



KANE COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL

making a difference ...together

Message of the Month October 2009

www.kanecountymentalhealth.org

Kane County Mental Health Council

- The Association for Individual Development
630-966-4000
- Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center
630-859-6562
- Delnor Community Hospital
630-208-3000
- Ecker Center for Mental Health Services
847-695-0484
- Family Counseling Service of Aurora
630-844-2662
- Family Service Association of Greater Elgin Area
847-695-3680
- Gateway Foundation/Aurora
630-966-7400
- Greater Elgin Family Care Center 847-608-1344
- Kane County Health Department 630-208-3801
- Larkin Center 847-695-5656
- League of Women Voters
630-365-2138
- Mental Health & Mental Retardation Services, Inc.
630-892-5456
- National Alliance on Mental Illness, DeKalb, Kane-South, Kendall Counties, Inc.
630-896-6264
- National Alliance on Mental Illness-Kane County
847-931-4715
- Provena Mercy Medical Center
630-801-2657
- Provena St. Joseph Hospital
847-931-5521
- Senior Services Association
847-741-0404
- Suicide Prevention Services 630-482-9696
- TriCity Family Services
630-232-1070
- Visiting Nurse Association of Fox Valley 630-978-9835

Media can skew public understanding

Media coverage of mental health can be technically accurate yet may also be misleading by focusing on negative stories about people with mental illness. Although it may not be the intention of the media to do so, there often seems to be a tendency to focus on sensational events that may lead persons to believe that people with a mental illness are to be feared. At times media coverage skews public understanding of mental illness by linking mental illness and violence.

Society too often seems to be ingrained with a prejudice towards mental illness and those who suffer with mental illness. Persons with mental illness are often perceived to be dangerous and unpredictable. The fact is that persons with mental illness are rarely violent. It is estimated that only 3 percent to 5 percent of all violence in the country can be attributed to mental illness.

When the media portrays persons with mental illness in this way, the stigma surrounding mental illness is perpetuated which in turn can cause persons with mental illness to feel shame and discourage the seeking of appropriate treatment.

The news and entertainment media can play a crucial role in informing public opinion. They can perpetuate a negative stigma surrounding mental illness or they can educate. In fact the media has played powerful roles in letting the public know the how persons with mental illness have been mistreated. In 1887, journalist Nelly Bly publicized the brutal and inhumane treatment of persons with mental illness by writing an expose on the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island. More recently the Ad Council partnered with SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services) to launch a media campaign aimed at promoting understanding of mental illness.

Info corner: Mental health problems are health conditions involving changes in thinking, mood, and/or behavior, and they are associated with distress or impaired functioning. When they are more severe, they are called mental illnesses. These include anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, depressive and other mood disorders, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and others.

<http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov/topic/media/default.aspx>

Also see <http://www.mindfreedom.org/campaign/media>