

Unite the Power Group

Once the advocates have targeted a key power group within a well defined community they must try to:

1.) Get all the doctors in a large provider network to improve their practice for people with mental illness.
2.) Get all state legislators to support an expanded mental health funding bill.
3.) Get all employers in their city to hire people with mental illness.
4.) Get all law enforcement officers in their communities to use mental health programs when individuals with psychiatric disabilities are involved in a crime.
5.) Get landlords in their communities to promote more rental accommodations for individuals with mental illness.

Four Groups One Voice

Advocates must be aware that all the groups will not have the same perspective or view. There is a lot of diversity amongst the groups and this can cause tension when creating action plans.

When possible all four groups should work together as this will increase the ability to obtain resources and create better opportunities for veterans as well as their family members to utilize the available mental health services.

Final Point About Language

There is no easy solution to the problem of how to identify a particular group and advocates need to be aware of the tension that they can create. Advocates need to be prepared to deal with anger or misunderstandings that may come about because of the language or terminology that they use.

Some advocates and social scientists make the compelling point that the language that we use can worsen social injustices that rob life opportunities from veterans with mental illness. This makes it important for the advocate to be aware of the choices they make in referring to their constituencies and the other stakeholder groups.

Language, what you say and how you say it can make or break a campaign. Our goal as advocates should always be to unite not to divide. Advocates should focus on correcting the disparity and increasing both opportunities and resources for people with mental illness.

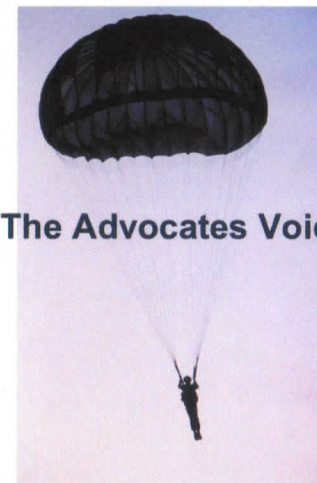
Over time the barriers will be broken and we will develop positive community-based services for our veterans and their families.

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The Advocates Voice

Who is an Advocate ?

The four groups that commonly respond to the call of Mental Health Advocacy are...

1. Consumers of Mental Health Services
2. The Families of Consumers
3. Mental Health Service Providers
4. Concerned Civic-Minded Citizens

Are YOU an Advocate?

www.hawaiiivet2vet.com/about_advocacy

The Advocates Goal

The goal of the Advocate is to change attitudes and beliefs about people with mental illnesses. Many of the problems facing people with mental illnesses are the result of public misunderstandings about mental illness or psychiatric disorders.

These public misunderstandings can rob people of their rightful life opportunities and result in a failure to prioritize mental health issues in the political arena.

Lack of Knowledge Creates

Public ignorance or the lack of knowledge about mental illness translates to or creates stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. This undermines equal opportunities and impregnates common assumptions about mental illness. These common assumptions translate into obstacles that must be overcome.

Conclusion

Therefore the Advocate must be a person of action and embrace strategies that will advance the Mental Health agenda. These strategies must focus on the "How To" not the "Why", in short they must be practical (i.e. to educate the public or our political leaders) so that the advocate can achieve success in advancing the mental health agenda.

The Agenda of the Advocate

The Mental Health Advocates' agenda is a collection of goals that will be accomplished through a series of discrete projects.

Accomplishing these projects in part requires tearing down the prejudice and discrimination of mental illness that blocks or hinders the opportunities that are available for consumers of mental health services. Most advocates work on multiple projects to enhance opportunities and resources for consumers of mental health services.

This could include but not be limited to working with the local legislature to increase spending on mental health services while educating employers to hire veterans with mental illnesses.

Ask Four Questions

1.) What is the problem ?
2.) Who are the targets ?
3.) What are the change strategies ?
4.) Did the project have any impact ?

When the advocate answers these four questions they will yield an action plan.

Our source is the handbook "Beat the Stigma and Discrimination"

Targeted Local Advocacy

Much of the adult population endorses some prejudice associated with mental illness yet the advocate cannot go after everyone. So in order for the advocate to be successful everyone has to be divided into specific groups or targeted.

"Power Groups"

We use the term Power Groups because these are the decision makers and are most likely to be more helpful in advancing the agenda of the advocate. Some examples of power groups are...

1.) Employers
2.) Landlords
3.) Law Enforcement
4.) Health Care Providers
5.) Legislators

Advocacy programs are most effective when targeting people in these power groups. Also, the most effective advocacy agendas and stigma reduction programs are local.

By using the four questions you will be able to find the power group that once engaged in a positive fashion can effect change and advance you toward better mental health services