

**S.C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION  
S.C. Department of Mental Health**

**Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center  
1135 Gregg Highway  
Aiken, SC 29801  
803-641-7700**

**December 2, 2010  
Center Presentation**

**Attendance:**

**Commission Members**

Alison Y. Evans, PsyD, Chair  
Jane B. Jones  
Everard Rutledge, PhD (absent)

Joan Moore, Vice Chair  
J. Buxton Terry

**Staff/Guests:**

John H. Magill  
Cynthia Smith  
Mark Binkley

Rick Acton  
Geoff Mason

Tamara Smith  
Brenda Hart

The S.C. Mental Health Commission met at the Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center, 1135 Gregg Highway, Aiken, SC, on Thursday, December 2, 2010. The center presentation was called to order by Alison Y. Evans, PsyD, Chair at 9:15 a.m. Dr. Evans welcomed everyone to the meeting and turned the program over to Rick Acton, Interim Executive Director of Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center. Mr. Acton said that when he was told that the Commission would be visiting Aiken-Barnwell, he was asked to highlight or spotlight a program that the center is especially proud of. He said that he didn't have to think twice about an outstanding program at Aiken-Barnwell. The presentation would be about Peer Support Services. Mr. Acton said that Aiken-Barnwell has the premier Peer Support Services program in the Southeast. He said further that the program is headed up by Ms. Tamara Smith, who would provide an overview of the Peer Support program.

Ms. Smith said that the center began hiring consumers in supportive roles under Welcome Home federal block grant in 2001. The Peer Support Services (PSS) program began in May 2004; however, billing for Medicaid began in February 2005 when the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) approved this service.

Peer Support Services in October 2007 received the Eli Lilly "Heroes In the Fight" Award for new program of the year in South Carolina, and a Department of Health and Human Services Audit in 2006 noted that Aiken-Barnwell's Peer Support Program to be one of excellence and high quality. Also in October 2007, the Helping Encourage Recovery Options (HERO) Center was established. This center is based on shared decision making and is a person-centered clinical method that encourages clients and clinicians to collaborate on treatment decisions. The Hero Center encourages recovery options. It is a way that the center invests in the clients and the clients can give back to the center. Ms. Smith said that for 2008 – 2010, Medicaid billing for Peer Support Services totaled \$328,841.

Ms. Tamara Smith next introduced Ms. Cindy Smith, who is a Certified Peer Support Specialist that was hired by the center in December 2005. Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) are clients that have been in the Peer Support Program and now provide guidance to the clients who enter the program. Clients finally have a say in their treatment. Clients learn there is more they

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can do besides what DMH has for them. Peer Support encourages clients to live separately. Ms. Smith explained the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). WRAP is a system for monitoring, reducing and eliminating uncomfortable or dangerous physical and emotional difficulties. It is also a way for the client to write down and remember simple and safe strategies that have the potential to create major life changes and help them to stay in recovery. It essentially enables them to identify the triggers that “set them off”.

Another more legal aspect of WRAP is the psychiatric advance directives. This allows a client to have some say in what treatment works well for them in a crisis or when they are admitted to a hospital’s emergency room.

Ms. Smith next explained the Transitions Group. The transitions group helps clients progress from an inpatient setting to living independently in the community. This can be quite scary when a person has been dependent on someone else for some time. This group helps the client with independent living skills and coping skills needed in the community.

The Commission next heard testimonies by several clients on their recovery and their praise of Peer Support Services and the Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center. At the conclusion of the testimonies, Dr. Evans explained that at Christmas, she bakes cakes as gifts for staff and family. She had an extra cake available today which she was going to raffle to a lucky person.

There being no further business, the center presentation concluded at 10:00 a.m.

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Alison Y. Evans, PsyD, Chair

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Connie Mancari, Recording Secretary