What’s New at MHA?

Check out this latest edition of the Update to find out more about our new and continued programs, including our upcoming E-Racing the Blues, happening October 12th, our Peer Support Education trainings, and our new Peer Internship Program that we will be developing over the coming months!

Also inside, check out our next conference, the 18th annual Community Mental Health Conference, focused on the Mental Health System “Through the Ages,” and information on this year’s Depression Screening Day, coming up on October 10th (and throughout the month of October.)

Finally, our schedule of wellness groups is provided, including our groups to support those with depression, anxiety, those grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide, and those facing homelessness.

Thank you to all of our supporters, who have given time and/or resources, including our active Board of Directors, our hardworking staff, and the many individuals who have been supportive to our mission of advocacy, education and support for a mentally healthier MHA Delaware worked in conjunction with the Delaware Suicide Prevention Coalition to present this year’s Military and Veteran’s Mental Health Summit, which was held on September 10th at Dover Downs. Over 350 people (Veterans, active military members, clinicians, nurses, family members, etc.) were there to learn more about the various behavioral health issues among the military community. The Lieutenant Governor, Bethany Hall-Long, presented a proclamation from Governor Carney in honor of World Suicide Prevention Day.
Join us after the walk for food, prize drawings, donut decorating, balloon twisting and face painting.
$20 Adults ($25 Day of the event)  
Free for children under 12

Register online at www.eracingtheblues.org.  
(We can only accept cash or check payment on the day of registration.)
The Mental Health Benefits of Diet and Exercise

Mental health disorders are real illnesses, and like any other illness, they often require treatment. Also like other illnesses, living a healthy lifestyle can make them much easier to manage, and lower the risk. There is significant research that links regular exercise to better mental health outcomes.

Aerobic exercise such as running, walking, dancing and gardening have been shown to reduce symptoms of both anxiety and depression. This may be because of increased blood circulation to the brain which improves cognitive function, increases in endorphins that boost your mood, distraction from negative thoughts and feelings, increases in feelings of accomplishment and ability, and social interaction. Whatever the reason, one of the plethora of benefits of exercising is that it supports our mental health. Interestingly, adherence to exercise routines prescribed to psychiatric patients appears to be the same as that of the general population.

Exercise is especially important to patients who find that they are vulnerable to weight gain due to side effects of psychiatric medication, as well as to those who find that their illness makes it difficult to sleep, which can then exacerbate the illness. Exercise improves sleep and increases mental alertness and energy, in addition to relieving stress and helping with weight management. Recent studies show that these benefits do not have to come from daily long episodes of exercise—three ten-minute walks are believed to be just as useful as one thirty-minute walk, and three times a week is sufficient to reap health benefits.

Nutrition is also closely linked with our mental health. Some nutrients that have been associated with better mental health outcomes include folate, Vitamin D, and Omega-3 Fatty Acids. Folate can be found in leafy greens (like spinach and kale), fruits, nuts, beans and whole grains. Most foods, with the exception of salmon and tuna, do not have naturally occurring Vitamin D, but many are fortified with it, such as milk, orange juice and cereal. Five to thirty minutes in the sun a couple of times a week generally produces enough Vitamin D.

Oily fish such as salmon, trout, mackerel, anchovies and sardines, as well as walnuts, flax, olive oil, and leafy greens are great sources of Omega-3 Fatty Acids.

Find more nutrition do’s and don’ts for optimal mental health on Page 6.
Interested in Becoming a Peer Specialist?

We regularly offer a variety of free peer education trainings. We offer Peer 101, an introductory training explaining the role of a peer specialists and the skills needed to succeed in this challenging and rewarding career.

We also regularly offer Peer Certification Training, the required, 40 hour training needed to earn peer certification in the state of Delaware.

Finally, we offer a variety of CEU trainings on special topics. The following are a list of upcoming trainings. Register for a training here:

https://mha-in-de.corsizio.com/

UPCOMING

**Peer 101 Training**
Wed Oct 9, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM / Thu Oct 10, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Georgetown ACE Center
20707 DuPont Blvd, Georgetown

CEU: 5 Minutes of Mindfulness: DIY Sensory Meditation Jars
October 15, 9:00AM—12:00PM
Community Services Building
100 W. 10th St. Wilmington, DE

**Peer Certification Training**
Oct 22, 23, 24, 30, and 31
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM each day
New Castle County, DE

**Peer Certification Training**
Nov 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM each day
New Castle County, DE

**Peer Certification Training**
Dec 3, 4, 5, 11 and 12
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM each day
New Castle County, DE

**Supervising Peer Recovery Specialists**
Tue Dec 3, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Community Services Building
10th St, Wilmington, DE

**Peer 101 Training**
Mon Dec 9, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM / Tue Dec 10, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Kent County, DE

**Peer 101 Training**
Nov 20, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM / Thu Nov 21, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Community Services Building
10th St, Wilmington, DE

**Peer Certification Training**
Dec 3, 4, 5, 11 and 12
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM each day
New Castle County, DE

Click here to view and register for peer support training.
New Peer Internship Program

Stigma and documented shortages of behavioral health practitioners make it difficult for many to seek and receive mental health care. Beyond the need for treatment, persons suffering from episodes of addiction or mental illness often require ongoing support and encouragement to recover and re-engage with their lives and communities. Strategies to increase workforce capacity, including deployment of a trained peer support workforce, are important for addressing the unmet demand for behavioral health services.

