

# Fact Sheet No. 2

## Who Are We?

Lancaster County Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation/Early Intervention (MH/MR/EI) is the tax-funded agency mandated by state and federal law to provide services to persons with mental illness or mental retardation. We also provide services to children up to age 3 with developmental disabilities.

MH/MR/EI was established in 1966. It is regulated by the state Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the state Office of Developmental Programs, and the state Office of Child Development and Early Learning under the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.

We are funded by State, Federal and County dollars. Some of our services, such as case management, cost nothing. Some services require a co-payment based on income. Early Intervention is an entitlement and families are not required to pay for those services.

## Crisis Intervention

Persons experiencing anxiety, depression or suicidal ideation can receive immediate assistance from Crisis Intervention staff.

Crisis Intervention can assist in assessing what a person needs to alleviate the immediate crisis and then link them to appropriate services. This can be completed by an outreach to the person's location or the person coming to the office.

Crisis Intervention also has the authority to arrange involuntary commitments to an inpatient mental health unit.

Contact Crisis Intervention at 394-2631, 24 hours a day.

## Mental Illness: Some Facts

- ◆ Mental illnesses are biologically based brain disorders. They cannot be overcome through "will power" and are not related to a person's "character" or intelligence.
- ◆ In a given year, about 1 in 4 adults in the United States have a diagnosable mental disorder. One in 17 adults in the U.S. has a serious mental illness.
- ◆ In a given year, about 9.5% of adults in the United States have a mood disorder such as depression or bipolar disorder.
- ◆ About 2.4 million Americans have schizophrenia.
- ◆ In 2004, suicide was the 3rd leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-24. It is estimated that there are between 8 and 25 suicide attempts per every suicide death.
- ◆ About 1 in 10 children have a mental disorder severe enough to cause some level of impairment.
- ◆ Fewer than one third of adults and half of children with a diagnosable mental disorder receive any mental health services in a given year.
- ◆ The best treatments for serious mental illnesses today are highly effective; between 70 and 90 percent of individuals have significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life with a combination of psychosocial and pharmacological treatments and supports.
- ◆ With appropriate effective medication and a wide range of services tailored to their needs, most people who live with serious mental illnesses can significantly reduce the impact of their illness and find a satisfying measure of achievement and independence.

Most health insurance policies only provide limited mental health coverage, if at all. Without treatment, the consequences of mental illness for the individual and society are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, suicide and wasted lives. The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than 100 billion dollars each year in the United States.

### References:

The National Institute of Mental Health, [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)  
National Alliance on Mental Illness, [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

## How to Get Help

If you or someone you love needs help coping with a mental illness (see article on back), there is help available.

Go to your family doctor, your employee assistance officer, your school counselor or your minister. These people can refer you to a competent therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist with whom you can talk or from whom you can obtain appropriate support and/or services.

If such resources are not available to you, or if you do not have health insurance that covers treatment for mental illness, contact the MH Case Management Unit at 393-0421.

They will arrange an appointment for an intake interview to determine your needs and financial liability. (Financial liability determines how much, if anything, you can afford to contribute to cost of services).

However, do not put off obtaining help, particularly in the case of threats of suicide or harm to others. In such emergency situations, call Crisis Intervention at 394-2631.

## Support Groups

You may find valuable empathy and assistance through a support group. Groups exist for various types of mental illness, as well as for family members of persons with a mental illness.

For information on support groups, call the Mental Health America in Lancaster, 397-7461.

# Major Mental Illnesses

## Recovery

Recovery in Mental Health is a highly individualized process by which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.

Recovery is supported by the power of consumer choice. A recovery-oriented system helps people to not only understand an illness or disorder, but it also provides the support people need to take back control of their life.

Recovery is a vision of hope that includes no limits.

## Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia actually refers to a group of disorders. The illness may be controlled with medication and other supports. Very few persons who have schizophrenia are violent.

Persons with schizophrenia sometimes hear nonexistent sounds, voices or music, or see nonexistent images. Since their perception of reality is distorted, they may act inappropriately.

The primary symptom of schizophrenia is a distorted thought pattern. Persons with schizophrenia often dart from thought to thought or think they are being watched or plotted against.

As for the cause of schizophrenia, some researchers point to a biochemical imbalance; some researchers say it is a brain disease.

Antipsychotic drugs, therapy, and reduction of stress in work or living arrangements are successful in treating many

cases of schizophrenia.

## Major Depression

Many people confuse depression with "feeling blue." Those "feeling blue" times are very common and very normal. What is not normal is for these feelings to persist and intensify.

Depression is serious when it interferes in life: when you can't get out of bed in the morning; when you look for ways to escape the pain of life (sleep, alcohol, drugs, transient relationships); when you feel life is useless, pointless and empty.

Other symptoms of major depression are insomnia, lack of pleasure in previously enjoyable activities, loss of sexual drive, withdrawal, fatigue, increase or decrease in appetite and apathy.

## Bipolar Disorder

Persons with bipolar disorder experience wide mood swings. These swings go from mania to depression. Mania is abnormal elation that involves hyperactivity, inability to concentrate, leaping from one idea to the next, or excessive involvement in activities.

Among the supports/treatments used for depression and bipolar disorder are:

- \*psychotherapy (learning to recognize emotional triggers), and
- \*mood stabilizing medications.

## Borderline Personality Disorder

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a serious mental illness characterized by pervasive instability in moods, interpersonal relationships, self-image, and behavior. This instability often disrupts family and work life, long-term planning, and the individual's sense of self-identity. People with BPD often have highly unstable patterns of social relationships. While they can develop intense but stormy attachments, their attitudes towards family, friends, and loved ones may suddenly shift from idealization (great admiration and love) to devaluation (intense anger and dislike).

Fear of abandonment seems to be related to difficulties feeling emotionally connected to important persons when they are physically absent, leaving the individual with BPD feeling lost and perhaps worthless. Suicide threats and attempts may occur along with anger at perceived abandonment and disappointments.

Treatment for BPD: Group and individual psychotherapy are at least partially effective for many patients. Medication are often prescribed based on specific symptoms shown by the individual patient.

*From the National Institute of Mental Health, [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)*

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### For Information Call:

Administration Unit: 717-299-8021

Crisis Intervention: 717-394-2631

Mental Health Case Management: 717-393-0421

Special Offenders Services: 717-299-8184

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