

The Exchange

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Chester County
Department of
Drug and Alcohol
Services

Kim P. Bowman

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

SEPTEMBER National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month 2005

Drug and alcohol addiction are equal opportunity diseases. People in recovery from these diseases come from all walks of life and deserve to be treated with kindness and respect for fighting and winning one of the hardest battles there is.

This September, celebrate the 16th annual observance of National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month by joining the voices of recovery because recovery heals lives, families and communities. For drug and alcohol information and treatment referral for you or someone you know, call 1-866-286-3767.

Message from the Director

THE STIGMA OF ADDICTION

The American Heritage Dictionary defines Discrimination as: *Treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit; partiality or prejudice* and Stigma as: *A mark or token of infamy, disgrace, or reproach*. Unfortunately, both stigma and discrimination are pervasive when it comes to alcohol and other drug problems, not only impacting those in need of services, but also negatively affecting individuals in recovery.

Alcohol and other drug problems are highly charged issues and some would argue that the stigma and discrimination are warranted. However, this is not only unproductive in addressing the devastation that alcohol and other drug problems wreak on individuals, families, and communities; it ignores the scientific evidence and facts, as well as the multitude of recovering

individuals who are daily,

contributing, and productive members of our communities. It is important to also remember that alcohol and other drug problems are equal opportunity diseases that affect 1 in 4 families. It happens in rich and poor families and has no regard for race, religion, or social status.

In 2004, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment panel "Changing The Conversation", part of the National Treatment Plan Initiative, undertook the first intensive exploration of the stigmas and attitudes that affect people with alcohol and drug problems. The Panel addressed stigma as a powerful, shame-based mark of disgrace and reproach that impedes treatment and recovery.

Stigma helps to perpetuate the problems of addiction. The panel found that addiction stigma delays acknowledging the disease. For example, in a national survey that looked at barriers confronting those seeking treatment, 40% said they were concerned about other people finding out about their problem.

This same stigma results in policies and practices that impede access to care that would make a

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difference. For example, we know that brief screening and intervention in medical settings can be effective for individuals with alcohol or other drug problems. Yet, if physicians in emergency settings ask about substance use they risk a denied claim for care by the insurance company for any injury sustained while under the influence. Additionally, individuals face denial of medical, life, or other insurance coverage if they talk to their physician about alcohol or other drug problems.

The stigma and discrimination also affects individuals in recovery. For example, there is a ban against students with past drug convictions from being eligible for student aid. This is counterproductive to supporting individuals who have overcome alcohol and other drug problems becoming productive citizens.

There is also a ban on individuals with prior drug convictions from being eligible for public assistance. Mothers seeking or in recovery who are struggling to be good parents and productive citizens cannot get financial assistance in many states. Luckily, in Pennsylvania, we took advantage of the ability to opt out of this provision of the federal plan.

In the case of both education and public assistance it is important to note the bans are limited to drug convictions, individuals with violent felony histories do not face the same restrictions.

The “Changing the Conversation” panel also found that families, treatment providers, and even researchers may face comparable stigmas and attitudes, and that public support and public policy are influenced by addiction stigma. Finally, it was found that stigmatized individuals often endorse the attitudes and practices that stigmatize them. They may internalize this thinking and behavior, which consequently, becomes part of their identity and sense of self-worth.

So, what do we do about this? Nationally, Faces and Voices of Recovery (www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org) is “working to mobilize, organize, and rally the millions of Americans in recovery from addiction, their families, friends, and allies in a campaign to: end discrimination, broaden social understanding, and achieve a just response to addiction as a public health crisis”.

Locally, the Pennsylvania Recovery Organization –

Achieving Community Together (PRO-ACT) is working in southeastern Pennsylvania to accomplish similar goals (www.proact.org). PRO-ACT is working to educate the public on Pennsylvania’s insurance law for drug and alcohol treatment - Act 106. Act 106 states that people are entitled to 7 days of detox, 30 days of rehab, and 30 units of outpatient services per year. PRO-ACT is also “working to reduce the stigma of addiction, ensure availability of adequate treatment options, and influence public opinion and policy regarding the value of recovery”.

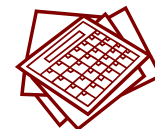
Slowly, the public’s mindset toward addiction is changing. A comprehensive survey of the general public on stigma, discrimination and other barriers to recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs was conducted in April 2004. The majority of respondents showed “a strong preference for policies that treat addiction as a health rather than a law enforcement issue. For example, more than eight (8) out of ten people (81%) say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who favored reallocating what the government spends on the war on drugs to place more emphasis on drug prevention, education, treatment, and recovery programs”. Faces and Voices for Recovery commissioned the poll.

