

Cuts in United Way cont'd . . .

began to experience funding issues when Erie County cut its share from \$10,000 to \$8,700. Additional blows fell when the United Way eliminated its share of funding, and the N.Y.S. Office of Child and Family Services first cut the program entirely, then reinstated it at \$78,000 instead of \$100,000.

“The latter portion of the funding was the basis for our program because it covered overhead and we were able to use our other funding sources to pay our advocates,” said E. Greenard Poles, program director.

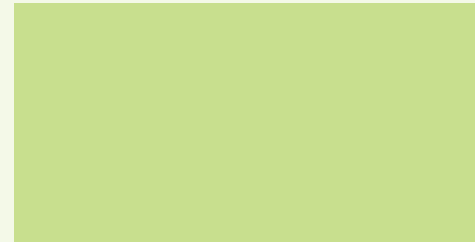
“We were able to renegotiate the contract with our advocates and reduce their pay for services, and I took a cut in pay myself,” Mr. Poles said. “However, this fall we will have to begin services with fewer advocates, which is going to impact the program significantly.”

Advocates are paid on a per case basis, so the more hearings they work on, the more quickly the funds are used up. If they try to ration their caseloads, families will receive advocates on a first-come, first served basis and cases that may be deserving of representation will have to go it alone.

“I don’t foresee there being less need for us,” Mr. Poles said. If we have three advocates and each is supposed to do nine hearings a week, where does that leave us?”

Once an advocate is at City Hall for hearings it’s difficult to do just three and then leave when people are waiting to be helped, he said. There is no doubt the current funding shortfall is going to negatively impact the advocates, hearing officers, and the families of BPS students.

Moot Senior Center: With their funding cut, the staff of the Moot Senior Center had two options – cut the hours the Center is open, or cut their own hours but cover the four-day-a-week program. They chose the latter. With a little juggling of staff coverage and cutting summer picnics to two per month plus two “Parking Lot Picnics,” staff figured out how to keep the Center open during its regular hours. “Our staff knows how important this program is to members,” said Jan Peters, executive director. “It was important to them to be able to continue with business as usual.”



BFNC News



Unlocking Potential ... Enriching Lives

Fall 2009 — Volume XIII, Issue 1

BFNC’s Mental Health professionals weigh in on the issues



Ricardo Herrera

The issues Mental Health professionals deal with are both vast and varied. From working with other service providers, to state and county agencies, to actual consumers, there is no end to the complexities. Three of BFNC’s leaders met recently for a Mental Health Roundtable. Below are some of the issues brought out during this discussion. Participants included: Chandra Banks, Program Coordinator of SCM and CSS Case Management; Robert Cannata, director of ICM and CM Services; and Ricardo Herrera Director, Life Management Services.

Herrera: My end is the bigger picture and future business piece. As a part of the Western New York Demonstration Project,

which involves six counties, we are dealing with a system that is seeking to reduce costs by capitation. They want to pay one set rate for a set period of time to provide a set number of services for mental health consumers.

I’m not sure anyone knows if it’s going to work, but it rearranges how organizations work with each other. It will alter how we work and create new challenges.

Cannata: My sense is that in Western New York we have a very rich system in place to provide Mental Health services for those in need, but it’s unwieldy at times. There are gaps, and sometimes the “system” is under the illusion that just because it’s so big and offers many services, the consumers’ needs are covered. What we have always done at BFNC is to look closely at the clinics and therapists who are available to our consumers and try to be sure the client gets the best match and doesn’t fall through those gaps.

Herrera: And that system works well for many people, however, there are some “hard cases” who are not invested in their own treatment, and who may be at risk in the community.

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Photo: Dave Lewis

Teresa Humphrey

Mother of three takes big step towards her goal

Sociology may not appeal to everyone, but for Teresa Humphrey, the courses she took while working on her bachelor’s degree were the spark for her interest in psychology.

“With the knowledge I acquired from my course work and the field experience while at BFNC I know now what I ultimately want to do is to be a clinical psychologist,” she said. “I also knew it was a field that required personal growth and the desire to excel, and that I’d have to continue my education.”

So, in the midst of raising three children and working full-time at BFNC, Teresa has been attending Medaille College. This spring, after two-and-a-half years of work, she completed her master’s degree in Psychology.

“The next step will be to begin working on my doctorate, which I am in contemplation about commencing by the Spring 2010 school year. Although I’d like to stay at Medaille,

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Our Vision

The Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers plays a major role in ensuring that anyone in Western New York who needs help and has no place to turn, or who has had trouble accessing services, or who has slipped through the cracks of the human service system, has a trusted place to go for help in taking the next step toward maximum independence.