The efficacy of peer providers in mental health has been extensively evaluated through published randomized controlled trials, qualitative studies, and meta-analyses of previously published literature. There are over 50 peer-reviewed articles that evaluate the effectiveness of peer providers in different settings.

Peer services are known to increase the use of primary care services over emergency services, lower hospitalization and re-hospitalizations, help patients to be more active in their treatment, and improve the quality of life for many patients. Peer support programs appear to result in significantly lower utilization rates, which could result in cost savings in the long run. Peers allow for a person-first or a person-centered approach to recovery and treatment, which yields higher satisfaction in care. Because of this information, multiple agencies throughout the state of Delaware are beginning and expanding the use of peer specialists, but the workforce is not currently prepared to meet this demand.

In order to become a Certified Peer Support Specialist in Delaware, individuals are required to have:

- 1,000 supervised peer support work/volunteer hours
- High school diploma/GED
- 54 hours peer training in specified domains (DCB approved training)
- Pass Certified Peer Support Specialist exam
- $100 certification fee

The Mental Health Association (MHA) of Delaware surveyed individuals who were trained in peer certification but have not gone on to become certified peers, and found that one important barrier to obtaining certification was getting the required 1,000 hours of peer experience needed for certification. MHA seeks to ameliorate this barrier through our new peer internship program.

MHA will begin the Peer Internship Program in the coming months. The program will match interns who come through training, or wish to be trained, with agencies where they can get their required hours for certification. Staff will provide biweekly group supervision to the intern cohort. Interns will receive monthly stipends and a stipend will be given to host agencies to offset the cost of onsite supervision. Interns will work approximately 30 hours a week for 8 months in order to get their hours and be ready for certification.

A pilot program in the Wilmington/Claymont area took place last year, and we were pleased with the success of the program. Interns received group supervision throughout the program, and were also assigned a mentor from the MHA Peer Specialist staff. Supervision topics included self-care, sharing your story to support consumers, professionalism, and many others. Nearly all of the interns were able to achieve their 1000 hours towards professional Peer Certification and pass their Certification Exam.

Perhaps most importantly, the majority of the interns gained full time employment in the field of behavioral health before or immediately following the end of the program. The peer interns served thousands of unique individuals, providing support, helping consumers identify strengths and goals, and teaching self-advocacy skills.

The following are some of the comments made by our interns:

- “The confidence I have gained through this internship has had a very positive impact on me.”
- “I’m proving to myself, ‘You can do this!’”
- “This internship has allowed me to identify things in myself that I need to change, and in turn help others do the same.”

We are proud of the work and growth of our interns, and the progress of the program. With generous support from The Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, we look forward to deploying a new cohort of interns in the coming months.
Studies show that what we eat is closely linked to our mental health. The following are some nutrition suggestions about what can hurt, and what can help, our mental health.

**Don’t:** Drink too much caffeine and sugary drinks, which have been shown to increase symptoms of anxiety, trigger panic attacks, and disrupt sleep.

**Do:** Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day to prevent dehydration. Studies show that even mild dehydration can cause mood changes, difficulty concentration, and fatigue.

**Don’t:** Skip meals, which can lead to fatigue, “brain fog,” and drops in blood sugar that make us feel irritable and nervous.

**Do:** Incorporate small meals and healthy snacks throughout your day to maintain a steady supply of energy. Pack nuts and dried or whole fruits that can be easily accessed throughout your day.

**Don’t:** Eat lots of high-fat dairy, fried, refined and sugary foods, which have little nutritional value, and have been shown to significantly increase one’s risk of depression. While these types of foods are often considered “comfort foods,” that we crave when stressed, and can temporarily give us a sense of wellbeing, in the long term they drain our energy and are harmful to our mental health.

**Do:** Eat a diet that relies on fruits and veggies, nuts, whole grains, fish and unsaturated fats (like olive oil and avocado). People who follow this kind of diet are up to 30% less likely to develop depression than people who eat lots of meat and dairy products.

**Don’t:** Over-diet. Eat well to nurture good health, not to force some improbable standard on your body. Strict food rules can backfire, and excessive dieting can be hazardous. If you or someone you know seems at risk of an eating disorder, professional counseling can help. Call 1-800-931-2237.

