

# RECOVERY AROUND THE SOUND

North Sound Mental Health  
Administration



January/February 2013



## Joe's Corner

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My wife and I recently had the opportunity to see the movie "Life of Pi" – a delightful, captivating, and profound movie richly deserving of the awards it received. Pi's determination to steer his little vessel and survive, in spite of the tiger and sharks, was inspiring. Maybe this is a tad too dramatic of a metaphor, but like Pi's vessel, those of us responsible for behavioral health services programs, may also feel that we are at the mercy of the seas and wild animals as we try and chart our way through health care reform, mental health systems reform, sequestration, leadership changes, etc. However, we can – and we should – be actively engaged in helping shape the future of behavioral health services to the vulnerable populations we are responsible for serving.

On February 14, the NSMHA Board of Directors, County Mental Health Coordinators, and NSMHA Leadership team spent a day doing just that. The Board examined in depth the critical challenges and uncertainties that NSMHA faces as a public mental health system. They went beyond just

discussing current challenges however, and tried to envision what a better integrated and more responsive regional mental health system would look like. At the end of the day, the Board re-affirmed the key goals and strategies that comprise the recently adopted 2013-2016 NSMHA Strategic Plan. They also identified some of the more specific areas they wanted us to focus on. These included:

- actively participating in health care integration initiatives;
- moving ahead with support for a Regional Health Alliance;
- expanding access to services

for the more geographically isolated areas and working families;

- engaging a wider array of other systems, such as hospitals, law enforcement, and EMS;
- increasing the number of trained Peer Specialists and better integrating them in service delivery models;
- moving ahead with a redesign of our Crisis Services Response system – including Children's Crisis Services;
- working with individual counties to better scale and adapt regional program models to the unique needs, size, and demographics of each county;
- continuing to look at ways of supporting Housing Support



(Continued from page 1)

Services; and,

- exploring opportunities for more creative collaborations with Tribal Behavioral Health Services programs.

Over the next several months, NSMHA staff and County Coordinators will be translating and prioritizing these areas of focus into specific action steps. A key to our success in moving ahead will be to reach out and actively engage provider agencies, other community systems, consumers, families and others who care about supporting the recovery of persons with mental illness.

**Get connected with a refurbished computer!**

**Interconnection.org**

**Interconnection is a non-profit that works to ensure anyone who needs a computer can have one, regardless of their skill level or economic resources.**

**<http://interconnection.org/low-cost-laptops.html>**

**(206) 633-1517**



## North Sound Regional Health Alliance

Jennifer Kingsley, Director, Skagit County Community Services

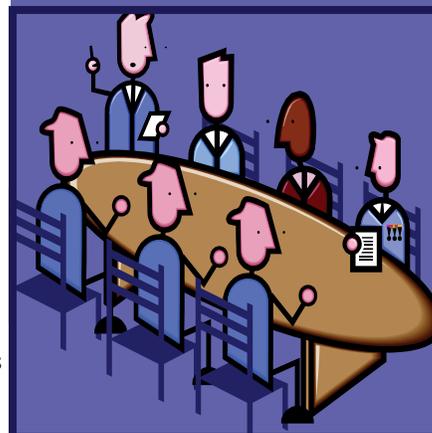
In November of last year, NSMHA joined with the 5 North Sound counties, the two regional Area Agencies on Aging, and other stakeholders to begin the formation of a “Regional Health Alliance”. Based on a model that has been successfully tried in Oregon, and is also being implemented in two other areas of Washington State, Regional Health Alliances seek to create locally accountable and integrated systems of care to both improve health outcomes and manage resources more effectively.

The North Sound Regional Health Alliance is focusing more specifically on developing a regional approach to identifying opportunities for improved care coordination between primary health care, behavioral health services, Long Term Care services, and other public systems that serve or come into contact with persons suffering from mental illness and/or chemical dependency.

The Regional Health Alliance Steering Committee has since been expanded to include the 3 county based health im-

provement initiatives from Whatcom, Snohomish, and Skagit counties, as well as a representative from county Public Health Directors and a representative of Community Mental Health Agencies. The Alliance is now zeroing in on one or two projects that can be used to build on and expand existing local health improvement initiatives that would demonstrate the value of regional coordination. This may include strategies to reduce unnecessary trips to Emergency Rooms and reducing the prolonged “boarding” of persons with mental illness in community hospitals.

