed that he had reduced anger and more ability to control his anger in difficult situations.”*
- *“I have seen tremendous positive change in (child), both academic and emotional.”*
- *“Since (child’s) mother is not communicative or present in the household, the listener program has given her a female role model to look forward to in order to share her feelings and special moments.”*
- *“Spending time with the listener changed my student’s demeanor. He always came back smiling like he was doing something special. This is priceless for kids who don’t have a support system in place at home.”*

COMMENTS FROM SCHOOL COUNSELORS ABOUT LISTENER PROGRAM

- *“I absolutely love this program! The students anticipate seeing their Listeners weekly and overall the students make progress academically and socially.”*
- *“I feel that the Listener program is a vital part of the social and emotional development of students who participate in the program. This program gives students the one on one attention that is so important and necessary as we are limited in staff available to meet the high need for this interaction with our students.”*
- *The LTC program allows the students to thrive and build confidence. The program provides an extra caring ear, meeting the social emotional needs of the students. It has a huge impact on enhancing students’ strengths and skills to progress both socially and academically.”*

COMMENTS FROM PARENTS/CAREGIVERS ABOUT LISTENER PROGRAM

- *“I’m so glad that my daughter is able to speak to someone about things that may cause stress in her home and family life.”*
- *“I’m grateful for my son’s listener. He empowered my son by validating how he felt.”*
- *“The one person my son misses the most, is his listener. He mentioned that he thought he was the only person at school that listens and supports him.”*
- *“(Child) still talks about her listener and the activities they did together. She enjoyed it very much and it helped her build more confidence.”*

COMMENTS FROM CHILDREN ABOUT HOW THE LISTENER HELPED

- *“Listening to me and he just let me say how I felt”*
- *“Building my confidence to face new things”*
- *“Listening to what was stressing me out”*
- *“Making me feel good when she talked and listened to me”*

TEACHER COMMENTS ABOUT I'M THUMBODY

- *"The students enjoyed and benefited from the message about being positive and feeling good about themselves. This program is great for the students' self-esteem."*
- *"In my opinion, this program would benefit any grade. All of my students participated, learned, and use the concepts."*
- *"Great program and discussion of emotions, behaviors, and responsibilities."*
- *"The program is a positive addition to our SEL (social and emotional learning) lessons."*

CHILDRENS COMMENTS ABOUT THUMBODY

- *"You should always (sic) be positive (sic) and not negative (sic)."*
- *"Always believe in yourself."*
- *"I shouldn't give up and I should make better choices (sic) and be nice."*
- *"It's awesome (sic) to be different."*
- *"Evrey one (sic) is speshl (sic) but diffrent (sic) cus (sic) of thum prents (sic)."*

CONSUMER VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT

- *9Muses artwork has been exhibited as part of the leased art work program at locations such as Correct Care/South Florida State Hospital, Dania Medical Center, Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services and Henderson Behavioral Health, NOVA University and Magellan Health.*
- *9MusesArtCenter hosts a mobile site for the Connections Behavioral Health Guidebook. www.browardconnections.org*
- *9 Muses was selected by Community Foundation of Broward to provide art based support services to the LGBTQ community for support services*

In their own voice, 9Muses and PROSPER participants offer the following comments:

- *It really is a wonderful, safe place to come and socialize. The peer support meetings are something I look forward to every week.*
- *9Muses helps me stay busy. This is a place where I can come every day and get a lot of support and help when I need it.*
- *I always admired the work of painters but thought this was something I could not do. After attending classes at 9Muses, I can see the progress I have made and I continue to improve.*
- *It has improved my confidence. I have also learned to be more patient with those around me.*
- *The class was well orchestrated and very informative.*
- *I have learned a lot of things such as how to organize my house, keep track of my appointments and how important it is not to isolate.*
- *I have always struggled with water color but I have learned more how to control it.*
- *9Muses allowed me to be of help to others.*

Medical providers who exhibit the works of 9Muses artists at their facilities report it as a tool to easily include mental health and wellness in their everyday language. Hospitals that exhibit 9Muses work in their psychiatric units report it as a bridge to community opportunity for individuals in treatment. Those patients say that the work is a reminder that there is something to look forward to in their journey to recovery.

