

THE PIPELINE

SINCE 1991

VOLUME 2 2019-2020

2020 GEORGIA EVENTS

GMHCN Board Meetings

Face-to-Face
Macon, May 18
St. Simons Island, August 17
November 7-8

Conference Call
March 9
July 13

Board Retreat
November 5-6

Certified Peer Specialist Trainings

2020 Trainings
Macon, Feb. 3-13
Augusta, May 11, 21
Cordele, July 13-23
Columbus, Sep. 21-Oct. 1
Atlanta, Dec. 7-17

Certified Peer Specialist CEU Forum

Macon, April 15

Whole Health Action Management

Duluth, April 22-23

Georgia Peer Support Institutes

Helen, May 5-7
St. Simons Island, Nov. 11-13

Mental Health Day at the Capitol

Atlanta, February 7

Georgia Parent Support Network

Mardi Gras Ball, Atlanta
February 25

5th Annual Ken Whiddon Memorial Golf Tournament

Jekyll Island Golf Club
May 2

GMHCN 29th Annual Summer Conference

St. Simons Island
August 18-20

Holiday Celebrations

throughout the year
at GMHCN's Peer Support, Wellness and Respite Centers statewide
Visit gmhcn.org for times and locations

KEEPING GEORGIA CONNECTED

Peer support is a vital part of Georgia's recovery-oriented system of care, and it is a really big system: The State of Georgia, and its public behavioral health system, covers over 59,000 square miles inhabited by over 10,000,000 people. More than half of Georgia's population is condensed into ten of its 159 counties, but there are many areas of the state that are very sparsely populated. In fact, there are 24 Georgia counties with fewer than 10,000 people. Access to recovery and wellness supports is just as important for the people in those counties as for those living in metropolitan areas, but it is not always possible to have brick-and-mortar facilities that are practical for people who may live in rural areas, have limited mobility, or lack access to transportation. And for many Georgians, the times when our behavioral health providers are open are when we are at work ourselves. That is why for many Georgians, the ability to access support over the phone is an important part of our wellness and recovery plans. Georgia is fortunate to have a network of behavioral health allies who coordinate to make sure Georgians have access to the recovery and wellness supports.

The Peer2Peer Warm Line operated by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network began providing peer support over the phone through its Peer Support and Wellness Center of Decatur when it opened in 2008. As each of four additional Centers have opened, the capacity of the Peer2Peer Warm Line has grown, and Georgians with behavioral health concerns are able to receive behavioral health peer support over the phone 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The real value of the Peer2Peer Warm line is in the relationships that emerge, according to Roslind Hayes, Statewide Coordinator for Georgia's Peer Support, Wellness, and Respite Centers, who says "In the ten years I have been working with the Centers, it has just been phenomenal to see how mutuality empowers hope, and authentic connections build resilience. When peers who have been calling in for support show up to an event at one of the Centers for the first time and are able to make that direct personal connection with someone they have been talking to on the phone for months or even years, you can see that joy of realization, of that essential direct human contact—and you see how much the support they have been receiving on the Warm Line has really meant to them."

The Georgia Council on Substance Abuse launched the CARES Warm Line in November 2017 to provide telephone peer support to Georgians in or seeking recovery from substance use. According to Neil Campbell, GCSA's Executive Director, "Our CARES Warm Line keeps us connected to rural Georgia. We get calls from people all over the state experiencing loneliness, who want to be connected with people who won't judge them. They are surprised when they learn that we aren't going to push them down a particular pathway to recovery. We are here to walk with them on the path they choose." The CARES Warm Line is operated 8:30am-11:00pm every day of the year.

The Georgia Crisis and Access Line provides telephonic crisis intervention, clinical triage, and referral for Georgians in need 24/7/365. GCAL also operates as the preferred point of entry for Crisis Stabilization Units and State Hospitals, provides Mobile Crisis Dispatch Georgia's Mobile Crisis Response Teams, and generally serves as the front door to Georgia's public safety net. For people in need of clinical support who do not know where to turn, GCAL has the answers. Even more than that, according to Wendy Farmer, the Chief Executive Officer of GCAL, "Reaching out can be really hard. We want people to know that we are available 24/7 and no issue is too big or small. That phone can feel so heavy, but so often when someone does reach out, they feel so much lighter afterwards. Sometimes just a little time with someone who cares and will listen makes all the difference."

