June 2023

PAPRS Newsletter

Pennsylvania Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services

"To accept ourselves as we are means to value our imperfections as much as our perfections."

-Sandra Bierig

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President's Update

By: Kim MacDonald–Wilson, ScD, CPRP

We have been busy working for PAPRS since my last article in the January newsletter. Since then, our full-time Education Manager moved to a new position and we started a search for an Executive Director with the input of our Advisory Board and Executive Team. In the very near future we will be announcing a new Executive Director and other updates to the organization – stay tuned! Our plan is to ensure that PAPRS is fully staffed to meet the needs of our membership and to grow in the future.

In March, we held our first 2023 PAPRS Virtual Networking Forum on March 30, 2023. We heard from many of you the challenges and successes in recruiting and retaining excellent staff. Using a true Psych Rehab approach, you identified positive strategies such as team building exercises to improve staff morale, catching staff doing "good" and recognizing that with self-care gift cards or an afternoon off, establishing regular, supportive individual staff supervisions, and providing extra support for preparing for and passing the CPRP exam. And we heard some great suggestions for what you'd like to see from PAPRS – offering a CFRP Prep Course, offering training on Social Determinants of Health, the 8 Dimensions of Wellness, and Self-Care/Self-Maintenance strategies. Please join our next quarterly Networking Forum on Thursday, June 15, 11:00am-12:30pm and stay tuned to our website and email for registration details.

In April, as you may have heard, we had a very successful virtual Annual PAPRS Conference. I would just like to take a moment to thank our Conference and Education and Consultation Committees, our Executive Team, PAPRS Board Members, and conference participants who volunteered to organize, present, host, moderate, and participate in excellent educational opportunities at

Board Members:

Amanda Burke
Aaron Burkhardt
Marcie Cole
Collette D'Angelo
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John W. Rosengrant
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Caitlin Needham

2023 Board Meetings:

- June 8 & 9, 2023
- September 21 & 22, 2023
- November 9 & 10, 2023

Board Networking:
Thursdays from 4-6 PM

Full Board Meetings:
Fridays from 9 AM - 1 PM

**Meetings are currently held through Zoom*

Annual Open Membership Meeting:

During 2024 Virtual Conference

Membership Networking:

Thursday, June 15th, 2023
11 AM to 12:30 PM

Registration Link

the conference. The success we enjoyed this year has strengthened our financial position, allowing us to lead into the future. Please read more about the conference in this issue. We would love to hear more from you about other learning opportunities you would like to see offered – regional in-person breakfasts, local learning events, virtual events, resources in our members-only section, and topics of interest. Contact us and let us know what you are thinking.

We have also been working on strengthening our relationship with our national organization, the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association. March 2023 marked the one-year anniversary of PRA's new management team, Meaningful Measurement. We have seen growth in stabilizing the CPRP exam process, responsiveness to member inquiries, and sending chapter dues to PAPRS consistently and on time. In addition, PRA has just established a new MISSION Training Series (Maintaining Independence and Sobriety through Systems Integration, Outreach, and Networking) about meeting the needs of individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. PRA is working on updating the CPRP Prep Course and developing a new Apprenticeship program benefiting the PR workforce. And PRA just provided PAPRS with information about PA individual (57 members) and organizational (59 members) membership, CPRPs (514 current) and CFRPs (7 current), and dues revenue which will help PAPRS grow our membership.

Finally, I'd like to put in a plug for the Communications Committee – a new look to our Social Media posts, and plans are underway for enhanced member newsletters and website. If you have not yet done so, please like our PAPRS FaceBook and LinkedIn pages and add us to your groups! In summary, PAPRS works for you, our membership, and your voice matters to us. Keep in touch!

2023 PAPRS Conference Recap!

By: Aaron Burkhardt

This years PAPRS 2023 conference; The Next Chapter welcomed 293 conference participants. We were blessed to have 4 major keynote speakers, 20 workshops geared towards professional development, a game collaborator, poster contest, professional award winners, and tons of networking opportunities!

