Consumer and Staff Conversations Summary

The Josiah H. Beeman Commission, in accordance with its mission to advise the Board of Supervisors on the future direction of the mental health services delivery system in Fairfax County, began assessing the current system of mental health services through initial visits to mental health settings during June 2007. Commission members conducted conversations with both consumers and staff members at a number of facilities, as well as with staff during a large multi-program session, all using a standard format.

- **Community Services Board: s**erves Fairfax-Falls Church residents with, or at risk of, severe and persistent mental illness or acute psychiatric emotional distress; mental retardation; or alcohol or drug abuse or dependency through programs on prevention, intervention, treatments, rehabilitation, residential, and other support services. The Community Services Board run locations that were visited during the Conversations were:
    - **Leland House:** provides short-term intervention and stabilization in a residential setting for children and youth ages 12-17 that are in behavioral or emotional crisis and unable to remain in their family home or current setting.
    - **Stevenson Place:** provides permanent housing and support to 36 adults with mental illness (assisted living facility).
    - **Residential Extensive Dual Diagnosis:** provides 24-hour highly intensive residential treatment to six adult females who have a history of severe and persistent mental illness and substance use disorder.
    - **Franconia Road Treatment Center:** provides 24-hour, highly intensive residential treatment services to 8 adult males with a history of severe and persistent mental illness and substance use disorders.
- **Consumer Wellness Center of Falls Church:** presents a relaxed atmosphere for consumers to meet and help one another move towards their recovery goals with an emphasis on consumer empowerment and education.
- **Juvenile Detention Center:** offers a variety of joint Alcohol and Drug and Mental Health services to youth involved in the Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court system, including assessment, education, and treatment.

It should be noted that feedback was also attained from Mental Health staff during a multi-program gathering due to the fact that there are numerous program sites, but there was only a particular amount of time to complete the conversations. Much feedback was obtained at this large gathering.

Through these visits, feedback was obtained from approximately forty county consumers, all from residential facilities with the exception of six individuals from the Consumer Wellness Center. Additionally, initial feedback was obtained from approximately seventy staff members currently working for Fairfax County. Consumers and staff members shared with the Commission their input on what works well and what needs improvement within their current program and throughout the county. The following open-ended questions developed by the Commission served to structure the conversations:

- What do you think works well about the Fairfax County mental health system?
- What does not work well about the system?
- What would you like to change about the system?
- What do you hear from others about how well services in the community are working for them?
- Are consumers (you, if asked to consumer) able to play a significant role in directing their own care? If not, how could they be more involved in their care?
- How well does the system respond to consumer (your, if asked to consumer) choices?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Positive examples of staff collaboration, program and staff quality, consumer-centered care, and use of the variety of county services were heard throughout the sessions. The primary conversation themes are outlined on the following pages.

Themes from Conversations with 40 CONSUMERS

EXPRESSED AREAS OF SATISFACTION

Participating consumers expressed satisfaction with:

Promoting Effectiveness

- Program Quality: content, applicability, recovery-focus
- Staff dedication and helpfulness
- Appreciation shown for system by consumers and families

Being Consumer-centered

- Consumer Empowerment-having a choice in activities, ability to volunteer and help others, and be part of decisions
- Staff helpfulness and compassion
- Responsiveness of system and staff

Providing Access

- Resources available to them

SUGGESTED AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Participating consumers suggested greater emphasis be placed on:

Promoting Effectiveness

- Modifying program content: applicability, flexibility in program structure, and number and range of outside activities
- Fostering consumer relations- getting along with others, task distribution
- Improving staff communication to consumers: ensuring information (on rules and treatment systems)is universally conveyed in a caring and consistent manner
- Adding community based programs (non residential)

Being Consumer-centered

- Creating more job and volunteer opportunities for consumers
- Cultivating a respectful relationship between psychiatrist and consumer
- Promoting wellness for consumers (nutrition and healthy living)
- Providing increased training for consumers on such topics as:
  - self-advocacy
  - navigating the county system
  - computer skills
  - medication management

Providing Access

- Providing transportation for consumers

Ensuring Safety

- Managing negative consumer behavior disruptive to recovery
- Improving the physical conditions of facilities and the location of residential facilities

Providing Transparency

- Providing education to consumers and families on diagnosis, medication, the Medicaid application process, and consumer rights

Ensuring Timeliness

- Accelerating the process to get into programs

Themes from Conversations with 70 STAFF

EXPRESSED AREAS OF SATISFACTION

Participating staff expressed satisfaction with:

Promoting Effectiveness

- Variety and range of services and resources offered
- Success stories shared by alumni and families
- Quality, competency, and dedication of staff
- Family involvement and effectiveness of therapy

Supporting Staff

- Internship program (quality of interns, potential for future staff)

Being Consumer-centered

- Involvement of consumers and families in treatment and goal setting

Promoting Collaboration & Coordination

- Integrated systems approach
- Collaboration of staff
- Crisis management and problem solving

SUGGESTED AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Participating staff suggested greater emphasis be placed on:

Providing Access

- Accelerating the process for housing and program admittance
- Increasing the transportation options for consumers
- Increasing number of available psychiatrists
- Enhancing the referral process to ensure continuity of care
- Reaching out to culturally diverse populations
- Educating and assisting consumers on insurance/benefits Issues

Ensuring Efficiency

- Developing clear work flow processes
- Improving the information technology system and support
- Clarifying staff responsibilities: counselors, therapists, and administrative staff
- Reducing the amount of paperwork

Promoting Collaboration & Coordination

- Promoting collaboration and partnerships within the Community Service Board (CSB), other county agencies, and with outside organizations
- Establishing partnerships with relevant government agencies to improve benefits processing: Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Medicare
- Evaluating the shared care coordination process

Supporting Staff

- Addressing organizational staffing needs (administrative, medical staff)
- Training and developing staff
- Ensuring adequate support and follow-up to utilize training
- Assessing the staff performance evaluation system
- Ensuring staff wellness- (burnout prevention and time management)

Ensuring Strong Leadership

- Establishing and cultivating organizational priorities
- Providing leadership training
- Gathering staff input and promoting involvement in decision-making
- Evaluating the leadership structure
- Establishing a process for staff feedback on leadership performance

Promoting Effectiveness

- Enhancing program quality (applicability, recidivism, and range and availability of outside activities)

	• Expanding services to include more day treatment and step down programs • Promoting consumer follow up (interviews and surveys) • Expanding the recovery model
Being Consumer-centered	• Empowering consumers through skills development (computers) • Promoting respect for Consumers
Ensuring Safety	• Assessing the physical conditions of facilities and vehicles • Supporting safe and appropriate consumer behavior • Assessing safety of program locations
Providing Transparency	• Educating consumers, families, and staff on programs and processes • Increasing availability of information to culturally diverse communities
Supporting Free Flow of Information	• Improving the communication between leadership and staff – response time, information sharing
Ensuring Timeliness	• Improving intra-agency responsiveness