This new social media platform provides news, updates and serve as a forum for open dialogue about issues related to all 16 EOHHS agencies.
Click here to read blog posts by Secretary Bigby, Commissioner Leadholm and others

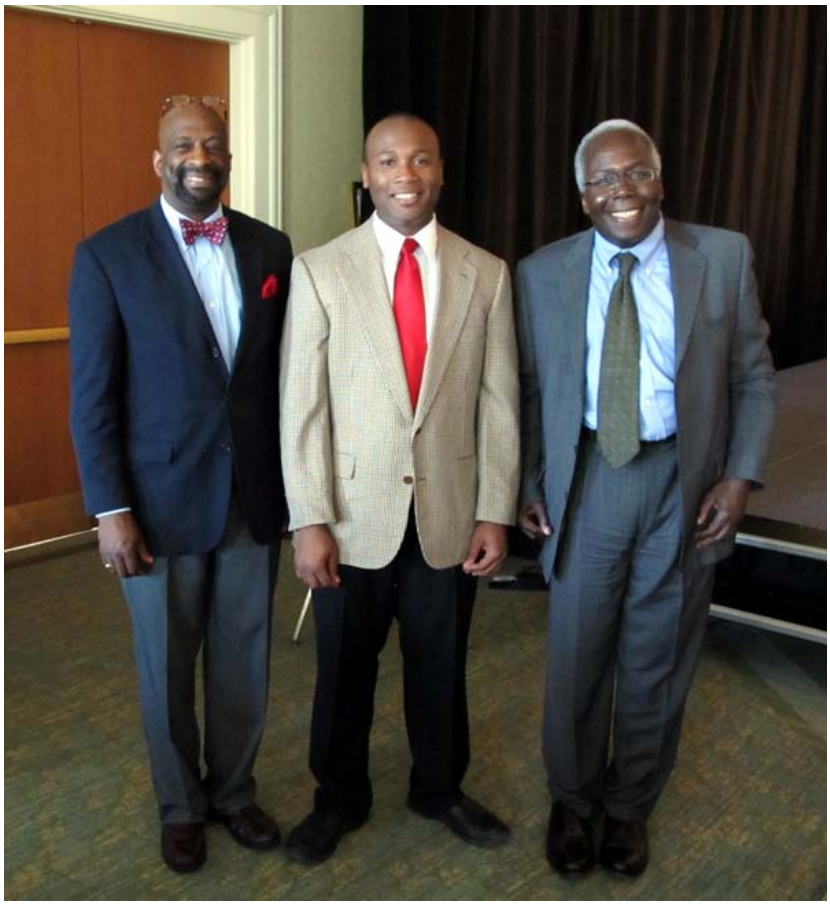
Department of Public Health Blog
Click here to view the DPH blog which features expert tips on nutrition and physical activity as well as a roundup of health and wellness events

Multicultural Corner



Seeing Recovery Through the Eyes of Ethnic and Cultural Minorities

In recent years, racial and ethnic disparities in health care have been consistently documented across a



Brother Dennis Slaugher, left, joins Shedrick Gavin and Metro-Southeast Area Director Clifford Robinson, right, at the 2011 MAMH Awards banquet.

"I am greatly appreciative of Brother Dennis Slaughter, who played the keyboard for me at the banquet. He was instrumental in bringing out that authentic gospel sound. He is the artistic director of the Boston Pops Gospel Choir and the director of BCC." - Shedrick M. Gavin

Click here to view Shedrick's debut performance of "Ordinary People" at the 2010 Friends of Metro Boston sponsored DMH Talent Show.

Click here to View Shedrick's performnace of "I Won't Complain" at the 2011 MAMH Awards.

Click here to view Shedrick's performance of "This Land is your Land" at the 2011 MAMH Awards.

Stay tuned for more from Shedrick in upcoming issues of *DMH Connections*.

DMH and SAMHSA: National Wellness Week Launches During Recovery Month at Tewksbury

As part of September's nationally observed Recovery Month, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will launch the first National Wellness Week **September 19-25** to promote the many ways wellness can improve quality of life and

wide range of medical conditions and health care services, including mental health care. Providing recovery-oriented and peer support services in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner is important to reducing these disparities. Understanding how consumers of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds perceive and interpret the concepts of recovery and peer support as well as their experience of service access is a critical path for providers and peer support workers to better serve diverse populations.

"Understanding How Ethnic and Cultural Minorities Perceive Peer Support and Recovery" is a recent study completed by Linda Cabral, Kathy Muhr and Judy Savageau of the University of Massachusetts Medical School Center for Health Policy and Research in collaboration with from Ed Wang, Psy.D., Director of the DMH Office of Multicultural Affairs; Lucille Traina, DMH Coordinator of Statewide Initiatives; and John Deluca, MassHealth Behavioral Health.

