

**RACINE COUNTY
HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE/HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING
July 13, 2015
Ives Grove Office Complex - Auditorium
14200 Washington Avenue
Sturtevant, WI 53177**

Present: David J. Cooke, Mike Dawson, Robert N. Miller, Brett Nielsen,
Monte G. Osterman, Donnie Snow

Youth in Governance Representatives: Meredith Freidheim

Excused: Elizabeth Falk, Luanne Simpson, Emma Stock

Staff Present: Gina Anderson, Claribel Camacho, Jonathan Delagrave, Liam Doherty,
Michelle Goggins, Kerry Milkie, Mark Mundl, Hope Otto, Anita Seils,
Sarah Street

Others Present: Bob Bagley, Racine Interfaith Coalition 11x15 Taskforce
Patrick Bohon, NAMI-Racine
Mike Boticki, NAMI-Racine
Dr. Michael Browne, Racine Friendship Clubhouse
David Corey, Racine Interfaith Coalition 11x15 Taskforce
Elisavet DeLuna, Racine Friendship Clubhouse
Tamerin Hayward, Racine Interfaith Coalition
Marsha Lubecke, Racine Friendship Clubhouse
Cherie Lyford, Racine Friendship Clubhouse
Detrick (Dee Dee) Morris, Racine Friendship Clubhouse
Samantha Olivares, Racine Friendship Clubhouse
Charles Pfof, Racine Interfaith Coalition
Lynelle Saunders, Racine Friendship Clubhouse
Margie Webb, Racine Friendship Clubhouse

Call to Order

Chairman Cooke called to order the Public Hearing at 5:00 p.m.

Public Comments

Chairman Cooke read the Notice for Public Comment Period and the Youth in Governance statement.

Bob Bagley – Racine Interfaith Coalition (RIC)

I'm Bob Bagley of beautiful Racine, Wisconsin and I also Co-chair the Racine Interfaith Coalition 11x15 Committee.

I'm here today to encourage you to invest in our county by increasing access to the Racine County Alcohol and Drug Treatment Court for county residents who have been convicted of an offense that has an underlying drug or alcohol component.

We are very supportive of Judge Petak and our local drug court team. They have labored long and hard to maintain this life saving resource in our community. We've produced a video showing that

our local alcohol and drug court is a vital part of our criminal justice system. But tonight we're advocating and saying that drug court needs to be supported and greatly expanded.

We've had a drug court in Racine County for the past eight years, but until recently it has been underfunded. Last year the Racine Journal Times published a short article saying that in those eight years forty-seven folks had graduated from drug court. Now that's forty-seven lives that are transformed in the past eight years. But the sad truth is that each year over five hundred folks, actually it's more than five hundred, who have served time in our prison system return to Racine County. That's right, they serve their time and they come home, here.

Back in 2012 the Department of Corrections reported that thirty-five percent of the prisoners in the system had not committed a violent offense and the highest charge for ten percent of prisoners was a drug charge. Many of the remaining twenty-five percent had an underlying addiction issue that contributed to their incarceration, now they're back and in many cases have not had that addiction issue addressed while in prison. Sadly, untreated many will reoffend, get arrested, spend time in our county jail and our county court system and be resentenced to prison. What if they'd gotten a second chance before we locked them up at a cost of \$32,000 per year to state taxpayers?

In January it was announced that Racine County had received a grant for \$123,000 for drug screening, case management, and evaluation, that's great. Yesterday's Journal Times stated that the number of people the drug court can serve has been increased from thirty-five to fifty. But what if Racine County invested in itself and added to the state dollars. How many more lives could be saved? How many more neighbors, how many more relatives could get a new start?

Again, the Journal Times yesterday had its lead article on the front page the fact that heroin overdoses, as measured by NARCAN use in first responder rescue calls, today already this time of year exceed those of all 2014.

No other program is as successful as drug court in reducing recidivism. For every dollar invested in drug court two dollars are saved. We're asking this committee recommend that the county match the state grant of \$123,000 and that amount of money be set aside for drug court purposes. Increasing drug court participation saves money and it saves lives. Thank you.

David Corey – Racine Interfaith Coalition 11x15 Taskforce

I'm here speaking on the same issue, that investment in Drug Court and Veterans Court saves taxpayer money and it saves lives. It's a wise investment for Racine County residents.

Patrick Bohon – NAMI-Racine

Members of the committee I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the current status of mental health services in Racine County and the priorities of NAMI-Racine County regarding the 2016 HSD proposed budget.

The environment has never been more favorable to accelerate progress toward the goal of all Racine County residents living with mental illness achieving the best quality of life possible. Here are three examples:

- NAMI-Racine commends County Executive Delagrave for his consistent public statements in support of continued expansion of necessary recovery-focused mental health services.
- The comprehensive county wide collaborative efforts to integrate and target all relevant community resources toward improving children's mental health services is another example of recent progress.
- Training of law enforcement personnel thru the CIT program combined with innovative mobile multi-disciplinary approaches to crisis intervention in the community often represent the most humane and cost effective approach to crisis situations. This is another example of recent progress that requires continued emphasis and expansion.

While NAMI of Racine is pleased with these and other initiatives, there is more to be done. Since the inception of NAMI-Racine County over 35 years ago, there has been a shift from reactive institution-based care and treatment to the more enlightened era of today with a focus on education, early intervention and recovery. A significant expansion of the Comprehensive Community Services model (CCS) planned for 2016 will move us closer to the goal of all people recovering from mental illness receiving the right treatment and supports at the right time tailored to their specific needs.

As CCS expands, NAMI-Racine County urges that there be a special emphasis on supporting employment opportunities, life skills enhancement and full utilization of peer specialists. These elements, among many others, will be critical to the long-term success of CCS in Racine County.

