

## Consumer and Family Led Services

**Drop-in Center/Empowerment Centers:** Drop-in centers, also called Empowerment centers are the heart of the BHI recovery model. Drop-in centers are the hub for many consumer-driven services. They offer consumer and family-member employment opportunities, recreational events, self-help support groups, consumer-run food and clothing banks, meals, peer specialists programs, and training and educational opportunities. To have all of these activities offered in one locale, and to have them operated by consumers, fosters personal empowerment and recovery. Perhaps the most important underlying dynamic of a drop-in center is the sense of community and belonging experienced by consumers. Additionally, drop-in centers offer the opportunity for consumers to utilize and develop their leadership skills.

**Clubhouses:** Clubhouses share many of the recovery strengths of a drop-in center (community, leadership-skill development) but emphasize a structured employment component. Along with housing, employment-related services have been identified as one of the greatest needs of consumers. A clubhouse model emphasizes the partnership between consumers and staff in performing day-to-day program functions. The clubhouse provides consumers with an employment program that will respect their needs and desires, offer an empowering environment and lead consumers to meaningful, gainful employment opportunities. A clubhouse also has available computer resources to provide computer training, skill practice and Internet access.

**Employment Opportunities:** Opportunities for consumers and family members to have gainful employment and manage supportive services such as newsletter production, drop-in center management, janitorial services, transportation services, Medicaid notification mailings and other such activities are key to recovery and send a powerful message to the system and the consumer community. These supportive services provide an opportunity for consumers to participate in gainful employment in an environment that values their expertise in mental illness and is able to offer flexibility and support that may not be available in the community at large.

**Self-help Support Groups:** The basic principle underlying all self-help programs are that consumers and family members themselves can truly understand what other consumers and family members are experiencing. Consumers and family members can provide information on coping strategies and resources they have found helpful. Consumers who have been particularly successful in their recovery can act as role models for others. Self-help support groups are offered in many different forms throughout the BHI area. Some are run by grass-roots community organizations. Others occur at drop-centers, clubhouses or clinical sites. Most groups are operated on a drop-in basis that requires no long-term commitment. Most groups are operated free of charge.

**Peer Counseling Programs:** Peer counseling programs like BHI's Peer Specialist Program meets two distinct needs. For the peer specialists themselves, the program

offers an opportunity for consumers that are interested in helping others receive formal training and ongoing supervision in the field. The consumers who work as specialists secure paid employment in a position that allows them to help others. Consumers who use Peer Specialist services receive quality one-on-one peer interaction with trained individuals who know from their own experience how to navigate the challenges of mental illness.

BHI recently partnered with the Community College of Denver to offer a Peer Specialist Course for college credit. The first semester is classroom based and the second semester is a field placement experience. BHI offers scholarships to consumers to attend this program.

**Adolescent Peer Support:** Adolescent and young-adult consumers have a special set of needs. The Young Adult Peer Specialist program, modeled after the Adult Peer Specialist program, is designed in recognition of the ability of young adults to provide support and act as role models for adolescents and each other as they face the challenges of transitioning into adulthood.

**Recreational Opportunities:** Along with housing and employment needs, recreation and social activity are commonly identified as a top priority of BHI consumers. Through drop-in centers and the BHI Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) and Family Advisory Network, BHI provides consumer and family driven recreation opportunities such as dances, picnics, holiday celebrations, and through ArtReach, tickets to community events. Some of these activities offer an opportunity for consumer/family members to utilize planning and organizational skills and to be compensated for their services.

**Training and Development Opportunities:** Several consumer and family driven training and development opportunities exist within BHI. Informational training is offered, at consumer and family discretion, at drop-centers, Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) and Family Advisory Network meetings, and support groups. These are planned in response to requests from participants of these particular programs/organizations. These groups also identify outside conferences and other educational opportunities, which are relevant to consumers/family and provides scholarships to promote the attendance of consumers and family members at these events.

**Peer Outreach Services:** BHI recently hired a consumer provider to do consumer outreach in our service area. This position focuses on nursing homes and alternative care facilities. The consumers living in those facilities will have the opportunity to meet with the provider and learn about services that are available and receive assistance getting connected with services.