

Independence Program: Peers Helping Peers

“I like having the opportunity to help others in the Independence Service,” is the statement of one member of the Independence Program, which began operating in May of 2003. Originally called the Steps Into Independence Program, the Independence Program is operated and managed by DMHAS Capitol Region Mental Health Center (CMHC) staff who are persons in recovery from mental illness. The program provides services to other persons in recovery and replaces a more traditional day program that was rehabilitation-oriented. The Independence Program operates five days a week concurrently with the Peer Support Center with the goal of assisting people to integrate into community life and to develop natural support systems in the community via regular exposure to recreational, spiritual and educational activities and to recovery orientated fellowship.

The Independence Program serves to “operationalize” the DMHAS Commissioner’s Policy Statement No. 83 on Recovery: *“The concept of recovery shall be the guiding principle for services that comprise the Department’s healthcare system. Services within this system shall identify and build upon each recovering individual’s strengths and areas of health in addressing his or her needs. The environment for this system shall encourage hope and emphasize individual dignity and respect.”*

Persons in recovery may join this program on their own or may be referred by a clinician or case manager. Members are encouraged to identify goals that they want to work on that ideally are related to treatment goals they are working on in collaboration with clinical staff and programs.

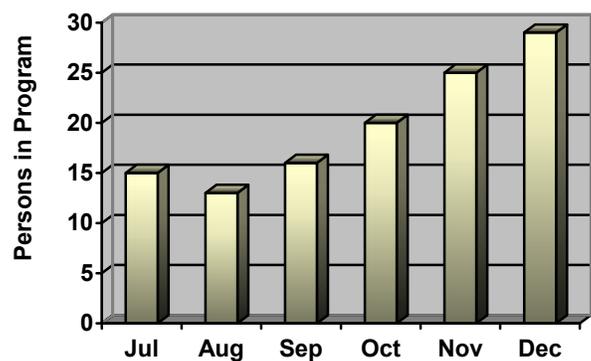
Via their own perspective and experiences, peer support staff who work in the program offer strength and hope in terms of their own successes. Members may work on their goals on site, e.g. learning how to use computers in the Peer Support Center, or may go out with peer support staff into the city, working on skills and community contacts.

Examples of goals identified by members include:

- ◆ Learning how to take the bus to work or to shop
- ◆ Getting a driver’s license
- ◆ Finding an apartment
- ◆ Finding a place of worship and joining it

Services and programs operated by persons in recovery are critically important as DMHAS moves toward a recovery-oriented system of care. The Independence Program is one of the primary domains of a recovery-focused service at CMHC.

Membership in Independence Program



Goals Identified by Members