Our Mission

BFNC prepares, equips and empowers individuals to address life management issues, and to improve the quality of life in their communities.

BFNC News is a publication of:

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Mental Health Professionals cont'd . . .

These are folks we've been trying to help for maybe 20 years, and they just keep ending up in the same situation. At BFNC we have the advantage of being independent brokers of services and a relatively small organization, so we are able to use all of the options available. We offer consumers the full range of services.

We take the tough cases and we work at making the right linkages for them. Sometimes, however, it's very difficult. We can only do the best we can do.

Cannata: We can spend a whole day trying to get someone a place to stay, the support and linkages they need, and a number of them will do very well. They don't have behavior issues, and follow their agreed upon medication regimen. But then there are those who will not stop drinking, using drugs, or exhibiting inappropriate behaviors, and although we get them into housing, they end up getting kicked out.

Banks: It's a real struggle. The people who develop the systems see it as black and white, they want consumers to stay off drugs and go to program every day, but that's not the reality. The case manager's best intentions are to adhere to the system, but in the end it's a balancing act between the system and the consumer. What we try to do is wrap services around people, and I think we do a pretty good job.

Herrera: There's a difference between the dogma and reality. We talk about rehabilitation and consumer choice but we have to face the fact some consumers don't want to sit down and work out a service plan, yet the system insists this is the only way.

Banks: There's a fine line when

we talk about consumer choice. When you are talking about an ill person's reality – often they can't make a choice.

Cannata: Yes, and there are some new trends we're seeing. More violence, acting out – there's a different kind of client. There's a hazy area around people with low I.Q.s or Developmental Disabilities (DD) and mental health issues. These people often end up treated in the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) system, because the New York State Office of Mental



Chandra Banks

Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (NYSOMRDD) doesn't know how to do mental health--it only knows how to do DD—and it's just not a good match because the OMH Programs are ill-equipped to work with DD issues.

Herrera: It's a different kind of population with a more fragile hold on reality.

Banks: Take a look at what's going on in general in the world. Lives are very traumatic. People have a lot of issues to deal with. Mental health consumers live under these tough conditions, then they end up in a hospital where they are traumatized even more and they have to deal with that as well. The economy is impacting people, veterans are coming back from the war and they are experiencing symptoms, yet they don't want to be diagnosed because it affects their benefits. African-American males are coming out of the criminal justice system in their early 20s --which is just when mental illness typically presents--and they are being diagnosed. So the system has this influx of new consumers.

Reception honors winners of poster contest



2nd place, Angela Zych

3rd place, Brazil McGee

4th place, Gilbert Pena

A reception was held in late August to recognize the BAPPS Pregnancy Prevention Poster Contest winners and award their honors. The winners were: 1st place, Jasmine Avery, Bennett High School, 11th Grade, \$500; 2nd place, Angela Zych, Leonardo Da Vinci High School, 12th Grade, \$400; 3rd place, Brazil McGee, McKinley High School, 10th Grade, \$300; 4th place, Gilbert Pena, Lafayette High School, 12th Grade, \$200; and 5th place

Natika Miller, Bennett High School, 10th grade, \$100.

The art departments of Bennett High School and Charter School of Applied Technology tied for having the highest number of entries and each won a \$125 gift certificate to Hyatt's. The winning poster will be displayed in bus card advertisements to promote teen pregnancy prevention.

Jasmine Avery was unable to attend.

Cuts in United Way Funding impact BFNC programs

Four BFNC programs were affected by cuts in United Way Funding for 2009: Fun & Learn, Summer Fun Days, Youth Advocacy Program and the Moot Senior Center. With the effect of the recession showing in decreased contributions to the United Way, it was inevitable that nonprofits across the board would have to share the pain. Here's an update on BFNC's programming:

Summer Fun Days: Buffalo Public Schools' mandated summer school program significantly affected enrollment at Summer Fun Days (a summer day camp incorporating learning activities as well as recreation) at Masten Playground.

This factor, combined with the loss of United Way funding influenced program director, Tiffany Prunty, and

BFNC administration in their decision to take a hiatus for summer 2009. **Fun & Learn:** Changes in the staffing of Futures Academy



combined with funding cuts have caused the Fun & Learn program to move back into Westminister House on Monroe Street. Starting at the beginning of October, the

after school program continued to provide homework help and activities to students in Kindergarten through sixth grade from its new location. The majority of participants live in the neighborhood and can walk from school to Westy, and be picked up by parents after work. "This program is essential for working parents of young kids," said Tiffany Prunty, program director. "We're pleased we could find a way to keep it going."