The first keynote speaker was Dr. Lisa Razzano. Lisa focused on the history of psych rehab and highlighted research that will help move us forward in the field. The second keynote speaker was several individuals from This Is My Brave organization. They all shared their recovery journeys in creative ways. If you missed this performance,

Upcoming Training Opportunities!

Engagement Skills in Psychiatric Rehabilitation Process
September 18-19, 2023
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Orientation to Psychiatric Rehabilitation (4 Sessions)
August 7-8, 14-15, 2023
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

October 2-3, 9-10
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

PR Services Documentation (4 Sessions)
August 21-22, 28-29, 2023
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

October 16-17, 23-24
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Creating Welcoming Services for LGBTQIA+ Individuals and Families
June 7-8, 2023
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

Ethics and Boundaries in Recovery Oriented Services (2 Sessions)
September 11-12, 2023
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Hearing Voices
Available Upon Request

2023 Course Calendar:
Link

please take time to check them out at www.thisismybrave.org, the organization provides in person and virtual performances and empowers individuals to share their stories in creative impactful ways. The third keynote speaker was Rita Lane. Rita was last year's PAPRS advocate of the year award winner. This year, Rita highlighted her advocacy work across the state of Pennsylvania, promoted CSP (community support programs) in each county and educated us all about the importance of challenging mental health stigma throughout our own communities. The last keynote speaker was Ross Szabo, a Pennsylvania native who is an advocate and an individual with lived experience. Ross is an advocacy speaker at Top Youth Speakers. Ross spoke about the importance of sharing your story, getting beneficial mental health help, and learning how to maintain and establish balance in life.

Aside from keynote speakers, the conference held some quality teaching workshops. Some top-rated workshops that were listed on conference evaluations were: LGBTQIA, QPR, Walk The Talk, Ethics, Crisis, and Safety Planning. All workshops had great content and interactive activities that engaged learners across all professional and personal relations. If you have not finished your evaluations from the workshops you attended please do so before June 20, 2023, or you will no longer be able to access your training certificates.

The poster winners, sponsor information, game collaborator winner and the professional award winners are highlighted in other articles in this month's PAPRS Newsletter; be sure to check them out! Overall, we had a great turn out to our 2023 conference, and we want to thank everyone that made this happen! Our biggest supporters in making the conference run smoothly and magically were Beth Ricker and Tricia Fisher! You both rock and we are always grateful for all the excellent work you do to help the conference committee. The last thank you goes out to all the individuals that attended the conference and participated in all the activities that were available. Great job this year to all! Hope to see everyone back in 2024!

CONGRATULATION!

Collaborator Game Winner:

Eneida Torres

Free Full Admission to 2024 PAPRS Conference

2023 Distinguished Service Awards!

The Pennsylvania Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (PAPRS) is pleased to announce the individuals and Psychiatric Rehabilitation agencies or programs which have distinguished themselves in their commitment to the principles of Psychiatric Rehabilitation in 2023. Awards are given in the four categories listed below. Award winners were honored at the PAPRS Annual conference on April 21, 2023, during the Closing Ceremony.

Distinguished Career Award

This award is to honor an individual who, throughout their career, has effectively promoted the development and implementation of psychiatric rehabilitation services in Pennsylvania.

"Kim has worked with Step By Step for nearly 30 years. She has grown the agency's Mobile Psychiatric Rehabilitation program since its infancy. She helped create our Fairweather Lodge Program, and oversees several independent and supported living programs. Kim is a role-model in advocating for the individuals in her services, always using a trauma-informed and client-centered approach to resolving issues."