To find more information on how you can get involved in the movement to end discrimination and promote the rights of those still suffering from the disease of addiction or individuals in recovery, please contact PRO-ACT at 1-800-221-6333.

Kim P. Bowman

*Director, Chester County Department of
Drug and Alcohol Services*

Mark Your Calendar



NATIONAL OBSERVANCES:

September 2005

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month: www.recoverymonth.gov

September 9, 2005

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day: www.fascenter.samhsa.gov

October 23-31, 2005

Red Ribbon Week: www.ncadi.samhsa.gov/promos/redribbon/default.aspx

IN VIEW

Pennsylvania Recovery Organization – Achieving Community Together



The Pennsylvania Recovery Organization – Achieving Community Together (PRO-ACT) is a grassroots advocacy initiative founded to promote the rights of and ensure opportunities for those still suffering from the disease of addiction, members of the recovery community, and their family members. Advocacy efforts target southeastern Pennsylvania (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties).

PRO-ACT is developing and mobilizing a constituency of “*Ambassadors for Recovery*”. *Ambassadors* are recovering persons, their family members and friends, professionals working in the field, and others with a special interest in and knowledge of recovery. Dedicated to educating and mobilizing its members to advocate for the recovery community, PRO-ACT is working to reduce the stigma of addiction, ensure the availability of adequate treatment options, and influence public opinion and policy regarding the value of recovery.

PRO-ACT believes that, during the past 25 years, there has been a shift in public policy from supporting treatment programs for those suffering from addiction to addressing the problem by utilizing the justice system when crimes associated with the disease are committed. This change from proactively treating the illness to recognizing only the criminal ramifications has had a dramatic effect on public opinion towards the disease of addiction and recovery, dramatically increasing stigma, and reducing opportunities for those affected. In recent years, discrimination against addicts and those in recovery by insurance companies, corporate America, the media, and others has gone largely unchallenged. PRO-ACT has been founded to be a voice for advocacy and change.

If you are interested in learning more about PRO-ACT or becoming a member, please call 1-800-221-6333. The Chester County branch of PRO-ACT meets the third Thursday of each month beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Government Services Center, 601 Westtown Road, West Chester, PA.

RESOURCE REVIEW

“Know Your Rights” – Are You in Recovery from Alcohol or Drug Problems?

US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment www.samhsa.gov

Are you in recovery and wondering what legal rights you have when it comes to your job, job training, health care, education, government services and programs? “Know Your Rights” is a 15-page brochure that provides guidance on the legal rights of individuals with drug and/or alcohol problems.

This brochure lets readers know what they can do to prevent or remedy violations of their rights under Federal non-discrimination laws and overcome legal barriers that other laws may impose due to past or current substance use-related conduct, including convictions for substance use offenses.

You will also find important contact information for specific questions you may have regarding employment, medical leave, job training, and other services. Additionally, the brochure outlines the legal consequences of substance use related conduct that may limit your rights and opportunities in areas such as public housing, federally funded public assistance and food stamps, and federal student loans and financial aid.

For more information, or to obtain a free copy of this publication, please contact the Community Prevention Department at The Coad Group: 610-363-6164 or 1-866-286-3767.

Healing Alcohol and Drug Addiction in Our Community Takes Education, Action.....

(Reprinted, in part, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment www.recoverymonth.gov)

For people with substance abuse disorders in Chester County, starting on a road to recovery can seem impossible. Even after admitting they have a problem, people who want to overcome their addictions have many other issues to consider: How do they find available treatment programs? Will health insurance cover the costs of the services they need? Will they be able to stay on the job while seeking treatment?

Answering these questions can help people with substance use disorders take the first steps to get the help they need. The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services works daily to inform residents in our community that dependence on, or an addiction to drugs and alcohol is a disease that can be treated.

We understand how discouraging it can be when help seems out of reach. Nationally in 2003, only 1.9 million persons (.8 percent of the total population and 8.5 percent of the people who needed treatment) received treatment at a facility that specializes in treating alcohol and drug dependence and addiction according to the *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*.

As a responsible community, we must ensure that addiction is recognized as a disease, and treated as such. We can do this by educating ourselves about the signs to look for in friends, family and co-workers, such as a sudden decline in performance or attendance at work or school, or sudden changes in behavior or personality. We also can call upon our doctors to actively screen patients for and diagnose dependence and addiction, and ask our employers to make treatment available.

To help educate our community on drug and alcohol issues, the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services supports the 16th annual observance of *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)*, a nationwide initiative each September supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This year's Recovery Month theme is "*Join the Voices and Faces for Recovery: Healing Lives, Families, and Communities*".