PEER2PEER Warm Line 24/7 Peer Support 888-945-1414

www.peer2peer.center

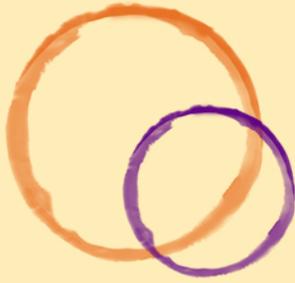
CARES Warm Line 8:30am-11pm Substance Use Peer Support 844-326-5400

www.gasubstanceabuse.org

Georgia Crisis and Access Line 24/7 Crisis and Referral 800-715-4225

<https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/access-services>





GEORGIA PEER SUPPORT INSTITUTE

The Georgia Peer Support Institute (GPSI) is a three-day immersion in peer support designed to inform, inspire, and expand the possibility of peer support in Georgia. Because peer support as a complement to behavioral health treatment is still a relatively new concept, many people, including both clinical treatment providers and recipients, are unaware of the potential of peer support. GPSI seeks to change that by creating an understanding of and passion for peer support.

TaTa-Nisha Frazier, the GPSI coordinator, took over the GPSI program in the summer of 2018 after spending several years working on the Recovery-Focused Transformation project led by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' Office of Recovery Transformation. Through that experience, TaTa-Nisha says, "I was able to experience firsthand how differently peer support is understood across the state. While most all service providers share an understanding of what different diagnoses are, what the roles of different clinicians are, and how different medications work, there is little consistency across the state of what peer support is. Peer support is not yet generally a part of behavioral health curricula in higher education, and it is not yet truly and consistently embedded as a part of our system of care, but by providing peers the opportunity to learn about and engage in peer support on their own, we can help impact the system in a positive way."

GPSI instruction is supported by Ike Powell of the Appalachian Consulting Group, who said "As a trainer, I always look forward to being a part of the GPSI training team. First, I get to work with GMHCN staff - some of whom I have known and admired for years. Second, I get to meet new peers who are often just getting into what we know as 'the recovery process' and be a part of their excitement." Much of that excitement comes from the GPSI curriculum, which is designed to teach the principles of recovery from behavioral health challenges; teach characteristics of peer-directed, peer-run, and recovery-oriented behavioral health services; and, to teach skills to take an active role in one's own recovery. For many GPSI participants, this is their first experience learning about what self-directed recovery means, and what it can mean for them personally.

Throughout the Institute, participants share knowledge and experiences, while developing new relationships with peers and themselves—and that is where the other part of the excitement comes in. Being surrounded by people with shared lived experience who are simultaneously learning about how to use that experience to create change is a transformative experience for many. Bill Jolly, who decided he wanted to become a Certified Peer Specialist after participating in GPSI in the spring of 2018, is now a CPS working at the Peer Support and Wellness Center of Decatur. According to Bill, "GPSI changed my life. I had been progressing in my recovery for a while, but GPSI showed me a whole new way of thinking about myself and my ability to take ownership of my wellness."

Peers are selected to participate in GPSI based primarily on their responses to a series of brief questions on the application, such as *Why are you interested in attending the Institute?* and *What do you hope to gain from attending?* According to Sherry Jenkins Tucker, GMHCN's Executive Director, there is no right or wrong answer to those questions, and that is where the magic of GPSI lies: "Unlike Georgia's Certified Peer Specialist Project training, which has a specific objective of developing Georgia's peer workforce, the GPSI training is about developing a statewide community of peers, contributing to a Recovery-Oriented System of Care, and advancing peer support within Georgia's communities. And, that can be realized in as many different ways as there are participants, as demonstrated by the diverse recovery and wellness community projects that are developed through GPSI."

Participation in GPSI is limited to adults from Georgia with a behavioral health diagnosis who have never participated in a Certified Peer Specialist or GPSI training. The GPSI application is made available each spring and fall, well in advance of the application deadline. The best way to be aware of application deadlines is to sign up for GMHCN's email list, follow GMHCN on Facebook, or visit the GMHCN website regularly.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY: NOW HIRING STATEWIDE

Each spring, GMHCN contracts with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to conduct surveys of recipients of state-provided behavioral health services. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please visit the Employment page of our website at gmhcn.org or call 800-297-1416 and ask for Daisy.

THE PATH TO WELLNESS

How we got to where we are, in our own words.



Angela Murphy, CPS
Forensic Peer Mentor Project Director

What challenges were you facing before you discovered peer support?