Kimberly Orner Rauch

Distinguished Advocate Award

This award is to honor an individual who has advocated for the inclusion of psychiatric rehabilitation services in their organization, county, region, and/or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

"Through brainstorming ways to develop and enhance job skills, Tracy heard an idea of selling snacks and coffee. She allowed group members to foster this idea... They found an old computer cart that wasn't being used, cleaned it up and made it into their "Snack Cart." Members enjoyed learning and exploring items they can purchase to have on the cart to sell around the agency. This opened the door for group members to use their voice in each step of the development, all while learning about money management, accountability, teamwork and communication. As they noticed success and enjoyment with the snack cart, Tracy started hearing that group members were ready to take the next step and turn the cart into a café. Using money earned by the snack cart, and donations from community members, Tracy supported participants to create Jefferson Café. Members take full ownership in the functioning of the café; Tracy continues to advocate and guide them now that it is fully functioning and still growing."

Tracy McElhone

Distinguished Practitioner Award

This award is to honor an individual who has demonstrated a commitment to the principles and ethics of psychiatric rehabilitation in their work with persons in recovery.

"Liz started in our mobile psych rehab program in December 2018. At the time the program was very small. With help from Liz our program has grown significantly. We now have four employees in the program and are able to serve many more people in Venango County. Since starting the program she has been focused on assisting our participants on their recovery journey. She goes above and beyond but is also able to set limits. She understands for someone to be successful they must do the work and she is the guide along the way to teach skills, educate and support the person. Liz received her CPRP in 2020 and has been a huge asset to me. She has taken on more supervisory duties and I know I can trust and count on her. She is a dedicated employee and very deserving of this award."

Liz Guerin

Outstanding Program Award

This award is to honor an agency or program within an agency, which operates psychiatric rehabilitation that effectively meets the needs of persons in recovery.

"We are committed to the concepts of recovery and resiliency. We focus on the five key recovery concepts as founded by Mary Ellen Copeland: Hope, Personal Responsibility, Education, Self-advocacy, and Support.

The Challenge Center offers a variety of classes teaching skills and connecting individuals to resources that focus on the areas of living, learning, working, and socializing, to assist individuals in living a more fulfilled and satisfying life. Persons in recovery are in the driver seat and staff members are the pit crew helping individuals along the way. As individuals grow in their recovery, Challenge Center staff encourage them to find their own voice in making choices, as well as, taking responsibility for their recovery.

The Challenge Center inspires hope and empowerment to take back life, in spite of the mental health diagnosis and encourages individuals to continue choosing their path and writing their own story."

The Challenge Center
Challenge-Choice-Change

The Challenge Center

PA is Leading the Way in Psych Rehab!

CPRP Certification: 514 Members **CFRP Certification:** 7 Members

PRA Membership: 57 Organizational Members / 59 Individual Members

Program Spotlight: The Challenge Center

By: John W. Rosengrant

This edition's Program Spotlight is The Challenge Center, located in Franklin, PA. I had a chance to sit down with Aaron Burkhardt, who has been the Director of The Challenge Center since 2019. The Challenge Center recently won "Outstanding Program Award" at the most recent PAPRS Conference. Their program began back in a small office building in 2009. They grew significantly over the years, and eventually bought a building to accommodate their growing community. The Challenge Center has a total of 9 staff members. Aaron is the PRS Director, Brittani Smerkar is the Direct Care Supervisor, and they have 3 CPRP (John, Naomi, Ally), 3 PRS Workers (Julia, Denise, Gena) and 1 PRS Assistant (Heather). They provide Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services to over 70 participants across Venango, Crawford, and Mercer Counties, and all their staff help to keep things running smoothly.

Staff work with potential participants throughout the entire enrollment process. The staff will set up a preliminary visit to see what a day at the Challenge Center looks like, at which time other participants in the program provide a warm welcome with open arms. During this time, staff will also sit with them one-on-one to answer any questions they may have, and to have releases signed. In order for them to officially start as a Challenge Center participant though, they need a fully completed LPHA form (*requirement of all Psych Rehab Programs in Pennsylvania*) and have the insurance under medical assistance called Carelon (*formerly known as Beacon Health Options/Value Behavioral Health*).

