

# **Mental Health Diverse Populations Strategy**

*To Achieve...*

## ***Improved Mental Health through provision of culturally relevant services by culturally competent staff.***

The Committee's three goals are:

- (1) to create a culturally competent Mental Health System;
- (2) to improve access to Mental Health Care for diverse populations;
- (3) to provide culturally relevant Mental Health Services.

A Mental Health Diversity & Inclusion Committee has been working since 2005. The Healthy Minds Initiative supported a strategy to improve connection and access of diverse communities to mental health services. We have learned, planned and worked together. We have provided energy and leadership within the mental Health program and we have contributed to developing District wide changes. The following actions are a result of some of our work.

### **Actions 2005 - 2009**

1. **Interpreter Services Information Session** – a presentation was given to all Mental Health Managers on the services available within the Capital District. *(January, 2006)*
2. **Information and Environments that support Diversity & Inclusion** – Community Mental Health Services were supported in creating welcoming environments through pictures and information. Cobequid Mental Health was one such area completed. Efforts were also made to locate Mental Health Information in different languages.
3. **Mental Health Orientation Sessions** – for all new employees to the Mental (MH) program. Members of the MH Diversity Committee developed a facilitator guide, power point presentation, and resource materials. Regular orientation sessions are provided. *(ongoing since September, 2006)* Those involved plan to become a part of the diversity training team.
4. **MISA outreach pilot project** –this project provides timely, culturally sensitive, patient-centered treatment to refugees experiencing psychiatric illness. The approach is flexible and tailored to the individual's needs with a team of a social worker and a psychiatrist providing rapid access to the system and accurate diagnoses through the use of trained cultural health interpreters to facilitate the therapeutic intervention. The response has been overwhelming. *(ongoing since September, 2006)*
5. **PSR Training Session** – information on Diversity and Inclusion relating to patient recovery was provided to clinical staff trained in psycho-social rehabilitation as part of a one day workshop. Diversity Committee members provided consultation to the curriculum development of PSR online Professional Development Program. *(2007)*
6. **Academic Day 2007** – Seven presenters spoke to diversity within mental health covering the areas of: race, role of culture, cultural competence, Aboriginal, Immigrant, and African Nova Scotian population specific considerations. *(April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007)*
7. **Taking PRIDE in Mental Health** – was a response to a community group request for support and information about the mental health program. A community mental health nurse now liaises with the community group and provides education and outreach as required. A workshop was developed and delivered to front line staff to raise awareness

regarding 'Improving Safe Access to health care' for people considering the challenges faced by the Rainbow community. (May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008)

8. **Diversity Challenge** - Funding was received for 2007 from the Mental Health Foundation for services of the Mental Health Program to create and implement one initiative that positively impacts "diversity" in their areas. Services proposed an initiative and received a stipend from the grant to implement their idea. At the completion of the project a 'Diversity Celebration Luncheon' was held with service and community representatives where the 10 initiatives were presented and honored.
9. **Business Proposal** – A proposal was submitted to the CDHA Mental Health Program for dedicated resources to support connections with our diverse communities. The business case is requesting resources for dedicated clinical positions and community liaison positions to provide primary mental health care to specific populations. These resources would support partnerships with culturally diverse groups to establish mutual education opportunities, facilitate the provision of mental health services and supports that are culturally responsive. This proposal was reviewed by community leaders and is now in the process of being redeveloped.
10. **Employment Equity** – Members of the MH Diversity Committee have been very active in initiating dialogue within CDHA regarding employment equity. We have been connecting with People Services, Public Health, Social Action Committee of Social Work Department, and Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator to raise awareness and seek opportunities to work with the Human Rights Commission. Having a diverse workforce is critical to the provision of culturally competent and responsive Mental Health Services.

The Mental Health Diversity Steering Committee has been directing its efforts towards: awareness raising, advocacy re: employment equity, and development of a grant proposal for focused resources. We joined Addictions Services on Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009 for an education & planning session.

*For information on mental health visit the website: [OurHealthyMinds.com](http://OurHealthyMinds.com)*