

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 the 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 the agency was awarded several new grants and contracts. We also saw increased funding in several existing grants through BBHC, Broward County and Child Net as the level of services increased.

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:

CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

- *Due to issues related to the restructuring of the Broward School District, MHA was unable to provide this service to the school system as a proposed contract and IEP was held up in process at the school district for the entire year. We remain hopeful that the programs will be reinstated for the upcoming school year.*
- *HOPE Sunshine Clubs were actively engaged in at least 15 middle and high schools over the past year.*
- *The plan for this coming year is to engage the newly established Alacca Scholarship Program to reward seniors who are actively participating in HOPE Clubs.*

CONSUMER SUPPORT SERVICES:

This 2022-2023 fiscal year has continued the tradition of 9Muses Art Center looking at the real needs of our membership to expand programming, services, and outreach. We have maintained virtual platforms with skype links on our calendar of activities and course descriptions remain easily available on the website; continuing our efforts to provide hybrid services established during the pandemic. We are still experiencing engagement from members who have moved out of our service area and form new relationships in other countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada. As our community continues to grow, we engage old and new membership with our online presence and social media efforts.

We have added new classes to expand our members' opportunities for skill building. Our printmaking class has added an entirely new medium to our fine art offerings and reinforces the importance of mark making which is a core principle of design. Our Visiting Artist program allowed 9Muses to incorporate the Colored Pencil medium to our fine art class schedule.

We have found that adding crafting classes, in addition to our art activities, allows members who may be intimidated by fine art to build confidence with quick and easy projects. Classes such as jewelry making, motivational mobile, crafted frames, and such have engaged members at all skill levels in instantly gratifying

projects. These classes utilize the elements of art and the principles of design in basic ways that are easy to understand, opening the possibility of fine art classes as a next step.

Beneficial Budgeting was born out of observations made during individual mentoring sessions. The group aims to help members achieve their self-directed financial goals. *Social Belonging* is a group based on the evidence-based program *It's My Life* that was offered to our membership from National Mental Health America in 2020. IML is a peer driven answer to isolation and social exclusion. *9Muses* has informally continued the group, utilizing the social action plans and goals from the original program. The facilitator adds to the support group structure by sharing low or no-cost ideas for outings, social exercises, and suggestions for transportation that are aligned with abilities and safety. *Self-Care Hour* directly reflects this year's theme of *Rooted in Wellness*. The group creates a space where members can learn more about nurturing and caring for themselves to help maintain their mental wellness and thrive. *Navigating Emotions: Helpful vs Harmful* is a wellness group that addresses ways to manage and practice emotional regulation. This group aims to convey helpful information about how to deal with emotions effectively through a facilitator with a community support component.

Our writing classes have also expanded. *Write That Down* is half support group half writing class highlighting the benefits of keeping a journal. Prompts, exercises, and ideas are given in the group, and sharing is encouraged but not mandatory. *Empowerment Through Poetry* aims to focus on mental health through poetry readings, self-image, growth, etc. Peers are welcome to share any form of poetry that resonates well with self/peer support. The facilitator also covers different poets who are famous for their work in promoting mental health awareness.

Now that *9Muses* has been fully open to our membership for an entire fiscal cycle, we have had 5 Solo Exhibits with 3 more planned to occur over the next three months, 7 outside exhibits, and one annual themed exhibition have taken place. Last year's theme, *Chasing Equity*, invited artists to interrogate inequality, struggle, and the power dynamics that maintain stratification and inequity. The 23 works in this exhibition were inspired by a drive for change and progress as they display the artists' challenges to themselves and viewers in their complicit support of racist structures.

This year's theme, *Rooted in Wellness*, focuses on self-care and community care. Classes and activities are centered around recognizing that mental health begins with you, but that we are linked together by common needs which can only be addressed when we are aware of one another. This theme has already yielded a successful wellness activity available on our weekly schedule, a member driven event in honor of National Self-Care Day that will take place on July 24th.

