

Recovery Wellness Program...Learning to Manage One's Illness

*"Health, learning and virtue will ensure your happiness; they will give you a quiet conscience, private esteem and public honor."
 So pronounced Thomas Jefferson over two centuries ago to which could be added "and assist in your recovery and growth."*

The DMHAS Northwest Mental Health Authority (NWMHA) Recovery and Wellness Program (RWP) recently celebrated its first anniversary. Initiated in July 2003, RWP sought inspiration from the adult education model developed by the Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. Its mission is to offer educational opportunities to persons with psychiatric disabilities so as to strengthen and broaden their knowledge of the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual practices that may support their journey of recovery.

Consistent with social role valorization theory and normalization, vocabulary was modified to become more positively focused. "Groups" became "classes;" "clients" or "consumers" became "students;" mental health workers became "instructors;" and courses were given more mainstream names such as "Holistic Forum," "Relax and De-Stress" and "Speak up/Speak out." As many classes as possible are held outside of the agency at community sites in varying locations within Catchment Area 22, a 38 town area in Northwest Connecticut.



CATEGORIES OF COURSES:

Recovery Courses:

- *Winning Against Relapse*
- *Managing Mood Swings*

Self-help and Advocacy Courses:

- *Debtor's Anon*
- *Consumer Networking*

Wellness Courses:

- *Fitness and Weight Management*
- *Music Appreciation*
- *Balancing the Self*

Prevocational Courses:

- *WarmLine*
- *HomeWorks*

Some individualized services are also offered.

Courses are offered during four annual 12-week quadesters with an average offering of 36 courses per quadester, taught by a "faculty" of seven staff and a program supervisor or "dean." Much like a college, some courses are offered every semester, others are offered less frequently and new courses are added at the suggestion of students, instructors and agency providers. Some "courses" run continuously throughout the year. Classes meet weekly with durations of from one to three hours.

Instructional staff develop curricula, utilize texts and workbooks, audio and videotapes and related materials and invite guest speakers. Instructional practices range from "lecture" and discussion, to demonstration, role-play and "hands on" experiences. Homework may be assigned as well. Students are awarded certificates of completion if they meet attendance criteria and may take a course over again if they desire. Students are expected to complete a course evaluation at the end of the quadester and the results are used to improve the quality of courses and generate ideas for new courses.

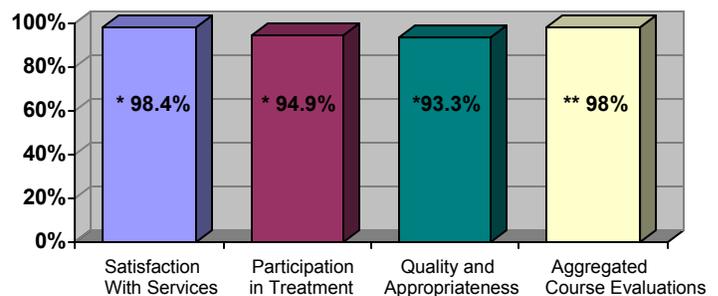
Positive Feedback!

Initial feedback suggests a very positive reception from both students and instructors. Students have demonstrated and sustained increased involvement, tenacity and interest as well as re-enrollment in succeeding quadesters.

**Results of the DMHAS Standardized Client Satisfaction Survey of 61 students (February & March 2004).*

***Results of the DMHAS aggregated course evaluations, (March 2004).*

Percentage of Student Satisfaction with RWP Courses



Instructors, despite the initially heavy burden of developing and teaching a whole new set of courses, have discovered they possess new abilities, have a new perspective on themselves and have gained a welcome sense of enhanced effectiveness in working with their students.

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