

Press Release

For Immediate Release

People with Psychiatric Diagnoses Attest: SAMHSA Mental Health Programs Save Lives

WASHINGTON (5/22/13) – Today, as a Congressional Subcommittee holds a hearing on the effectiveness of federal grant programs for mental health services, the National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery ([NCMHR](#)), a coalition of 32 statewide organizations representing individuals with mental health conditions, reports that these programs are saving the lives of people with the most serious of mental health challenges and helping them recover.

“SAMHSA has supported hope and recovery through evidence-based recovery-focused services, treatments and supports that work for people with severe mental health conditions,” said Daniel B. Fisher, M.D., Ph.D., a National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery board member and a person who himself recovered from schizophrenia.

People with lived experience of mental health challenges have not been invited to speak at any of the mental health hearings called by House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chair Tim Murphy (R-PA), including today’s hearing, entitled “SAMHSA’s Role in Delivering Services to the Severely Mentally Ill.”

“As a national organization comprising people who both use these services and deliver such services to others, NCMHR attests that SAMHSA’s competitive grant programs are bringing lifesaving services to children and adults in thousands of American communities,” said NCMHR director Lauren Spiro. “These services reach out to the people who are most isolated and provide hope and connection with others, as well as helping them access the community-based services and supports that they need. With such help, people with even the most severe mental health conditions are rebuilding their lives by becoming engaged in their community and entering or re-entering the workforce, which often results in the reduction of use of costly services.”

One of the SAMHSA-funded initiatives that have made an enormous difference in the lives of people diagnosed with serious mental health issues is the “Alternatives” conference. For over two decades, this annual conference has brought together thousands of people with mental health issues to learn and share skills relating to recovery, advocacy, peer support services, holistic wellness practices, and creative expression. The conference attracts expert speakers from around the world presenting innovative, cutting-edge programs and practices. “Nowhere else but Alternatives are such important skills taught on such a large-scale basis,” said Dr. Fisher.

Besides vitally important knowledge and skills, the Alternatives conference and other SAMHSA-funded initiatives offer hope to those who most need it.

“At the age of 19 I was placed on disability and told of all the limitations my life held due to my diagnosis with a serious mental illness,” said Amy Pierce, president of Texas Catalyst for Empowerment. “Today I am a taxpaying citizen, a valued employee and, most recently, a new homeowner. This was all made possible because people shared with me their vision of recovery and that my diagnosis did not limit my life. I no longer take from the system. I contribute to society not only from the taxes I pay, but the service work I do.”

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