The POP program for 2022-2023 was able to follow up on referrals for about 250 individuals from our partners at Broward Health, BSO, Henderson Behavioral Health, and South Florida State Hospital. There were 50 unduplicated direct service individuals in the program. Our Certified Peer Specialists have had the opportunity to engage with persons served directly on a consistent basis on the grounds of the State Hospital at their Drop-In Center, Forest Park. A similar engagement is experienced at Broward Health and Henderson CSU during support group meetings that Peer Specialists conduct on a weekly basis. This allows a seamless transition into Peer Services upon discharge. The POP Program plans to increase engagement at these sites with additional groups this coming fiscal year. The POP program also got a boost this year from the creation and launch of our Occupational Therapy pilot. This is a first-of-its-kind program that synthesizes Peer Specialists with an Occupational Therapist supervisor working with peers in the community. Early results have been positive, with all participants either achieving their occupational-therapy goals or in pursuit of them. Participants also reported more engagement in their activities of daily living and a better ability to meet their goals.

The SethLine is celebrating 20 years of providing compassionate and caring support. This milestone would not be possible without the Stambaugh Family entrusting us with their vision to create a warm-line for mental health and emotional well-being and the dedication and hard work of our team of caring and empathetic peers who have been with us throughout our service. For the past two decades, our SethLine has been a source of comfort and hope for those seeking mental health and emotional support. It has been our privilege, and we look forward to continuing to do so for many more years to come.

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

BY THE NUMBERS

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

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

89 established a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)

307 individuals participated in individual and group peer mentoring activities

9,464 Adult Mentoring contact units were delivered in 2022/23

3,946 unduplicated callers were supported by the SETH Line Warm Line

126 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. MHA now employs 8 peers servicing Forest Park.

989 Empowerment and training hours were contributed to 9MusesArtCenter by five different universities.

CONSUMER VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT

9Muses artwork has been exhibited as part of the leased artwork program at locations such as Wellpath/South Florida State Hospital, NAMI's Artful Minds events, The Office of The Public Defender inside of the Broward County Courthouse, and Segal Trials.

9MusesArtCenter hosts a mobile site for the Connections Behavioral Health Guidebook.

www.browardconnections.org

SG began his artistic endeavors three years ago. SG sought freedom from the tragic social impact of the coronavirus and returned to 9Muses Art Center to complete his aquatic paintings. With motivation from his 9Muses family and a strong sense of belonging, SG achieved a well-attended solo exhibition.

JT, an exuberant member of 9Muses Art Center, feels he has found a safe space to share his poetry and steady progression with new art techniques. JT has worked diligently toward defining his newfound capabilities by continuing to learn how to healthily navigate his emotions and express self-love.

Earnestly seeking to make strides in her road to recovery, CM engages in a myriad of 9Muses Art Center classes. CM finds beneficial ways to regulate her emotions by jovially creating and maintaining friendships with other members. She also passionately builds her art portfolio by taking time to learn new techniques.

LG, a longtime member of 9Muses Art Center, has a newly found inspiration as she embarks on her journey of improving her mental health by painting on canvases and has expanded to pillows, hats, watches, and masks. LG has also found comfort in the encouragement she receives from her 9Muses family. Her passion for the arts and sense of community has led her to participate in a solo art exhibition and three group exhibitions. LG continues to create mentally healthy and achievable goals as she creates innovatively designed accessories and cherished narratives.

CP, an enthusiastically involved member, set out to improve her mental health through developing her artistic and social abilities. CP took the initiative to practice painting architectural structures of various scales to advance her skills in perspective. She also collaborated with other members, to give and receive positive feedback on her progress. She began producing more works with a cohesive theme, inspiring her to set a goal of composing a solo exhibition that she achieved in June of 2023.

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.

§ 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.

§ 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.

PARENT-FAMILY SERVICES:

- 173 referrals were received from Child Net for Court directed parenting services.
- 80 referred and community-based families participated in parenting, co-parenting, anger management and fatherhood classes.
- 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 and Creole.
- 152 Kinship participants 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 continues to serve families via virtual platform. We also 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. The participants have responded well to the class content.
- 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. **The Silver Liners** continue to support the program with donations of toys and gifts throughout the year. We continue to utilize **Listener's** from the Children's Department for our Kinship kids. We are planning a back-to-school event for Kinship families this summer.