Youth Advocacy Program: Throughout its 26-year history, YAP

has had four funding sources, Erie County Youth, the Buffalo Board of Education, New York State Office of Child and Family Services, and the United Way. Last spring the program

Summer Youth Employment Program

With funding provided by the NYS Department of Health and Planned Parenthood of Western New York, Buffalo Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services (BAPPS) hired 30 teens for seven weeks this past summer in a project to introduce young people to the world of work. The youth ranged in age from 14 – 18 and represented public and charter schools from all over Buffalo. Work sites included clerical and maintenance positions, a daycare center, programs that service senior citizens and a project where kids learned science at a community center.



To participate in the program, the youth first had to obtain working papers, fill out a job application and successfully complete an interview. For most of the youth, these were all new “real world” experiences.

In addition to working 13 hours per week, the youth were required

to attend weekly workshops that addressed life skills including resume writing, sexual harassment, an introduction to budgeting and money

management, sexually transmitted diseases, “Hot Topic Careers” and healthy relationships.

For many teens, the income was very significant in that it allowed them to buy things they needed like school clothes. As one young man put it, “If I didn’t get this job, I don’t know how I would have gotten those things.” For another, Jemario B., there was a major leap in his perspective: “I

used to think my relatives were being selfish when I asked them for money and they said no, but now I know what they meant – making your own money IS important.”

For some, though, the experience was life-changing as was the case with Af-Asia R. who said, “My experience ... was amazing! ... Some days I got to work with the Day Training seniors and other times I worked in the (office) doing paperwork. Either job was a wonderful experience. ... This opportunity ... made me consider switching my major in college. I love this job and I have grown to love these (seniors)

who attend Day Training.” Brazil M. a Summer Youth worker who also was one of the BAPPS Poster Contest winners, has transitioned to a part-time position with the Accounting Office at BFNC.

Mental Health Professionals cont’d . . .

Herrera: And the mental health system is geared to an older clientele. They don’t really know how to deal with younger people.

Cannata: Yeah, you turn 18 and suddenly you’re entitled to make all of the treatment and housing decisions on your own; even to the point of completely excluding your family from the decisions you make.

Banks: Even without a mental illness it takes awhile to get it all together at that age. We need a special program for younger people who have mental illness to prepare

them for the changes in their services and benefits as they age. We need to look at our educational and vocational system. From a societal standpoint we should encourage them to do something constructive with their time, however, even with this whole pool of rich resources we still can’t figure out what’s best. What we have to keep in mind is that at the end of the day there’s a life, we want to save money and protect the community, but our real purpose is to make a life better.

Mother of Three cont’d . . .

they don’t offer a doctorate so I will probably have to go to the University of Buffalo,” she said.

Teresa has already begun using her psychology training in her work with consumers and staff at BFNC.

“I utilize many of the tools I have obtained when conducting screenings and assessing clients, she said. “It’s been very useful.”

BFNC, she says, is tremendously supportive of staff members who are furthering their education. The agency offers its employees the opportunity to work flexible hours, allowing them to attend classes during what would normally be business hours. “I’m really appreciative of that,” Teresa said.

Keeping track of trends and performance

By Ricardo Herrera, Director, Life Management Services.

One of the many tools BFNC’s Licensed Housing program (which serves individuals challenged with mental health issues) uses to give us worthwhile information is called Discharge Trending. This tool helps us look at our success rates and core areas of competency, and indicates areas where there is a need for further growth. Recently we reviewed three years of data from our licensed residential programs to produce a 40 page report. These are some selected highlights.

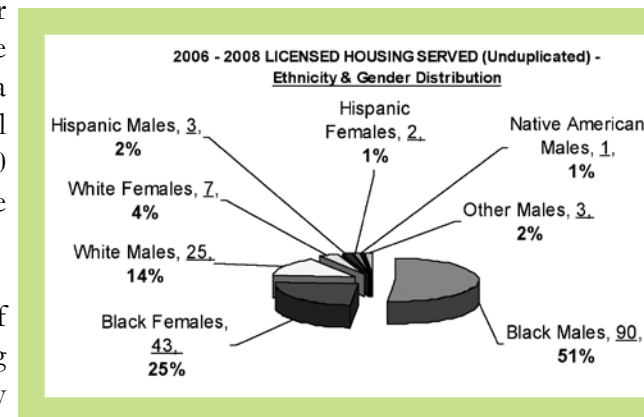
Who do we serve?