The Challenge Center provides their participants with a variety of classes for the development of skills, ranging from emotion regulation and symptom management, to independent living skills and relationship-building. One of the unique things about Challenge Center's programming is that they are currently offering a Movement & Motion class and Weight Wellness & Healthy Choices class, which focus on developing skills to improve physical wellness and motivation. They also offer a Creative Expressions class, which encourages art as a coping skill. They also have a participant-run Advisory Board, which vets participant concerns and suggestions for improving services at the Challenge Center. Additionally, they offer after-hours activities including Creative Connections, which is a participant-led social activity.

Allison Downs, one of their Psych Rehab Workers, told me that what their participants like best about the Challenge Center is that the Challenge Center is like a second family to them because of the support they receive from staff, but also the support they receive from each other. Many participants have formed lasting connections and friendships with each other. When Allison was asked what she likes best about the program, she stated, "We have a very good balance of providing classes that are educational and informative, and also hands-on, engaging, and fun. It's also awesome to see how our participants show up for themselves and for each other each day. So many of them have broken out of their shells and made strides in their recoveries, and they work hard each day and use the skills they've learned within and outside of the Challenge Center."

Allison also stated that they often hear participants say, "This isn't called the Challenge Center for nothing. We recognize that each of us faces our own set of challenges, but we all come together and support each other through them. That's what the Challenge Center is all about."

This was echoed by Aaron herself in saying, "The thing I like best about our program is the community and culture of hope that we bring to those who have been impacted by mental health stigma and symptoms. The staff at the center all excel in compassion, empathy and caring with all their hearts to lend a hand and help others when needed."

We couldn't put together an article about this year's Most Outstanding Program without asking Aaron what she wants the PAPRS community to know about the Challenge Center. "The Challenge Center is always growing and striving to provide quality services daily. We are always open to work together with community agencies and PAPRS to educate others about psych rehab services across the state of Pennsylvania. This year, two Challenge Center staff presented a "Trauma Informed Care" workshop at the PAPRS Conference, and our CEO of Hand in Hand presented "Psych Rehab in Residential Settings" and "Psych Rehab for Older Adults" workshops. Psych Rehab is an always growing and learning service that advocates for mental health awareness and action. This is a needed service across the whole state that we hope someday will be an in-plan service of the state of Pennsylvania".

I think this sums up exactly why The Challenge Center is worthy of being called *Most Outstanding Program*. The impact and self determination that they instill in their participants is extraordinary, and the service and commitment from Aaron and her staff resonate loudly.

Challenge Center Facebook Page:
https://www.facebook.com/TheChallengeCTR/

2023 POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

Adult Category

1ST

DANIELLE DELSO
JOHNSTOWN, PA

2ND

KIMBERLY COVATCH
BADEN, PA

3RD

ANGELA CALDWELL
COUDERSPORT, PA

2023 POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

Young Adult Category

1ST

CAYLIN YOUNG
MEADVILLE, PA

2ND

JULIANN PERRY
MEADVILLE, PA

3RD

DAMEIN HUNT
AMBRIDGE PA

Conference Session Recap: Walk the Talk

By: Georgie Staley, Senior Program Director (CSG)

Hello PAPRS folks! I have one question for those of you who attended my workshops: ***ARE YOU WALKING?!?*** If not, you best get to steppin' because every one of you in my workshop promised me you would!

For those who didn't make it this year or last, let me explain! As professionals in the mental health field, we spend so many hours learning really cool techniques, such as DBT skills, mindfulness, and dare I say it...self-care. Yet how many of us actually use them to support our own mental health? Even down to the Psych Rehab Core Principles; are we walking the talk and living the principles, or are we just preaching, but not practicing? As I learned in my session, and as I suspected, only a handful of us really put the tools into practical use. It was my goal to emphasize how I, personally, used "evidence-based, promising, and emerging best practices that produce outcomes congruent with personal recovery" *(Psych Rehab Core Principle #11)*.

