

2006 Annual Report of Mental Health Committee

2006 was an exciting year for Mental Health in Benton and Franklin Counties. Starting with the issuance of the long awaited “Anne Strode Report” in February, to the hiring process for a new director of Human Resources which began in September and continued throughout the remainder of the year, the MHC was part of the process.

2006 also saw the establishment of the jail services program in the Benton County jail. Lourdes Counseling Center contracted to provide services to assess persons with mental health problems who are incarcerated and to provide smooth transition to DSHS services when they are released.

Another part of House Bill 1290 is also being implemented in Benton and Franklin counties, among others, as DSHS works to provide expedited access to services for persons with a serious mental illness who are being released from jail/prison or a mental hospital.

Another exciting new program that began in 2006 was the implementation of the PATH program to aid the homeless mentally ill. This program proactively seeks to find homeless mentally ill people in our community, meet their immediate physical needs, and connect them to social services and mental health services.

In 2006, the Mental Health committee:

- Adopted an official position and wrote to county commissioners urging them to proceed with the plans for:
 1. building an integrated crisis center
 2. creating a strategic plan with community input for a comprehensive mental health system.
- Facilitated a 2-hour training program introducing CIT to all Richland police officers.
- Participated in the jail mapping process being conducted by our county Department of Human Services. Laid the groundwork of collaboration which allowed the initial phase to proceed so efficiently.
- Established a sub-committee which formed an independent organization called Mid-Columbia Housing Options. This organization has established a Board of Directors and incorporated for the purpose of providing housing opportunities for the mentally ill. It plans to apply for 501c3 status.
- Kept lines of communication open among the various agencies involved. Added a representative from the Department of Corrections to our membership.

Future goals:

- Continue to keep each other informed of all the initiatives happening in mental health in our community.
- Continue to advocate for needed changes in how our community responds to the needs of the mentally ill.
- Continue to educate ourselves, our elected officials, and the community on mental health issues.