Please join us in celebrating Recovery Month at one or both of the following local events:

PRO-ACT'S RECOVERY WALKS! 2005

4th Annual Walk for
Recovery from Alcohol &
Other Drug Addictions



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2005
1 P.M. to 4 P.M.**

FAIRMOUNT PARK, PHILADELPHIA
Lloyd Hall at Boathouse Row
Waterworks & Kelly Drive

Entertainment & Light Refreshments

Registration Begins at 1:00 pm
3 Mile Walk Begins at 2:00 pm

*Join the Voices of Recovery, Healing Lives,
Families and Community*
www.proact.org

3RD ANNUAL RECOVERY EXPO

When: September 24, 2005
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Where: United Methodist Church
of the Resurrection
181 Sharp Lane
Exton, PA

Why: This Expo was created to educate and assist those people and their families who wish to learn more about alcohol and other drugs disorders in a non-threatening atmosphere. Event is open to all who are interested in learning more about what *Recovery* is and how you can help. For more information visit: www.umcr.org

*Free Admission !!!!
Lunch Provided !!!!*

WAYS TO SUPPORT ADOLESCENTS IN TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

(Reprinted from www.recoverymonth.gov/2000)

Adolescents who are in treatment or recovery need all the support they can get from their families and communities. Consider taking one or more of the following actions to support youth undergoing treatment for and recovery from substance abuse:

- Encourage schools to support their Student Assistance Programs (SAP) – SAP is designed to assist school personnel in identifying problem areas including alcohol, other drugs and mental health issues which pose a barrier to a student's success. Professionally trained SAP teams are available at all secondary level public schools in Chester County.
- Encourage schools to offer on-site counseling on substance abuse.
- Encourage purchasers of health insurance to obtain comprehensive coverage for substance abuse and mental health services.
- Get involved in organizations that advocate public policies and funding to support substance abuse treatment and recovery programs for adolescents, e.g. Faces and Voices of Recovery (www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org) or locally The Pennsylvania Recovery Organization – Achieving Community Together (PRO-ACT www.proact.org).
- Promote public awareness and enforcement of Act 106 (Pennsylvania law that states people are entitled to 7 days of detox, 30 days of rehab and 30 units of outpatient services per year). For more information call 1-800-221-6333.
- Encourage treatment centers, schools, and community-based youth organizations to conduct support groups for children of parents who are addicted to alcohol and drugs.
- Encourage adolescents who have recovered successfully from addictive disorders to participate in community events that target their peers.
- Because alcohol and drug use among youth often occurs in groups, be aware that encouraging one young person to seek help may lead others in his or her social group to seek treatment.
- Encourage environmental changes in your community that promote recovery such as reducing the number of billboards advertising alcoholic beverages and holding alcohol-free recreational events.
- Encourage the participation of family members in all aspects of the treatment and recovery process for adolescents, and foster the availability of family-centered support groups and other services that address the needs of the entire family.
- Join a community coalition – contact The Coad Group for one in your area: 1-866-286-3767 or 610-363-6164.
- Be a positive role model for young people by not engaging in any legal or unhealthy substance use.
- Stay informed about available local resources for treatment and recovery, and use this knowledge to help others.

For additional information on any of the ideas listed above, please contact the Community Prevention staff at The Coad Group: 1-866-286-3767 or 610-363-6164.



The Exchange is sponsored by: The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, P.O. Box 2747, 601 Westtown Road Suite 325, West Chester, PA 19380-0990.

For more information or to be on the mailing list for this newsletter, contact the Community Prevention staff at: The Coad Group, 930 East Lancaster Avenue Exton, PA 19341. 610.363.6164 or 1.800.917.1117

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The Department of Health and Chester County Commissioners specifically disclaim responsibility for any analyses, interpretations, or conclusions herein.

The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, P.O. Box 2747
601 Westtown Road, Suite 325
West Chester, PA 19380-0990

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For More Information...

Join Together (617) 437-1500

www.jointogether.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.nida.nih.gov or clubdrugs.org

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health

www.cdc.gov/tobacco

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information

1-800-729-6686 www.health.org

Partnership for a Drug-Free America

(212) 922-1560 www.drugfreeamerica.org

PA Dept. of Health, Research & Info. Clearinghouse www.padohric.org

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters.

(800) 344-2666 or (800) 356-9996.

www.al-anon.alateen.org

The Coad Group

www.coadgroup.com

You can view or print this newsletter by visiting Chester County's Website: www.chesco.org and following the links for Human Services to Drug & Alcohol Services.