REPRESENTING INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY

LOCALLY: *MHA staff and volunteers are actively engaged in numerous community boards and committees addressing services and issues that cross the lifespan. They include:*

- *BBHC Consumer Advisory Council*
- *Community Solutions*
- *Broward Partnership for the Homeless Program Committee*
- *Well Path/South Florida State Hospital Governing Board*

- *BBHC Board of Directors*
- *Suicide Prevention Task Force*
- *House of Hope Board of Directors*
- *State Hospital Discharge Committee*
- *STARR Coalition (Little Rock, AK)-research support for peers*
- *Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition*

NATIONALLY & BEYOND: *Mental Health America and World Federation for Mental Health provide resources and resource opportunities that expand our vision. MHA of Southeast Florida is an affiliate of Mental Health America National in Washington DC. MHA was invited to present a workshop on the efforts of the Lethal Means Task Force that the MHA CEO leads.*

LOCAL UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Mental Health America of Southeast Florida established increased visibility in its work with local Universities offering training and intern placement opportunities. Those include:

- *Keiser University*
- *Nova Southeastern University*
- *South University*
- *Broward College*
- *Chamberlain College*

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

MHA is appreciative for the broad support that allows us to provide our programs and services. Our diverse funding sources have allowed us to be creative and responsive to emerging needs. We value the positive relationships that we have evolved with our primary funders, the Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, Broward County, Broward Children Services Council and Child Net.

This year we were able to provide an in-person EPIC Luncheon for the first time in two years and the event was very well attended by over 250 people and was quite successful in raising funds for MHA.

The board has been actively involved in providing support directly to staff in developing the EPIC event and now more recently the Listen to Children and I'm Thumbbody programs. The newest development has been the adoption of an Evidence Based Practice for the Listen to Children Program to make that program eligible for funding. In fact this program was funded in full for the first time in over 6 years.

MHA updated its website through the dedication of MHA staff and they have helped MHA produce a cleaner and more usable website that is a powerfully positive representation of MHA. While this was going on, we moved the FISP Website under the MHA Website while updating their website.

NEW INITIATIVES

Our contracts with BBHC for peer support and drop in center were renewed. MHA was awarded two new contracts from Broward County, one is for a renewed Family Voices program and the other for the ongoing Consumer Support Program.

Two other programs came on board over the past 12 months and they are LOSS (Local Outreach To Suicide Survivors) Team and the HEAL Trauma team based in Pompano Beach and Deerfield Beach.

The Connections Guidebook is available on line through the website www.browardconnections.org and is free of charge. It has all the information available in the Connections Guidebook but offers direct links to agencies listed and is updated annually to ensure the information is up to date.

FROM THE CEO:

MHA/FISP is an organization of people who care about the people we serve. Every day our staff and volunteers step up to the challenge to ensure that persons served receive quality services and caring and supportive care. The addition of FISP to the organization has been a win/win in terms of the expansion of services and the intervention on behalf of suicide postvention and prevention.

The Board of Directors continues to be an active partner with the staff and persons served to ensure that services are delivered in a caring and reasonable fashion. The Board has been a tremendous asset to the organization, and I thank them for their time and expertise.

We continue to work with all the behavioral health providers in the county in a highly collaborative manner fostering the commitment to those people we serve. MHA has been in the forefront in the development of exciting new peer opportunities, and we look forward to an exciting year in developing even more programming around this initiative. The addition of a ground-breaking concept of peer support services being combined with Occupational Therapy is unique and I thank BBHC for their continued partnership with MHA/FISP as this project continues to develop and grow.

The addition of the LOSS Team (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) this past year has given us the opportunity to provide support services IMMEDIATELY to Suicide Survivors (those left behind in the aftermath of a death by suicide) and to engage them more quickly in the process of keeping hope alive for them. I thank United Way of Broward County for their efforts along with many other stakeholders in the community such as BBHC, DCF, Broward County, Law Enforcement, and many others. The LOSS Team is currently the only LOSS Team in the State of Florida.

The addition of providing peer support services on the grounds of the South Florida State Hospital started this past year and has provided the residents of the hospital the opportunity to connect with community resources even before they are discharged from the hospital into the community. The operations at Forest Park are another way in which peer services are delivered in a persons served centric manner and are well received by the residents of the hospital. We thank Well Path (South Florida State Hospital) for their continued partnership and forward-thinking process.

MHA's commitment to the community remains strong and I am proud to be part of this commitment as we move forward at a very challenging time. Early Intervention is the key to mitigating the devastation that mental illness can significantly impact an individual's life.

As MHA celebrates its 67th year of operation in Broward County we continue to be a vibrant and ever-changing agency ensuring our future and the future of the many individuals who have come to rely on our services over the years. I continue to be amazed at the hard-working individuals who help keep our agency providing these vital services to our community. Our Board deserves recognition for their years of dedicated service as well. There are several Board members who have served for many years and value the contributions of the organization and remain committed to the mission.