As a young child, I was always feeling nervous and sad and those feelings continued throughout my teenage years. By the time I graduated high school it only had gotten worse and at the age of eighteen I took a bottle of pills with a fifth of vodka and woke up in the emergency room. Three days later I was transferred to Delaware State Hospital. It was there that I learned that those feelings of nervousness and sadness had names, and I was diagnosed with manic depression and anxiety. I remember feeling ashamed of my diagnosis because my family began to convince me that there was nothing wrong with me that God couldn't fix and so I stopped taking my medication and went to church, and the Pastor prayed over me. It wasn't long after that that I began to self-medicate because those feelings came back only this time they were even worse. Eventually, I moved away from all my family and wound up on the streets for the next sixteen years in and out of institutions, jails, and prisons.

What helped you move forward?

In January of 2004, while walking down the street feeling lost and hopeless out of nowhere, a lady said to me that I didn't have to live this way and she could show me a way out if I wanted help. When I agreed to get the help she took me to the Atlanta Taskforce for the Homeless and sat there with me through my assessment. I didn't have an ID or birth certificate so the Taskforce placed me in a shelter until I was able to get the things I needed to be accepted into a Substance Abuse Program. I have never seen that lady again and I often wonder about her. She was an angel in disguise and I am forever grateful for her help. Finally, I was able to get treatment for my dual diagnoses and I live every day looking for ways to help others just like the person who chose to help me.

What is life like for you now?

I've been in recovery for quite some time now and I am living my best life. I would have never imagined my life turning around like this after making just one decision and that was choosing to live rather than die. I became a Certified Peer Specialist in June of 2018, and it changed my life for the good. I found out about the Forensic Peer Mentor Project and with my lived experience I was able to land the job of my dreams. After some time in the position I was promoted to the Director of the program and I couldn't be prouder. Every day I'm learning new things, and I am growing and stretching myself in ways I never imagined or thought possible.

What keeps you hopeful?

I see the face of the system slowly changing and that gives me hope. Now when I go into the Georgia Regional Hospitals, State Prisons and Day Reporting Centers I see counselors and officers who are recovery-oriented and educated. They are open to peer support and some are willing to walk with us on this journey of recovery. Although we have a ways to go in society towards reducing the stigma, we are much further along than we were just fifteen years ago, and that gives me a lot of hope. I can honestly say what a difference a day makes.

THE 5TH ANNUAL KEN WHIDDON MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

All skill levels are welcome at the Tournament, as are families, friends, peers, and allies. This is a great opportunity to experience the fellowship of the golfing community, and learn how golf can be a great and healthy addition to a wellness plan. Sponsorship opportunities are also available for organizations and individuals. Please visit the Tournament website below for more information or to register.

5th Annual Ken Whiddon Memorial Golf Tournament
To benefit the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network
Jekyll Island Golf Club
May 2, 2020, \$70 per person, (two-person teams)
www.kenwhiddonmemorial.com

*All are welcome!
Save the date!*

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E. Joseph Sanders, President Sharon Jenkins Tucker, Executive Director Chris Johnson, Pipeline Editor

New Address!



We are on the move!

The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network is planning to move its offices the last week of February 2020. Please update your records with our new mailing address in Tucker (above), and if you do not follow us on Facebook or receive our monthly email, please contact our office at 800-297-6146 before visiting or mailing us at our existing office in Decatur.

We look forward to seeing you in our new home soon!

A note from Sherry

Throughout my years as a behavioral health advocate, the language of behavioral health has been and continues to be constantly evolving. What is preferred one year may be questionable a few years later, and downright offensive a few years after that. It can get confusing, and even frustrating at times, particularly when we are acting with the best intent. But it is incumbent upon each of us, whether we are behavioral health professionals, allies, or people living with behavioral health concerns, to remain focused on our language, because words have power.

Over the course of the past few years, with the increasing deployment of surveillance technology, we have heard a lot about how we are now living in the novel *1984* by George Orwell, but it was not surveillance that was Big Brother's greatest weapon, it was language. When we talk about stigma, we are really talking about discrimination, and that begins with how we are described, both by ourselves and others: Which boxes appear on the forms we complete, which words our leaders choose to describe us, how we end the sentence that begins "I am a." Orwell wrote in *1984* that "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought." Language impacts how we think about ourselves.

At this spring's Certified Peer Specialist Continuing Education Forum in Macon, GMHCN will be introducing a new training we have developed called "Elevating Language." It is a deep dive into the language of behavioral health recovery, and how we can use it to improve our own wellness, reduce stigma and discrimination, and provide more compassionate and informed support to our neighbors and peers. If you are unable to join us in Macon, we hope you will join us for an Elevating Language webinar later this year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sherry", is located in the bottom right corner of the orange background.