Last year, I set out to share my own story of recovery and how I learned to use certain tools to thrive at work and at home. This year, I added the tools I have learned over the past year to show that I am still on that journey to build on my strengths and capabilities *(Psych rehab Core Principles #1 and #4)*, in hopes that someone might just walk away with an idea to spark or support their own growth. They might even use the "Intentional Toolbox" from the presentation to promote their own health and wellness, and maybe even improve an aspect of their lives *(Psych Rehab Core Principles #9 and #10)* because, as we explored, it takes a significantly less amount of energy to use the tools we already have than to deal with the consequences and circumstances that develop if we do not.

So! Would you go to a dentist that had rotten teeth? Or order from a chef that refused to eat their own food? Then why would we expect someone to work with a mental health professional who does not believe in and use the theories and techniques they spew? Think about your most effective supervisors - did they tell you to do as they say and not as they do? Or did they model the expectations they had for you? I am guessing the latter. We in the field owe it to our clients (*whether they know it or not, because we want to respect and observe boundaries*), and ourselves, to be living, breathing examples of how the tools we learn can realistically work in everyday life.

In order for me to demonstrate how I "walk the talk", I chose to channel Breńe Brown and get vulnerable. That meant risking that my audience would not see vulnerability as weakness, but rather as a strength. Of course, it is always scary exposing the good, bad and ugly, but I felt it served a purpose here. So, I put it all out there. ((*Deep breath in. Hold it...wait for it...*)) I felt an overwhelmingly supportive response. *((Deep sigh of relief.))* You can't imagine the feeling I felt when I disclosed very personal things about my life and was met with acceptance, empathy, compassion, and appreciation.

> "Courage is contagious... we have to cultivate a culture in which brave work, tough conversations, and whole hearts are the expectation, and armor is not necessary or rewarded...we have to be vigilant about creating a culture in which people feel safe, seen, heard, and respected.
> Daring leaders must care for and be connected to the people they lead..."
> Brene Brown, Dare to Lead

That support echoed throughout the presentation as I discussed tools based in DBT, CBT, Motivational Interviewing, Recovery Language, de-escalation, mindfulness, boundaries, medication, therapy...you name it. I felt the agreement and respect that, even though this was my story and these are the tools I use, they aren't a one-size-fits all. People's recovery must be "unique [to the] needs of individuals, consistent with their values, hopes and aspirations" *(Psych Rehab Core Principle #5)*.

When we discussed stigma and what my monkey mind was telling me would happen if I ever disclosed my mental illness to anyone, I was sure I was safe in this space, because I saw people reacting non-verbally and adding thoughts in the chat space. When I shared my self-doubts, low self-esteem, and negative body image: I felt that safety. When I shared how I exercised my self-determination and ability to make my own decisions, no matter how unhealthy they may have been *(Psych Rehab Core Principle #7)*: I felt that safety.

I would like to take this moment to express my deep gratitude to the PAPRS community for being such a strong support in my recovery, for allowing me to share my story, for learning from my mistakes, and for not judging me as I work to reach my potential *(OH! Psych Rehab Core Principle #8 in case you are keeping track!)* My hope is that you treat yourselves as well as you treat your members/individuals, that you don't use your knowledge and training just on the job, and that you continue to grow and earn the happiness and wellness you each deserve. Thank you for all you do!

Thank You,

2023 CONFERENCE SPONSORS!

Your generosity is what allows us to continually provide a successful conference year after year! We truly could not do this without each and every one of you!

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COMMUNITY CARE Behavioral Health Organization

Over 40 years of excellence Step By Step, Inc.

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Stairways behavioral health

Elwyn Est. 1852

Children's Service Center an integrated behavioral health organization Centered on the very best health.