Parenting client comments in response to parenting classes:

§ "I'm very happy I came upon this course and instructor. She always took the time and care to hear what we had to say and offered the greatest perspectives on our predicaments. Thank you; this has given me new perspective on how to approach my motherhood in the future."

§ "I learned a lot from my teacher. She spent a lot of time assisting me in learning the new techniques."

§ "At a time when I felt criticized and misunderstood by everyone, parenting provided me with support and assistance that was incredibly helpful. I received clear explanations from my instructor and was handled with respect."

§ *“During this period, my teacher was the only thing keeping me sane. She significantly improved my understanding of my kids. I gained a lot of knowledge.”*

Parenting Responses after receiving Parenting Classes:

§ *There are various parenting styles, and they have an impact on how our children behave. To accept my child for whom they are.*

§ *How to deal with my children's behavior, how to give them choices, and how to communicate with them rather than yelling at them.*

§ *The best method to develop a relationship with your child is to spend time with them.*

§ *Physical restraint is not the solution.*

§ *That I want to bring up my kids differently from how I did*

§ *For children, rituals and consistency make sense.*

§ *I discovered there is always more to discover.*

§ *To take charge of my parenting.*

Kinship Responses:

§ *“I'm so grateful that you have a program that helps grandparents like me! I've been anxious about being there for my young grandson as he grows since I feel so alone. Now that I realize I'm not alone.”*

§ *“I've changed a lot because I have activities and support! Having these caring people in my life gives me more hope for the future!*

§ *“It made all the difference to me to have someone accompany me to the lawyer to assist me with the complicated legal issues associated with taking custody of my grandchild.”*

§ *“Having financial assistance has been priceless. Without you, I couldn't have done it!”*

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!"*

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.

LOSS TEAM:

- This was the first year of operations for the newly established LOSS Team (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors).
- We lost our original Director who unexpectedly had to leave to complete his educational requirements for his doctorate. We were lucky to find a replacement, Dr. Phil Bulone who has capably and creatively established the LOSS Team as a critical component of the Postvention service to the entire stakeholder community.
- In the past 7 months over 22 scene/home visits were conducted
- 10 Funeral home/Cremation/Biohazard events were covered in full or at least partially covered by the contract under flex funds.
- 3 opportunities to prevent evictions following the death through the use of flex funds.
- 25 out of region families received some assistance in terms of follow up and referral.
- 32 Community outreach presentations were given with over 630 participants.

Two professional presentations at the Statewide Florida Coalition for Suicide Prevention and the United Way of Broward County Prevention Conference were given.

REPRESENTING INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY: *MHA staff and volunteers are actively engaged in numerous community boards and committees addressing services and issues that cross the lifespan. They include:*

- *Community Solutions*
- *Broward Partnership for the Homeless Program Committee*
- *Well Path/South Florida State Hospital Governing Board*
- *BBHC Board of Directors*
- *Broward Suicide Prevention Coalition*
- *Lethal Means Task Force*

- *House of Hope Board of Directors*
- *State Hospital Discharge Committee*
- *Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition*
- *MHA National Peer Affiliates Committee*
- *Florida Mental Health Coalition*
- *Commission on Florida Mental Health Substance Data Workgroup*

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.*

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:

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

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

MHA/FISP 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 successfully hosted the 27th Annual EPIC Luncheon which raised over \$12,000. The event was very well attended by over 250 people and was quite successful in raising awareness for MHA/FISP.

MHA/FISP maintains an updated website through the dedication of MHA/FSIP staff, and they have helped MHA/FISP produce a user friendly website that is a powerfully positive representation of MHA/FISP.

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 18 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 online 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. The combined Board of FISP and MHA Directors has proven to be a significant tool in the efficiency of the board and directing the mission and vision of the combined agency as MHA/FISP.

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.