

ACCESS TO CARE

WHOLE HEALTH ACTION MANAGEMENT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Brandon Rogers, BS, Administrator of Program and Service Development

What comes to mind when hearing the word *wham*? This noun is used to describe “the sound of a vigorous impact.”

The Western Tidewater Community Services Board is implementing a national best-practice program, through an Obici Healthcare Foundation grant, that is having a vigorous and positive impact on the lives of severely mentally ill (SMI) individuals.

“Whole Health Action Management (WHAM) is a training program and peer support group model. It is designed to encourage increased resiliency, wellness and self-management of health and behavioral health among people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders,” said Darlene Rawls, Director of Community Integration and Rehabilitation Services.

“WHAM has been a great opportunity to energize and introduce a new dimension of wellness to the SMI population,” she added.

WHAM participant Dorothy can attest to the *vigorous impact* of the program. She is now eating more vegetables and fruit and losing weight. Dorothy stated, “I learned how to take care of my physical and mental body. My teachers were great! They made it not just something to do, but something I learned about.”

Typically, persons experiencing SMI have difficulty managing chronic diseases, advocating for themselves, knowing when to seek care and understanding medical terms. This population dies an average of 25 years earlier than the general population.

Johnny achieved his goal to quit smoking during the 10-week session. “The group helped me to make a decision for myself, and I haven’t smoked since.” Johnny

admits to being very proud of himself for achieving his goal, and “it was great having a best friend to teach and support me in reaching my goal.”

Peers are trained in person-centered planning and will be able to identify strengths and supports, write a whole-health goal with weekly action plans, facilitate 8-week

WHAM-peer support groups to change health behaviors and use tools for shared decision making.

Peer Support Specialists assist individuals in achieving or re-gaining skills and confidence needed to re-enter/successfully remain in the community.

Robert, who achieved his weight loss goal, echoes the sentiments of other WHAM participants. “I learned how to control my portion sizes. I really like the positive reinforcement from the instructors and the other members of the group.”

For more information about WHAM Programming, contact Brandon Rodgers at (757) 419-9670.

“... a national best practice program that is having a vigorous and positive impact on the lives of severely mentally ill (SMI) individuals.”



WHAM group participants Robert (l) and Johnny (r) partner with Western Tidewater Community Services Board Peer Support Specialists, such as Adam Burton (c), to help participants better understand chronic disease self-management techniques.

The Up Center Helping Fill Behavioral Health Gap in Western Tidewater

by Rick Spencer, Program Resource Officer

Western Tidewater respondents to a survey identified behavioral health services as the most important community service gap. This finding appeared in the Sentara Obici Hospital's 2013 Needs Assessment.

In response to this gap, the Foundation funded a grant to The Up Center that addresses the barriers clients face such as lack of transportation, insurance and funds to afford outpatient behavioral health services.

The Up Center deals with transportation obstacles by offering outpatient counseling in community locations such as Suffolk Housing and Redevelopment sites and the Western Tidewater Free Clinic. Groups are also conducted at the Western Tidewater Regional Jail and Virginia Department of Corrections District 6 Suffolk Probation and Parole. The Obici Healthcare Foundation grant awarded to The Up Center pays for persons without insurance.

"Recognizing the need for more therapists in the area, The Up Center hired three licensed-eligible clinicians who receive training and supervision from seasoned staff," said Mary Brantley, LCSW, Director of Outpatient Counseling.

Once they attain the required number of hours of clinical supervision, the clinicians intend to continue providing behavioral health services in Western Tidewater. These therapists are Luz Castillo, Catie Colletto and Ruth Woods.

"There is an increasing focus on the impact of trauma and how service systems may help to exacerbate trauma related issues. The most responsive systems are beginning to revisit how they deliver their services under the framework of the trauma informed approach. Trauma does not occur in a vacuum," said Andrea Long, M.A.,

Ed.M, LPC, The Up Center Chief Program Officer.

"Individual trauma occurs in a context of community, whether the community is defined geographically, as in neighborhoods, virtually as in a shared identity, ethnicity or experience or organizationally as in a place of work, learning or worship."

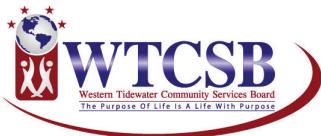
"How a community responds to the individual trauma sets the foundation for the impact of the traumatic event, experience or effect. Communities that provide a context of understanding and self-determination facilitate resilience, healing and recovery for its individuals and the community overall," Ms. Long continued.

For more information about The Up Center's Outpatient Counseling Program, call 757-965-8652.

"Trauma does not occur in a vacuum."



A team of licensed-eligible therapists received clinical supervision from The Up Center. Funded by the Obici Healthcare Foundation, Luz Castillo, MSW, Supervisee in Social Work; Catie Colletto, MS, Resident in Counseling; and Ruth Woods, MSW, Supervisee in Social Work are nearing their requisite number hours for obtaining counselor and social worker licenses. These therapists are committed to serving Western Tidewater after they earn their licenses..



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