While CCS expands, it is also imperative that investments in our current mental health system infrastructure for counseling, clinical services, the community support program and other vital services, like those offered by Racine Friendship Clubhouse, remain a priority. A continued commitment to adequate funding and staffing for the Behavioral Health Clinic so effective services are available in a timely manner is also a critical objective for 2016.

The challenge of people living with mental illness entering or returning to the jail/prison system requires our full attention. National studies have indicated that nearly 25% of jail inmates are experiencing a serious mental illness. NAMI-Racine urges continued active collaboration from all stakeholders affected to implement treatment, diversion and discharge planning services that will eliminate unnecessary incarceration of people living with untreated mental illness.

In conclusion, there has been much progress in moving us closer to the goal of supporting all Racine County residents recovering from mental illness as they aspire to reach their full potential. There is still, however, work to do to fully implement promising new initiatives while maintaining commitments to existing services with a proven record of success. NAMI-Racine continues to welcome the opportunity to share the perspective of people recovering from mental illness and their families and friends, as we strive toward a state-of-the-art mental health system in Racine County. We look forward continuing to walk this path together. Thank you.

Marsha Lubecke – Racine Friendship Clubhouse

I'm here for the Racine Friendship Clubhouse and I thank you very much for your considerations and funding us in the past. I have benefited greatly from the clubhouse. I have experienced jail time and hospitalization. I feel the clubhouse has helped me maintain a stable persona and I ask that you consider us further into the 2016 budget.

Dee Dee Morris – Racine Friendship Clubhouse

I'd like to say by attending the clubhouse I have gained confidence in myself, which I love, it's an extraordinary place. I have the opportunity to speak my mind and learn new things all the time. When I leave my house and come to the clubhouse it helps me not only mentally, but physically, and emotionally as well. It keeps my mind busy with everything they have to offer. I don't know what I'd do without it. I love it and it's great for me, my mind, and my soul. Thank you.

Lynelle Saunders – Racine Friendship Clubhouse

I'm here representing Racine Friendship Clubhouse. I want to thank you for funding us. I want to let you know we are doing what we're supposed to be doing. We continue to enhance and upgrade our program as our members and our community needs it. We're being good stewards with the money you've entrusted with us and I just want you to know that. We're available to come and speak any time.

Elizabeth DeLuna – Racine Friendship Clubhouse

Racine Friendship Club is more than just going there to have lunch it's more like learning how to socialize and meet new people. I've come to believe they've been more than just friends it's more like a family to me there. I was going to Kismet Club, I don't know if you've heard of it but they were closed down because of budget cuts and for awhile I was only going to the Kismet. Now that I've gotten the opportunity to go to the Friendship Club, I really love it, I'm forty and I get a chance to run

around, play kickball, throw footballs, play kickball, and work in the garden. I really enjoy myself there. Some people actually don't have places to go. A lot of people live in group homes where they wouldn't have anyplace to go if it weren't for the Racine Friendship Club. At Kismet we had people come for a while, now they go to a church called the Phoenix Club but I'm representing the Racine Friendship Club.

Charles Pfost – Racine Interfaith Coalition

We have a Drug Court here in Racine and here are the facts, it's not being used and it should be used. It saves money and it saves lives. I'm not going to bring up any facts or anything I'm going to bring up a name, Matthew Christopherson. I was in prison with him and wanted to look for him and he never got in drug treatment. When I Googled him I found his obituary and he's from Racine. I could give you five more examples of that from Wisconsin, but that one is from Racine specifically. The thing is Drug Court's not being used enough, if it saves peoples' lives and if it saves money use it.

Also, if you can't get beyond just thinking about the drug addict, think about their parents, their brothers and sisters, their sons and daughters, their wives, and their girlfriends. That should be used we have it, please back it up and support it. Thank you very much.

Dr. Michael Browne – Racine Friendship Clubhouse

Good evening my name is Dr. Brown I'm a retired cognitive behavior therapist, currently a member and a volunteer at the Racine Friendship Club. Witnessing first hand the incredible work the Friendship Club has to offer this community is absolutely astounding. I first came to volunteer at the club to offer my expertise as a guest speaker and a group leader for the mentally ill. However, upon my first week there I noticed it was not just a club to hang out. If you suffer mental illness you need something more. It was much, much more; instead it was a warm and inviting atmosphere that welcomes people just to be safe and to be themselves as you've heard hear tonight. Without regard to the way they may look or the way they may behave in public or in private. A place that is filled with a talented staff that has one goal in mind, to help to advocate and empower adults living with mental illness so they continue life's journey to become an active and meaningful part of our culture and our community.

Activities on the monthly calendar are filled with promoting skill and confidence building. Job seeking workshops, dressing for interviews, and learning real skills for real life situations are weekly events. Our members learn planning and executing skills that they can use in businesses locally, so it helps the local economy as well. For example someone has to account for the lunch monies collected and book keeping skills. They learn to be accountable for deposits and other banking skills. In our culinary department the skill level is proper use of equipment, food handling, and serving using portion control, as well as proper sanitation.

This is a working club that works. Why, in order for the members to be productive in their own lives they must also be productive and want to be a successful part of the business community here in Racine and that works, both for the employers and the community.

All of the wonders of the Friendship Club do cost real money; yes real dollars of which the majority of those dollars go right back into the community that supports us. Funding such a magnitude is a daunting task that our executive director, Lynelle Saunders, reminds us that every single dollar counts toward our mission for the mentally ill in our own community. Therefore I beseech each and every single one of you here tonight to contemplate voting for allocations directed toward the Friendship Club and allow this reality to continue its fine work. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

The public hearing session closed at 5:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly R. Bartel, Recorder