As the Chair of the Regional Health Alliance, I know that the only way we can make significant improvements in our systems of care for our vulnerable and at-risk populations is to partner with the other systems and stakeholders who serve these populations. I look forward to creative and exciting community collaborations in improving our systems of care.



## Peer Support and Family Partners

By Margaret Rojas, NSMHA

In developing the NSMHA 2013-16 Strategic Plan, staff and stakeholders identified Peer Support and Consumer Initiatives as an important aspect of our system of care. For a number of years the North Sound has been at the forefront of bringing peers, family members and individuals with lived experience, into the regional planning process and onto various committees and workgroups with the ultimate goal of integrating Peer Support and Family Partners into the delivery of mental health services throughout the region.

The value added of having an individual with lived experience working with individuals struggling with mental illness is equivalent to an individual in chemical dependency recovery working to help individuals struggling with their illness to stay clean and sober. For Peers alike it is the sharing of their experience in coping with their illness, how they have managed their symptoms and their recovery that has a powerful impact on others.

Individuals with lived experience have empathy for what it's like to live with a mental illness; a family member can provide a toolbox of learned lessons in living with or raising a child with a serious emotional disturbance. We believe that their lived experience is a powerful intervention in helping individuals and families know they are not alone in their journey.

In the next three years, we intend to increase participation of families in regional planning of the children/youth mental health system of care and increase the number of peers and parent partners employed in the mental health delivery system.

To learn more about becoming a peer counselor please go to: [www.dshs.wa.gov/dbhr/mhpeer/shtml](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dbhr/mhpeer/shtml) or you may contact Bonnie Staples: [bonnie.staples@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:bonnie.staples@dshs.wa.gov) or 360-725-1833 / 1-888-713-6010.

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Respect  
=  
Inclusion

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Campaign**

[www.nsmha.org/  
dignity\\_respect/](http://www.nsmha.org/dignity_respect/)

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**Register Now!**

The Thirteenth Annual  
Tribal Mental Health Conference  
*“Canoe Journey ~ Life’s Journey”*

May 14 & 15 2013

Skagit Resort in Bow, WA

<http://nsmha.org/Tribal/Default.htm>

[TC2013@nsmha.org](mailto:TC2013@nsmha.org)

## Have Your Say! Children's Behavioral Health System

**HAVE YOUR SAY** in designing the North Sound's Children's Behavioral Health system! Your knowledge and suggestions will be used to help the North Sound Mental Health Administration develop a regional response to statewide children's mental health redesign initiatives. Your county Human Services Department will also use this information to better understand children's behavioral health strengths and needs in your community.

Our goals are to:

- Ensure that services and supports are child-centered, youth-guided, and family-driven.
- Identify opportunities for partnerships that enhance the availability and/or quality of community-based services.
- Develop a plan to improve cultural and linguistic competence.
- Support the dedicated individuals who work in behavioral health services and provide opportunities for professional development.

Please use the **CLICK HERE** links below to choose to **1) register to attend one of our community forums in person, or 2) participate via our online survey**.

However you choose, we appreciate your voice! North Sound Mental Health Administration, Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties

Please use the link below to:

**CLICK HERE** to register and attend a local forum

**CLICK HERE** to continue to the online survey

*Shaping the Future of Children's Behavioral Health  
Through Conversations that Matter*

HAVE  
YOUR  
SAY!

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**TWO WAYS TO PARTICIPATE!**



**1. Participate in person at a World Café!**

An invitation to Parents, Youth, Caregivers, Educators, Pastors, State and Community Providers

FIND YOUR COUNTY FORUM!

Skagit: March 29th, 10AM-2PM  
San Juan: May 10th, 9AM-1PM  
E. Snohomish: April 10th, 1PM-3PM  
W. Snohomish: April 12th, 1PM-3PM  
Island: April 16th, 10AM-2PM  
Whatcom: May 14th, 1PM-4PM



**2. Participate online with our HAVE YOUR SAY Survey!**

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/have\\_your\\_say\\_2013](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/have_your_say_2013)

[CLICK HERE](#)

OR

**Food Provided!**

Brought to you by the North Sound Mental Health Administration, Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties. For more information, please contact Julie de Losada at NSMHA @ 360.416.7013 or [julie\\_de\\_losada@nsmha.org](mailto:julie_de_losada@nsmha.org)