RHA HEALTH SERVICES PREVIOUSLY SALISBURY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

CSg

HH Horizon House

City of Philadelphia DBHIDS DEPARTMENT of BEHAVIORAL HEALTH and INTELLECTUAL disABILITY SERVICES

Bucks County Behavioral Health/Developmental Programs

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StLuke's UNIVERSITY HEALTH NETWORK

PENN FOUNDATION BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

PaPSC PENNSYLVANIA PEER SUPPORT COALITION

Community Counseling Center

Dickinson Center, Inc. COMPASSION • EXCELLENCE • HOPE SINCE 1958

"We believe recovery happens in the Community."

By Collette D'Angelo, MPH, CPRP; Michael Hrouda CPS, FPS; Cristina Mejia, B.A.

In January 2023, Access Services, Inc. implemented the PODS (the Power of Dependable Souls) program in Bucks County, PA with their Mobile Psychiatric Rehabilitation Service (Starting Point). PODS, a pilot program initiated through Temple University (TU) Collaborative on Community Inclusion, is a group-based psych rehab program focused on community engagement, shared activity interest, developing mutual stories, and creating a natural support system in the community.

With the support of a local community organization (Reach Out Foundation), Starting Point was able to facilitate collective meetings in a community space that was accessible to public transportation so that participants could have a means of getting to the meetings without needing support if they couldn't drive. Participants initially met weekly with a Starting Point Practitioner (PODs Facilitator) for the first month as a Collective, discussed common interests, developed ground rules, and a schedule.

The collective organized a Nintendo "Just Dance" activity as an icebreaker to help brainstorm options for a PODS group and engagement with each other. Through this activity Bowling PODS was initiated. The PODS identified a bowling alley that was easily accessible, a schedule that worked for the group, and a night that had affordable games.
Over the past five months, participants of the Collective have been able to meet in their community on their own as a PODS group. They've developed healthy friendships, become more confident, increased social connections, and have been able to utilize their strengths to help others. Participants have learned skills to overcome barriers in the areas of finances, transportation, emotional regulation, social connections, navigation community resources, and working with others.

Starting Point is currently working with the Collective to develop a new PODS group so that more individuals can experience the positive outcomes the Bowling PODS has achieved.

Here's what participants are saying about PODS:

"PODs is an innovative and fun way to grow connections with new people with different stories and backgrounds."

"The more I began to know, the more I began to grow."

"PODs is very fun and I have been able to learn more from people who also live with mental health challenges."

"I'm glad I've met such wonderful people."

"Real people come with real friends. These are my new best friends."

BUILD CONNECTIONS.

PODS is a group-based Psych Rehab Program focused on supporting you to increase community participation.

PLEASE CONTACT COLLETTE AT CDANGELO@ACCESSSERVICES.ORG OR CALL 215-816-0849 AND MENTION "PODS."

FIND YOUR COMMUNITY.

Creating Welcoming and Affirming Spaces for LGBTQIA+ Community in Psych Rehab

By: Martina Buffington, Technology Trainer (CSG)

What does "affirming'' mean? Or, perhaps a better question, what does affirming look like to you and what does it feel like to be affirmed? On the final day of the 2023 PAPRS Annual Conference, 115 of you joined the "Creating Welcoming and Affirming Spaces for the LGBTQIA+ Community'' to explore these questions.

As you might expect, to be affirmed looks differently for everyone. If you tried, it is likely that you would have little trouble finding two people who identify similarly to each other... two people who identify as male, two people who identify as straight, two people who identify as gay. What is unlikely, however, is to find two people who will describe for you similarly what it looks like to be affirmed and what it feels like to be celebrated. Sometimes, celebration looks like the Pride parades that happen every June. Sometimes affirmation looks like the US Congress passing laws to protect legal marriages for all. But sometimes (and hopefully in the near future, most times) affirmation and celebration means that a person is allowed to show up naturally and authentically without any fanfare whatsoever. A person is able to just exist and be in whatever shape or form that takes. Humans are so incredibly and wonderfully unique and so is true of this community.