This research builds on work initiated by DMH in our efforts to insure that people who are deaf/hard of hearing and other minority clients benefit from the peer support and recovery movement. The Office of Multicultural Affairs promotes the use of cultural brokers through work with and advocacy on the part of its Multicultural Advisory Committee.

Lucille Traina, who also coordinates deaf services at DMH, has worked with deaf consumers to promote access to the Recovery Learning Communities and with the Transformation Center to develop a CPS curriculum which is culturally and linguistically appropriate. The following synopsis of the study is written by Linda and her team:

The study sought to better understand how persons with mental health conditions from two cultural groups, Latino and Deaf/Heard of Hearing (D/HH),

increase life expectancy for people with mental illness and substance use disorders. The DMH Northeast-Suburban Area is excited to host Lauren Spiro, the Mental Health Communication Manager for SAMHSA and one of the forces behind National Wellness Week, who will launch the first National Wellness Week in Massachusetts with DMH on Sept. 19 at Tewksbury State Hospital in a day-long workshop. Lauren will discuss the SAMHSA 10x10 Campaign and the Eight Dimensions of Wellness.

Regular readers of DMH Connections are familiar with the fact that persons with mental illness have a shorter life expectancy of an average of 25 years than the general population. In our efforts to raise awareness, change attitudes and focus on whole health, DMH signed on to the SAMHSA 10x10 Wellness Campaign. Launched in 2010, the campaign promotes the importance of addressing all parts of a person's life in hopes of increasing life expectancy for persons with mental illness and substance use disorders by 10 years in 10 years. Nearly 3,000 organizations and individuals have made a commitment to this work by signing the Pledge for Wellness. The Campaign is guided by a multidisciplinary Steering Committee representing consumers, providers and researchers.

Aligned with the campaign, SAMHSA is promoting the Eight Dimensions of Wellness (**chart pictured below**). SAMHSA defines wellness as "overall well-being. It incorporates the mental, emotional, physical, occupational, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a person's life. Each aspect of wellness can affect overall quality of life, so it is important to consider all aspects of health. This is especially important for people with mental illness and substance use disorders because wellness directly relates to the quality and longevity of your life."



Social - developing a sense of connection and a well-developed support system
Physical - recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition while discouraging the use of tobacco, drugs, and excessive alcohol consumption
Emotional - developing skills and strategies to cope effectively with stress, challenges, and conflict
Spiritual - searching for meaning and purpose in human existence
Occupational - deriving personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work
Intellectual - recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
Environmental - fostering good health by occupying pleasant,

access recovery-oriented and peer support services. Results from this study helped to inform the DMH regarding system improvements that could be made to better serve these populations.

We utilized cultural brokers, who were mental health peers from the cultural communities of focus, to work with the research team in all phases of the study. This approach was effective because cultural brokers can identify with and have knowledge of the cultural heritage, as well as knowledge of the mainstream mental health system. The cultural brokers partnered with evaluation staff to conduct interviews and focus groups in the participants' language of choice. The goal of this approach was to maximize the comfort level of participants and to encourage them to share their views on mental health recovery and peer support.

For both cultural groups, multiple communication issues were barriers to accessing appropriate mental health services. Barriers such as a lack of providers able to communicate in a person's preferred language and inadequate interpretation services were cited as well as a lack of qualified professionals who speak Spanish or use American Sign Language (ASL). Among both groups, the preference was to work directly with someone in the language they feel most comfortable with and to avoid interpreters.

Among the peers interviewed, peer support was valued among everyone. All study participants preferred peer support to be offered in a language they could fully participate in. However, there are limited peer support groups available in Spanish and even less available in ASL.

We believe that this study can inform others who are interested in collecting health disparities data from people of different cultural groups. Using qualitative data collection and employing a cultural

stimulating environments that support well-being
Financial - feeling satisfied with current and foreseeable future financial situation

The National Wellness Week workshop at Tewksbury State Hospital will also include morning session speakers Oryx Cohen from the National Empowerment Center; Lisa Forestell fom the Western Mass. Recovery Learning Community; and Elizabeth Frates, M.D. of The Institute of Lifestyle Medicine. Oryx and Lisa will talk about local wellness activities and Elizabeth will discuss wellness of body, mind and spirit.

In the afternoon session, Lauren Spiro will present an educational workshop with Beth Filson on trauma and wellness. In addition to her involvement with the 10x10 Campaign, Lauren, who was as a teenager labeled with chronic schizophrenia, is also a coordinator with the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. Beth Filson serves on the Steering Team of the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. She is lead developer of a peer engagement guide for women in trauma-informed peer support to be released later this year.

