



Healthy Together

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Member Newsletter

Notes From Member Services

There is hope that spring is around the corner... While there is still snow on the ground, we have had several warm days and lots of melting. It has been a long and hard winter. I notice with just a few days of longer daylight, my mood has been brighter. Getting enough sunlight is so important to feeling emotionally well.

Here in Member Services, we continue to be busy. More members and families are calling for assistance with making sure they are getting the services they need. We started mailing packets to members who want them with more information about who APS Healthcare is and how we can help the member community make decisions about their care.

In January, the MAC (member advisory council) and the PAC (provider advisory council) met together to share the work we have done over the past year. We were joined by Cheryl Collins, who is the Senior VP of Operations for APS Healthcare and gave the keynote speech. Members of both groups were recognized for all of the time and expertise that they have brought to the groups. Thank you so much! Speaking of the MAC group, we would really love to have some parents of children in services join as well as several young adults. If you or someone you know would like to join us, please call Simonne

Maline at Member Services.

We continue to go out into the community. We spoke with the Statewide Consumer Council, to get feedback on what members are hearing and experiencing in the community. Hearing this feedback is crucial to us to know how we can support the member community to help them with correct information. We have been working with the Youth Alternatives Ingraham hi-fi wrap around oversight committee to affect positive change for families with challenging situations.

We have also worked hard to update all of our written materials and soon they will be posted to the website for access. We are also in the process of making at least the member handbook available to listen to for those who have difficulty reading and the blind community.

With winter soon behind us, we plan to do more traveling to sites we have yet to visit. We would love to be invited to any group that could be helped by understanding their MaineCare behavioral health benefits. Just give us a call!





Notes From Eric



Some Thoughts from the Executive Director

The Maine Behavioral Health ASO by APS Healthcare completed its first full year at the end of 2008. A tremendous amount of work has been

accomplished by all who have a part in mental health services. Providers, MaineCare members and DHHS staff have joined with us at APS Healthcare to build the foundation of a well managed mental health system.

A few of the highlights of the work in 2008 include:

- Established utilization management system for most MaineCare funded mental health services.

- An average of 20,000 requests per month are submitted by providers to APS Healthcare.

- Most providers use APS CareConnection®- 2,669 individual users and 346 provider organizations.

- Member Advisory Council was established and has had a successful first year.

- Provider Advisory Council was established and has also had an active and successful year.

- Many reports have been made and are run on a daily, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

- APS Healthcare provided training, outreach and support with UM

process trainings, clinical trainings, IT, billing and Data Forum conference calls, site visits and more throughout the year.

Individuals trained have been:
2,653 Providers,
239 Members and
243 DHHS staff.

APS Healthcare-Maine website as a resource:
www.qualitycareforme.com

None of this progress could have happened without the strong support and partnership of all who have a hand in our system. There is much to be proud of, but there is much work left to do. In 2009, there is a great deal of work we can do to improve our system. An important part of our work will be using the reports and data we have to improve services and the results that consumers see from them. We will be looking for many opportunities to promote system improvement, throughout the year. 2009 will also be a year that we all prepare for the shift to the new MaineCare claims payment system that DHHS is using to improve claims payment to providers. APS Healthcare is already working closely with DHHS to help the change to the new system be a smooth one, when it starts in early 2010.

Together, we have built a firm foundation for this new system. Together, we can move this system forward to improve the quality and access of care for the people of the State of Maine.



My Experiences With High Fidelity Wraparound by Simonne Maline

Several months ago, I was asked to join the oversight committee for Youth Alternatives Ingraham's High Fidelity Wraparound Program. Prior to this, I did not know very much about this service, as I have spent almost my entire career in the adult services world. When I came to APS Healthcare, one of my priorities was to understand the children's services world as well as adults.

High fidelity wrap around programs work with families who are experiencing a high degree of stress and who have children involved in multiple systems; Child Welfare, Children's Behavior Health Services, Special Education, the Department of Corrections, and others. Staff helps families develop a wraparound team. This team might include professionals, as well as friends, and family who will assist them in identifying their most critical needs. The team will then try to find creative ways to meet the family's needs.

One of the most important principles of high fidelity wraparound is family voice and choice. That is, the family identifies their own needs and then chooses options to meet those needs based on what fits with the family's strengths and culture. This is one of the most important things to me when looking at providing effective recovery focused services to adults or children. I know when people focus on my strengths I am more likely to succeed. Another part of the process is to increase the number of natural supports for a family. Providers have a role, but ongoing success is going to be greatly improved when we connect people to their local communities.

It is really important for the oversight committee to have family representation as well. An example of one of the oversight committee's responsibilities is to oversee the flex funds which are available to families when other resources have been exhausted. We are a group of people who think outside the box for incredibly creative solutions to complex issues.

There are many teams already in existence throughout Maine with more currently being established. I am excited with what these groups are doing to help families. to succeed!