The population of the BFNC Licensed Housing units is overwhelmingly male. Seventy percent of our consumers are male, with African American males making up the single largest demographic group at 51.7 percent of all served over this three-year period. Historically this population has been considered more of a challenge, since African American males consistently show poorer outcomes compared to other ethnic groups across the mental health system.

African American females are the next largest group, at 24.7 percent; followed by white males at 14.4 percent; and white females at 4 percent. Hispanic males made up only 1.7 percent of the population, and Hispanic females and Native American males made up 1.1 percent each. A group of mixed ethnicity we call “other” accounted for 1.7 percent of consumers and were all male.

- Almost 60 percent of the individuals served ranged in age from 40 to 70 years, a chronic and challenging group to work with.
- Schizophrenic Disorders dominate at more than 82 percent of all primary Axis I diagnoses. Schizophrenia is universally regarded as the disorder that has the most severe consequences affecting an individual’s ability to function in society. Therefore it is expected to be the most prevalent Axis I diagnosis in a residential population dominated by those aged 40 and older.

- Black males are more likely to carry the diagnosis of Schizophrenia as compared to White males in our service population: 89 percent versus 78 percent.
- Black females are also more likely than white females to carry a diagnosis of Schizophrenia at 77 percent versus 58 percent respectively. Both groups carry the same rate of Depressive Disorders, 14 percent.
- White males are more likely to be diagnosed as suffering from a Depressive Disorder: 9 percent versus 1 percent for Black males.



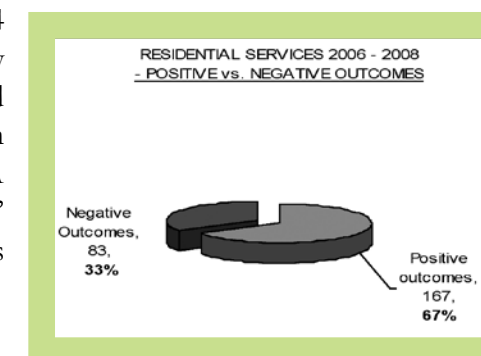
How do we do?

AGENCY VALUE: Individuals should have the opportunity to live in the least restrictive setting that meets their needs. Residential support services are meant to assist residents in learning the skills necessary to move upward on the continuum to the least restrictive and least costly level of housing.

During the three years reviewed, the BFNC licensed housing units served 174 residents

in 84 beds. Over two-thirds, (67 percent), were either “successfully discharged,” moved to less intensive settings, or maintained at an appropriate level of housing for their needs.

AGENCY VALUE: CULTURAL COMPETENCY MEASURE - The Discharge Pattern should reflect the Service pattern.



A comparison of the service profile with that of the discharge profile shows remarkable consistency. African American males were 51 percent of the service population and were discharged at a rate of 56 percent. The same can be said for Black females at 25 percent of the service population and 22 percent of the discharge population. The trend holds up across Ethnic groups, with

the rate of discharge falling within 1 to 4 percentage points of their rate in the overall residential service population.

In today’s outcome-oriented environment the Discharge Trending tool has given us an invaluable concrete measurement of the populations we serve and our success rates with those populations. Armed with this knowledge we can communicate effectively with our colleague agencies outside of BFNC, and speak intelligently within our own staff about where we need to place our efforts to improve.

United Way Campaign is underway!

Goal is \$25,000!

It's that time again! Make your pledge to support the United Way through automatic paycheck deductions. Employees who make notable contributions to the United Way will be recognized at our Spring Breakfast in

April 2010. The United Way has been a steady supporter of BFNC for many years. You can also designate BFNC to receive your tax-deductible donation.

Community Services for the Elderly moves to Matt Urban Center



Photos: Dave Lewis

After almost 30 years of service, Margaret Spates-Ruff, program director of Community Services for the Elderly, decided it was time to retire and spend more time with her grandchildren. Margaret had been running CSP, a partnership program run by BFNC under the auspices of the Erie County Department of Senior Services. On July 1, 2009 the program was operationally transferred to the Matt Urban Center with the support of EC

Senior Services staff.

"We all miss Margaret, who did a wonderful job with our seniors in the Ellicott district," said Jan Peters, Executive Director.

Community Services for the Elderly provided assistance to frail, isolated and homebound seniors, 75 plus years. The program managed a caseload of 325 persons. CSP was started in 1979.



Margaret Spates-Ruff

Summer Soulstice `09

\$19,320 raised for BFNC's Children's Programs!

