

Mental Health Forum

Minot, ND

March 25, 2013

A community forum was held in Minot, ND on March 25 from 6:30-8:30p.m. to obtain information about mental health issues in the area. The forum was held at the suggestion of the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Advisory Council, associated with the Protection & Advocacy Project.

A list of topics, including issues related to the flood, were addressed as well as allowing time for the participants to cover issues of their choosing.

Invitations were sent to persons via e-mail listings, postings on the internet by organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities, and contacts by Protection and Advocacy staff. Persons attending the Mental Health First Aid training, sponsored by Protection & Advocacy, on March 25 & 26, 2013 in Minot were also invited to the Forum.

Persons attending the forum included peer mentors, individuals with mental illness, family members of children with mental illness, and professionals, including persons serving veterans. Twelve persons attended the forum. Persons attending were open to sharing information and appreciated the opportunity to provide input. Here are notes about what they had to say...

Mental Health Services in the Minot area

There is a lack of mental health professionals in the area.

When a family lives between Minot and Bismarck they get some services from Minot and half in Bismarck, and there is a huge disconnect with the providers.

There are conflicting diagnoses from different doctors.

It is very difficult for a child with some disabilities to sit in a waiting room for 45 minutes at a clinic. Some staff doesn't understand this.

One psychiatrist serves the Minot, Williston community and up towards the Bottineau community.

Mental Health Services / In-patient needs

There is a lack of pediatric beds in the hospital for psychiatric care.

There is a shortage of respite and crisis beds.

There are only 12 adult beds.

Minot and Williston together have only 8 beds for children at the hospital.

Residential facilities are not following through when discharging a child.

Families have to drive 3½ hours to Grand Forks to the hospital.

When Grand Forks is filled, people are going inpatient in Canada or Minnesota hospitals.

There have been some persons in Dickinson with mental health needs that have been held in the jail due to a lack of crisis beds.

Rural Services

There are no mental health services provided in many rural areas.

For rural areas that do have some mental health services, there is a lack of staff to meet needs of the community, and services are not comprehensive.

Assessment is needed to determine what services are needed in rural communities.

Coverage for cost of care for mental health services

There are insurance gaps.

Families can't afford to pay for medications.

Parents have to quit their jobs to care for their child's needs so they qualify for services for their child.

A child that had multiple surgeries couldn't get Medicaid since the child doesn't have a developmental disability.

Disability Awareness

Professionals sometimes blame parents, indicating that the disability of their child is a parenting problem even though the child has a diagnosis.

Medical professionals don't understand mental health.

Professionals don't understand that some people can't handle it when someone touches them. Persons have to tell the doctor every time that you don't want the doctor to touch you.

Medical providers think that the parents are overreacting, like the parents don't know their child.

Educational Issues

Schools will do 504 plans for some disabilities, but not for other disabilities.

Schools and Souris Valley Special Services interpretation of the laws are not the same as what the law says.

Schools are not consistent with their interpretation of the law from one school district to the next school district.

Residential programs don't interpret the education law consistently either.

Transition Services

Once a person turns 21, they are left to fend for themselves as services cease to exist.

Transition is scary for parents.

Should a child drive if they understand cognitively how to drive, but aren't emotionally mature enough to drive.

Mental Health Services/Additional Comments

If a child didn't qualify for DD services, they wouldn't have the supports that they have.

Not sure what the scope of the partnership project is.

Some parents can do their own wrap around.

Flood issues/Minot Community

Persons are afraid to rebuild their house. They see the school in their same neighborhood that was demolished, rather than being rebuilt. They then question how safe is it then to rebuild their home.

Anxiety is high for people, related to flooding issues.

People may be moving back into their homes, but their neighbors may not be coming back.

When they move back, the flood is a reminder every day because neighbors haven't repaired their homes.

Persons feel helpless because other people don't know what to do.

Renters can't afford the apartments being built.

It has been hard on people that didn't flood. They've felt helpless and had trouble accessing services during the flood.

Minot had an anhydrous spill in 2002 which affected a lot of people, and then the flood.

Flood Issues / PTSD

PTSD is affecting people, such as when the street lights are not working yet. This reminds people of a war zone.

People will have anxiety and PTSD when Minot starts using the sirens in the summertime.

Some people won't drive down certain streets in Minot because their child is fearful that it will flood, as the area was flooded during the flood.

People are afraid of persons in uniform because the National Guard was here helping during the flood and it was scary.

Flood Issues/FEMA

FEMA doesn't understand accommodations.

FEMA trailers had flashing lights by the smoke detectors. This works well for persons with visual disabilities. Accommodations are needed for persons with sensory issues.

FEMA does not understand accommodations needed for persons with disabilities, and specifically for persons with mental illness or physical disabilities.

Flood Issues/Other Communities

Devils Lake has flooding every year. Persons there didn't get the help that persons in Minot received. These persons can't sell their land or afford to move. There is hopelessness regarding the issue of flooding there. Persons have loans that they are paying on for properties that they can't even live on.

Fargo is looking at needing 1½ million sandbags this spring.

Flood Issues/Persons with Mental Health and Physical Disabilities

Individuals with mental and physical disability were displaced in the high school gym.

Individuals did not have medication when displaced.

Individuals had chronic needs.

There should be a way to let everyone know that the Village Family Services is providing free therapy for people affected by the flood.