**Do:** Work on your balance. Your brain needs a varied diet and a healthy supply of carbohydrates, fats and proteins, or it can’t perform functions that affect your mood and thinking. You don’t have to give up all of your favorite foods to eat healthy – just make regular, small changes to boost your intake of nutrient-rich food.

**Don’t:** Use tobacco. While it can give your mood a temporary boost, nicotine is associated with higher risk of depression, and a host of other health problems.

**Do:** Limit alcohol intake. Just like smoking, alcohol may offer short-lived relief from stress or mental health symptoms, but in reality it causes stress on the body, disrupts sleep, and causes poor judgement.
Registration is now open for the 18th Annual Community Mental Health Conference! The theme for the conference is “The Mental Health System: Through the Ages” and as we share our excitement about this year’s event, we also invite you to join us for what we expect to be an informative, action packed and very inspiring day! We know that the knowledge shared and connections made on this day between both speakers and participants, can create the changes and healing that we need in our community. For professionals looking for Contact Hours please be aware that these spaces will fill up fast so please register soon to ensure your space. To attend this event or if you are interested in vendor or sponsorship opportunities, visit our website at https://www.mhainde.org/events/community-mental-health-conference-2019/.

The conference will be held at the Chase Center on the Riverfront in Wilmington from 9am until 3:15pm on Thursday Nov 7th with hot buffet style lunch included in the registration cost. In addition to the workshops listed on the registration portal there will be a Keynote Address by Priscilla Murphy on “Intergenerational Mental Health Issues”, an interactive panel discussion on the Peer Recovery Movement and more! The Mental Health Association in Delaware is also looking forward to showing our support of the Delaware Goes Purple Campaign by having this be our first conference that “Goes Purple”! We hope to see you there!
National Depression Screening Day

National Depression Screening Day is designed to call attention to the illness of depression on a national level and designed to educate the public about symptoms and effective treatment, to offer individuals the opportunity to be screened for depression and to connect those in need to the mental health care system in Delaware. On Thursday, October 10, 2019, many organizations will participate with MHA in providing quick, anonymous screenings in various locations throughout the state. These screenings are often the first step for individuals with depression in getting help. There are also many sites who will provide screenings throughout the month of October, not just on Thursday, October 10, 2019.

Like other health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes, many people with depression are not aware of their illness. The depression screenings are not a professional evaluation, but are a quick and easy way to spot some of the early signs of trouble. Clinical Depression is a common medical illness affecting more than 15 million American adults each year. Over 84,000 Delawareans reported experiencing serious psychological distress in the past year, with depression being among that distress. Importantly, 80% of those diagnosed with depression who seek treatment, experience a decrease in symptoms within 4-6 weeks.

It is very important for people to understand the connection of mental health to physical health and overall well-being. An initiative such as National Depression Screening Day 2019 works to provide Delawareans options if they are reluctant to seek help. It also establishes prevention and early intervention.

Find a list of screening locations on our website here: https://www.mhainde.org/education/national-depression-screening-day/

In 2018, we screened approximately 250 people throughout the state and approximately 129 screened positive for Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, or PTSD and were referred to treatment. We want to increase that number for 2019.

If your organization is interested in holding a depression screening at your site on Thursday, October 10th, 2019, please contact our office at (302)654-6833 or e-mail Elizabeth Davis@edavis@mhainde.org.

A huge thank you to all of those who are contributing their time and effort!
## Wellness Groups Schedule

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<th>For help with...</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Newark (7:00-8:30 pm)</td>
<td>Dover (7:00-8:30 pm)</td>
<td>Wilmington (10:00-11:30am)</td>
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<td>Anxiety (A peer-led group for individuals experiencing or who have experienced Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and/or specific phobias. The groups use a self-help book on anxiety disorders for discussion during each meeting)</td>
<td>Newark 1st &amp; 3rd Thurs. (7:00-8:30 pm)</td>
<td>Milford 3rd Fri. (12:00-1:30pm)</td>
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<td>Survivors of Suicide (SOS) for Grief &amp; Healing (SOS groups are peer-led groups for individuals who have lost a loved one or friend to suicide. These groups provide insight and comfort to individuals dealing with the trauma and tragedy of a loss to suicide)</td>
<td>Wilmington 1st Mon. (7:00-8:30 pm)</td>
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<td>Newark 2nd &amp; 4th Thurs. (7-8 pm)</td>
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<td>Seeking Safety (The group prioritizes in demonstrating and educating the population about coping skills to help people attain safety from trauma and/or substance abuse)</td>
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<td>Wilmington (12:30pm-2:00pm)</td>
<td>Wilmington Library</td>
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MHA in DE is joining the Delaware Goes Purple campaign during the month of October, to provide a message of hope to families who are struggling with addiction and raise awareness of local resources that can aid in recovery from substance use disorders.

On September 11th, MHA in DE presented “Mindfulness is for Everyone,” a workshop led by Kate McHugh- mindfulness coach, fitness instructor and licensed mental health and substance abuse counselor.