Website Resources

Support/Help

www.amistadinc.org/warmline.php The Maine Warm Line, a toll-free mental health, peer-to-peer, non crisis phone support service to adults in Maine.

www.gearparentnetwork.com The Gear Parent Network is a statewide, parent-run organization providing opportunities for parents of children with emotional and behavioral health need to support each other.

www.tobaccofreemaine.org Partnership for a Tobacco-Free Maine, offering a wide range of information and resources related to smoking cessation and other tobacco-related issues.

www.aamine.org Maine Websites for Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, which are self-help groups for people who would like to stop drinking or taking drugs.

www.namaine.org See description above.

www.mecasa.org The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault is a group that hopes to put an end to sexual violence in Maine, and have ongoing support and services for victims and survivors of sexual violence.

www.mcedv.org Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, a state-wide organization whose goal is to end domestic violence in Maine.

* All of this information plus more website resources can be found on our website at www.qualitycareforme.com under the Members tab.



“Feed My Sheep”

By Karen Evans

“Feed my sheep”. The voice spoke to Karen in a direct and compelling manner. She was used to paying attention to voices. She had heard her first voice at the age of seventeen. That voice had commanded her to cover her body with lighter fluid and put a match to it. The scars that cover her body from that incident are minor compared to the scars she carries inside.

Karen Evans has been labeled with schizophrenia, thought doesn't agree with the use of labeling. While she believes that some of her mental health issues may be inherited, she has no doubt that her environment is equally responsible. By the time she graduated from high school, she had attended 27 different schools. Her father was in the army, and often gone for long periods of time. Her mother, sick with depression over a younger child she had felt forced to put up for adoption, could no longer care for Karen or her twin sister. There was never any bonding, and often, there was desertion and abandonment. Karen spent her youth shuffling between relatives' homes, foster homes and orphanages. The abuse, physical, sexual, and mental, that each new placement brought, never ended. In her late teens, when the voices began, she was placed in a number of state mental institutions.

"The horrors that then accompanied placement in state mental institutions were real. Patients were beaten, molested, and never told what had happened to the people who often just disappeared overnight. I was terrified of these places, and took to escaping whenever I had a chance."

Karen's last escape was from the Maine Insane Hospital (today's Augusta Mental Health Institute). She took the only job she thought she could do without getting caught, and entered the world's oldest profession. Falling in love with one of her customers led to a marriage with a man who constantly beat her. Fortunately, her love for her three children fathered by this man kept her from killing herself. One day, she simply picked them up, and deposited her family on a bench in Lincoln



“Feed My Sheep”
By Karen Evans, continued

Park in Portland, not far from City Hall, hoping someone would heed her cries for help.

This final act of desperation became the catalyst for change. First, the women’s crisis center that took her in offered her a position helping other women in situations like hers. There, she was encouraged to go back to school and obtain a degree. A chance encounter with a local church led to a growing connection with a spiritual side of herself that had never been nurtured. For the first time, Karen began to hear voices that were not destructive.

When the voice that kept saying "Feed my Sheep" would give her no rest, Karen opened the Wayside Evening Soup Kitchen in Portland. Serving the city’s homeless and poor put Karen in touch with other unmet needs of these forgotten citizens. In 1987 she established "Tent City" in front of city Hall, and camped out for three weeks with other homeless people. As a result, officials finally realized the need to establish a shelter system in Portland.

Today, Karen is considered one of the most respected advocates for the needs of those with mental health issues and the poor in our state. She continues to receive services and support for her own illness, and has gone from being a client to a Peer Specialist for Catholic Charities Maine Support & Recovery Services. Her work involves speaking in the community, developing services, and working with mental health clients to fully integrate them into the community. She sits on the Quality Improvement Council of AMHI, a place she had escaped from years before. Most recently, she has become involved with the Maine Cemetery Project, a way to honor the lives of those who died and were buried nameless at Maine’s mental institution.

"I am passionate about issues I have experienced – abuse, poverty, hunger, mental illness and homelessness. I know that if I work for change, others won’t have to live the life I did. Most importantly, I know the power of forgiveness. By forgiving, I have been able to become my brother’s keeper."



Introducing Rob Noble Appeals and Grievances Specialist

Rob Noble manages the APS Healthcare/Maine Reconsideration, Denial and Appeal process. He is responsible for coordinating APS responses to requests for reconsiderations, denials or appeals, with providers and the state. (Members contact Simonne Maline for information about reconsiderations, denials or the appeal process.)

Rob has been with APS for over one year. His first job was with data entry. He then went to Provider Relations, and finally to his current position in Operations. He took on the responsibility for the appeals and grievances process in May of 2008. It is a huge and sometimes complex job, requiring tremendous patience and attention to detail. Rob's organizational and computer skills are excellent, making Rob the perfect choice to ensure this process goes as smoothly as possible. With the support of Simonne and Sara Godfrey, Rob works hard to ensure that Members, providers and the state have all the information they need to address a request for a reconsideration or appeal.

Prior to coming to APS, Rob worked as front desk manager for Nonantum Resort in Kennebunkport. He enjoyed his work at Nonantum, and worked there for a total of eight seasons.