Both workshops are open to DMH and provider staff, persons with lived experience and other interested parties. Registration is required. DMH employees can register through PACE. All others can e-mail the DMH Northeast Staff Development office with the number of people planning on attending at NEAStaffDev@dmh.state.ma.us. If you need special accommodations, notify the Staff Development office as soon as possible. Click the links to download a printable flyer for the morning session and the afternoon session.

Below are some useful links to SAMHSA's Health and Wellness Resources:

- A Report of the 2007 National Wellness Summit for People with Mental Illness
- SAMHSA 10x10 Wellness Brochure
- SAMHSA 10x10 Wellness Campaign Information for Consumers
- SAMHSA 10x10 Information Brochure for General Health Care Providers
- SAMHSA Top 3 Ways to Promote Wellness Poster
- SAMHSA Eight Dimensions of Wellness Poster
- National Empowerment Center - Wellness Works Initiative

Follow the DMH Twitter account @MassDMH for Tweets on health and wellness related information and resources during the week of September 19-25.

Health and Wellness is everyone's concern: staff, people receiving services and the general public. There are many examples of things everyone can do right now that are low or no cost and can be done by anyone. Remember that exercise and healthy eating work better when done with partners and that wellness is not just a one-week event, it's a lifestyle.

Music as Stigma-Stopper

Tunefoolery Musicians Play to a Different Drummer

Since 1994, Tunefoolery, a non-profit organization comprised of

broker was an effective approach and one that should be considered when seeking to collect sensitive data from people of different cultural backgrounds.

For the complete study, Click here to view the report.

RLC Spotlight

SE Recovery Learning Community Hosts 5th Annual Recovery is Real

The DMH Southeast Recovery Learning Community (SEMA RLC) is looking forward to the 5th Annual Recovery Is Real Celebration on Sept. 30 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Ricky Silvia Gym, Taunton State Hospital. The SEMA RLC officially turns three this year and celebrates recovery being real every day. This year's celebration theme is "Conversation, Connection and Community: How open dialogue, person first language & Intentional Peer Support can create community." The event will feature speakers whose stories reflect diverse communities and paths to recovery.

Speakers will discuss personal milestones such as going back to work, getting one's own place, volunteering, health and wellness, transitioning from the hospital into the community and how connections and community support recovery goals. The audience will hear how individuals accomplished some of these goals, how they stay well on a day-to-day basis and how others can make some of those same connections.

This year the SEMA RLC will present musicians with psychiatric disabilities, puts out a simple yet powerful message emphasizing people's strengths by focusing on abilities, not disabilities. Tunefoolery's 50 musicians perform as solo acts and in ensembles at hospitals, nursing homes and other venues where quality live music is needed most. Music styles span everything from rock to classical. Tunefoolery also provides their members with discounted guitar and voice lessons.

Brendan Burns is one of those teachers. He is a guitar instructor, performer and composer living in Cambridge. For the past several years, he has taught guitar part time with Tunefoolery.



Tunefoolery's Rick Davenport rocks the house at the "Stops the Stigma" concernt with Tunefoolery guitar teacher Brendan Burns

Photo courtesy of photographer Arthur Tsicoulias

"Tunefoolery has changed my life as musician, guitar teacher and human being," Brendan said. "When I started working with them in 2006, I didn't know anything about mental illness. I had never had any direct experience with psychosis, schizophrenia or trauma. Through my work and experiences at Tunefoolery, I've had the amazing opportunity to witness the extraordinarily capabilities and musicianship of a group people who have challenges integrating with society."

Brendan said he believes Tunefoolery represents a profound development in the awareness, acceptance and care for people living with mental illness in our community and that their work is helping erase the social stigma of mental illness and educating us that we all exist on a mental health continuum just as we do with our physical health.

"I was inspired to put together an awareness concert for Tunefoolery one night in August at the LilyPad in Cambridge," Brendan said. "My goal of this concert was to raise awareness about what mental illness is and what it is not, and to help help stop the stigma by booking Boston-based musicians and Tunefoolery members on a collaborative bill. Local performers included Mali Sastri, Tony Leva and Raky Sastri (of Jaggery), Sarah Rabdau (of Sarah Rabdau & The Self-Employed Assassins), Molly Zenobia, Lainey SchoolTree, Brian King (of What Time Is It Mr. Fox), myself and seven Tunefoolery members."

It was a jam-packed night at the Lilypad in Cambridge. The evening showcased a collection of music from all artists as well information about Tunefoolery and mental illness in general. The concert featured some excellent music as well as some powerful sharing from performers about dealing with mental health issues. Tunefoolery's Executive Director Jens Rybo talked about Tunefoolery's important work and gigs that bring hope and healing to thousands of people every year.

"As the audience walked out into the busy streets of Inman Square that night," said Brendan, "many talked about how inspiring it was to hear about Tunefoolery and realizing that people dealing with mental health issues have so many talents that for sure challenge stigma related to psychiatric conditions."

We're happy to report that because of the success of the Lilypad