

Multi-faceted Grassroots Efforts to Bring About Meaningful Change to Alaska's Mental Health Program

NARPA 2005
Reclaiming Freedom: A Call to Action
Jim Gottstein

Goals

- Substantially Increase Recovery Rate from diagnosis of Serious Mental Illness
- Substantially Reduce If Not Eliminate Force
- System Support of People's Non-Medication Choices
 - (In favor of non-system alternatives, but need to change system)

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Recovery – JG Definition

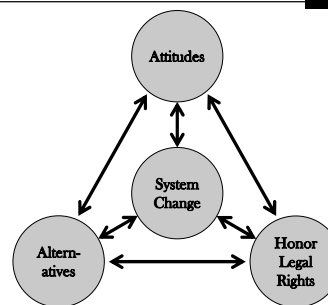
Getting past a diagnosis of mental illness to a point where a person enjoys meaningful activity, has relationships, and where psychiatric symptoms, if any, do not dominate or even play a major role in their life.

Recovery: Responsibilities and Roadblocks, by Jim Gottstein,
<http://akmhweb.org/recovery/RecoveryResponsibilitiesRoadblocks.pdf>

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Elements of Efforts



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Alaska Attributes

- Small Population = Easier Access to Policy Makers
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (Trust) Unique
 - Committed to Innovation
 - Has Some Money
- Consumers Consortium
- Ionia

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Attitude (in Alaska)

- Widespread(?) Acceptance People Should Have Non-Drug Choices.
 - "Ten years ago, there was no way you would get anyone on the medical staff of that hospital to even understand what Jim is talking about," Jesse said. "Now the issue is how will we get there." Anchorage Daily News 11-6-2005

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Efforts to Change Attitudes

- Constant Pounding on Policymakers
- Brought Bob Whitaker up in 2002
- Brought Bob Whitaker and Michael Perlin up in 2003 for Seminar on Mental Health Disability Law
- Number of newspaper articles
- Public Forums
- Litigation

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The Four Non-Profits

- Soteria-Alaska—Alternative to Hospitalization
- CHOICES, Inc.—Choice in the Community
- Peer Properties—Peer Run Housing
- Law Project for Psychiatric Rights (PsychRights)—Create Atmosphere Conducive to Non-Coercive, Non-Drug Choices

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Soteria-Alaska

- Non-coercive, non-drug option for people who would otherwise be facing hospitalization.
- Trust (and perhaps State to a lesser extent) is beginning to buy into
 - \$7,500 for planning just awarded
 - \$2,500 to attend INTAR in Ireland
 - Discussions Regarding Hiring Project Manager
 - Likely at Least 1.5 Years Out
- Trying to Replicate Original Soteria-House Model
 - 6-8 People
 - Two staff at all times.
 - 48 hour shifts

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Consumers
Having
Ownership
In
Creating
Effective
Services

- “Consumer” Run
- Non-coercive, Non-drug Choices In Community
 - Helping People Get What they Want
 - Type of Program(s) Described in Ch. 9 of “Community Mental Health: A Practical Guide” (Mosher & Burti)
 - “Pass-Through” to Other Consumer Run programs
- Working with Community Mental Health Center
- Human Resources Challenges
- Unsuccessful so far in Operating Grant Applications
- Number of pass-throughs

Peer Properties

- Peer Run Housing
- Allows Non-drug Choice
- No “services,” but peer support principle
- One 4 bedroom House Owned & Operated
- 11 Unit Grant/Low Income Housing Tax Credit Construction Project Recently Abandoned
 - Too Expensive to Operate?
 - Too Complicated Financing?
 - Too Little Organizational Capacity?

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PsychRights

- Encouraging Receptive Climate (Path of Least Resistance)
- *Myers*
- *Wetherhorn*
- "Report" on AkPA Agenda
- Meeting with Public Defender
- Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API)

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Litigation Can/Will Be Escalated As Necessary

- Attorney Ethics Complaints
- §1983 Civil Rights Case
- Informed Consent Complaint Drafted
- Prison Case Ready
- Appeals

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Overall Assessment

- Agenda on Table
- Something Going on Housing
- Reasonable Prospects for Soteria & CHOICES
- Need Qualified Personnel
- Litigation Is Wild Card

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Discussion