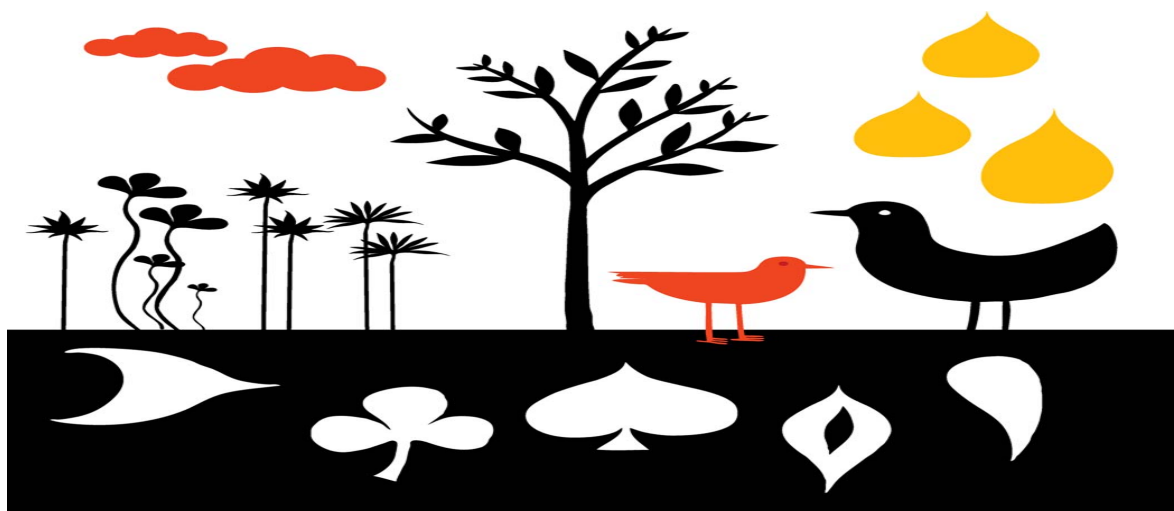
His quiet and generally subtle sense of humor is appreciated by his co-workers. Although it should be noted that when Sara, Simonne and Rob entered the APS "Winter Carnival Snowperson" contest, Rob's constant protesting that Simonne and Sara did not know the first thing about making a snowperson did get him into trouble with his teammates!



Care Management Department

The Care Management Department at APS Healthcare/Maine consists of ten Care Managers and the Clinical Director. It is the Care Managers' responsibility to help providers register, pre-authorize, or request further authorizations for Members receiving their services. Care Managers have extensive clinical backgrounds and licenses, allowing them to work very closely with providers in order to match behavioral health services with a Member's needs.

All our Care Managers have worked in Maine's behavioral healthcare system before coming to work for APS. Staff have worked in Children's Services, Adult Services, Substance Abuse Services and both child and adult Community Based services. This means the people reviewing your provider's requests are very familiar with Maine, and your behavioral health service providers. They understand the challenges you and your providers face, and will work with your providers to help you receive the services that best meet your circumstances.





MYTHBUSTERS:

This is where we hope to talk about the stuff YOU are hearing in your community about APS Healthcare

What does it mean if I get a letter telling me my services were denied or partially authorized?

This means that the services your provider requested were either not approved by APS or only part of those services were approved. This can happen for many reasons. If you get a letter telling you your services were denied or only partially authorized, please do not panic! Call the Member Services Liaison, Simonne Maline and talk with her. She can tell you what choices you have.

What is Community Integration? I did not ask for this service.

“Community Integration” is what the state calls “Adult Community Support Services”, or Adult Case Management. They call it Community Integration because the goal is to help people become fully integrated into the community of their choice. But it is the same as Adult Community Support, or Adult Case Management. If you are getting Adult Community Integration Services, you have a case manager (community support worker, community integration worker) who is helping you meet your goals.

What if I don’t agree with a decision that APS Healthcare makes?

You have several choices. First of all, you should be working with your provider to review the information sent to APS and either send additional information or ask us to look at it again. You can ask us to do this independently of your provider as well. You can ask us to start the appeal process. We will do the initial paperwork and set up the appeal. We will provide you with resources to get legal help if you want it. Our first goal is always to see if we can come to an agreement about what you need for your treatment. When we are unable to agree, we nonetheless want to make sure you have the resources available to help you through the appeal process. Helping members through the appeal process is an important part of APS Member Services.

If YOU have a question about what you are hearing or experiencing, call APS Healthcare Member Services (1-866-521-0027) and check it out!



Contact Information

APS Healthcare Member Services
1-866-521-0027

Member Services Manager: Priscilla Seimer x4906
Member Liaison: Simonne Maline x4915

MaineCare Member Services
1-800-977-6740 Option 3

MaineCare Member Services can help if you:

- Have questions about your benefits
- Have questions about your co-payments
- Get a bill from a Provider
- Need help finding a transportation Provider
- Need help finding a Provider enrolled in MaineCare