The Human Rights Campaign reported that a record 71% of Amercians (and rising) support legal protections for the LGBTQIA+ community. Sadly though, in 2023 the LGBTQIA+ community is under siege from those who seek to limit their freedoms. Transgender humans specifically comprise less than 1% (0.39% according to the National Institute for Health) of the US population however more than 650 anti-trans bills have been introduced thus far in 2023 aimed at limiting access to healthcare, sports, and education. Research, science, healthcare professionals, and insurance companies have largely condemned these bills, citing the intense harm they cause to the LGBTQIA+ community. The American Academy of Pediatrics had this to say:

"The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly supports access to health care for all individuals regardless of gender identity. Our organization strongly opposes any legislation that would discriminate against gender-diverse individuals or limits access to comprehensive, evidence-based care. Any discrimination based on gender identity or expression is damaging to the socioemotional health of children and families as evidenced by increased risk of suicide in this population."

Community Care Behavioral Health (CCBH) is a managed care organization providing behavioral health coverage to individuals living in 43 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. CCBH has recognized the gravely damaging effects of living in anti-LGBTQIA+ environments, and has laid out specific and (*if I may say*) bold expectations for providers of behavioral healthcare in Pennsylvania. In CCBH's publication to providers, CCBH states, "It is expected that all providers engage in affirmative treatment. Affirmative treatment is an approach to care for LGBTQIA+ individuals that embraces a positive view of LGBTQIA+ identities and relationships and addresses the negative influences of homo/bi/trans-phobia and hetero/cis-sexism."

Being an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community begins by holding safety as the pillar to be prioritized above all other virtues. Physical and emotional safety is often not present for this community so for providers to act as allies, first and foremost they must contribute to building a safe environment. Additionally, below is a list of tips that a provider can take to bolster one's ability to support this community:

Vote - Above all other methods to becoming an ally that will be mentioned here, the single most important action that you can take to support the LGBTQIA+ population is to vote. Register to vote and then show up for this community.

Speak up - We recognize that speaking up for any marginalized community can be hard, especially in the workplace or when sitting around the holiday table with family. We don't want to say or do the wrong thing or we don't want to damage the relationships we have with our colleagues and family members. The results of keeping quiet, though, are damaging in so many significant ways and should be enough to help us find our courage.

Educate yourself - Find a mode of educating yourself that works for you. For example, active learning (reading books, going to a training, doing your own internet searches) versus passive learning (following the social media pages and sharing the posts, paying attention to popular culture, surrounding yourself with community members). As you are going through your everyday life and hearing words or phrases that you don't understand, look them up. Google them. That way you are more knowledgeable when you encounter someone who needs your support.

Challenge yourself and your biases - Someone coming out to you will read your body language. They will see you shift in your seat or see you hold your breath for just a moment and those non-verbals will send signals to the individual that you are uncomfortable. Challenge yourself and your biases BEFORE you are in the situation, get comfortable with being uncomfortable, so that your non-verbals are warm and welcoming.

Use chosen names and pronouns - *Always. Full stop*. Using a name that a person has expressly asked you not to use is an act of violence and causes trauma. Using chosen names are not preferences, they are requirements.

Own your mistakes - You may mess up and that is completely ok. No one is ever expected to be perfect 100% of the time. But when you do mess up/say the wrong thing, stop yourself immediately, apologize with sincerity, and then make your best effort to do better in the future.

Allyship is a love language. It says: tell me what you need. I don't know what to do or what to say but I am here, at the ready, willing, no criticism, no judgment. If you tell me to do nothing, I will do nothing. If you tell me to speak, I will lift my voice even if the wrong things come out. No more will I be idle. No more will I watch you suffer. I am with you.

~ poet Adrian Michael Green

For more information on how to support LGBTQIA+ youth and adults in Pennsylvania, see the resources linked below:
Gender and Sexuality Development Program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Community Care Behavioral Health Performance Standards for working with LGBTQIA+

LOOK FOR OUR NEXT PAPRS NEWSLETTER IN SEPTEMBER 2023!