

# CFAC Meeting Minutes

## October 12, 2006

**Present:** Pam, Cheryl, Allen, Marcus, Leslie, Steve, Bradley, Gwyn, Megan, Dan, Virginia, Michael B., and Michael N.

**Guest:** Lisa Hamill, NAMI-Orange County President

**Introductions:** Committee members introduced themselves to the Guest Speaker, Lisa Hamill.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the September meeting were reviewed, and a motion was made to approve them with a correction to the spelling of Gwyn's name. The motion was seconded and carried.

### REPORTS

**Update from CFAC Chair:** Dan reported on several things:

- CFAC needs to nominate new officers. Dan mentioned that last year, a nomination sub-committee was established. Dan announced his need to step down as Chair due to the traveling required by his work schedule. He would like to remain an active member of CFAC. Virginia has agreed to serve as Chair, and Allen and Pam agreed to continue as Treasurer and Secretary, respectively. Since no one volunteered to serve as Vice-Chair, Dan and Virginia agreed to speak to individual members between now and the November meeting.
- Dan also provided an update from the Child and Family Sub-Committee of the OPC Board. He reported that there has been a reduction in funding for Child and Family services. Due to a recent incident in which a young man allegedly killed his father and fired gunshots at a local high school, members of the Sub-Committee found this cut in funding to be particularly worrisome.
- The Orange County recycling facility responded to a letter Dan wrote regarding problems with access for disabled persons. Dan suggested that they need to provide easy access or assistance from staff of the recycling center. The facility reported that this matter would be taken up at their October meeting.
- Finally, Dan recognized Edward for his sharing at a recent NAMI Family-to-Family dinner. He reported that he found Edward's remarks to be very moving and effective.

**Update from OPC CFAC Liaison:** Michael N. drew committee members' attention to several upcoming trainings, including the ADCNC Outer Banks Conference, the W.R.A.P. and Peer Specialist Trainings sponsored by the Triangle Empowerment Center, and the 2006 NC Council of Community Programs Conference. Michael also spoke briefly about Communication Bulletin #63, which outlines the non-Medicaid Appeals Process. This process would be followed only after a consumer's appeal has been through the local LME complaint process. Michael noted that a copy of Communication Bulletin #63 (which includes an attachment that explains the process in detail) is included in the Pass Around Folder.

**Update from State CFAC Liaison:** Michael B. reported on Community Program Realignment, which allows for LMEs to transfer up to 15% of their state allocation from one population to another (e.g., transferring funding designated for Developmental Disabilities services to Child Mental Health services). In order to complete such a transfer, LMEs must demonstrate that all the needs have been met for the population from which funding is being transferred. This requires the signatures of the Area Director, the Area Board Chair, and the CFAC Chair. Michael advised members to use the document that identifies service gaps for OPC to help determine whether all the needs have been met for a particular population, should OPC plan to transfer funds this year.

## **GUEST SPEAKER**

Lisa Hamill shared a bit about her background. She currently serves as the Advocacy Chair for NAMI - Orange County, and will become their new President on Saturday. She has a long history of political advocacy and activism. She shared some of her family stories related to various disabilities.

Lisa pointed out that CFAC membership is in itself a sort of advocacy. There are many issues for which NAMI is and has been advocating, including:

- Affordable insurance that includes mental health parity
- Affordable housing
- Fighting stigma
- Mental health funding and the uncertainties of reform

Advocacy can take place nationally, statewide, and locally. Examples of advocacy at the local level include:

- Local funding issues -- Informing County Commissioners about the issues of persons living with mental illness, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities in order to help sustain funding
- Local housing issues -- NAMI worked with Club Nova a few years ago to get the Section 8 waiting list opened for persons with disabilities (the waiting list had been closed because it included more than 1,000 names)
- Local decriminalization of mental illness -- NAMI members were instrumental in establishing the Community Resource Court (a mental health court), which has been operational in Orange County for more than 6 years now. Their advocacy efforts helped to get jail diversion funding, which supported the first staff position for Community Resource Court.

These examples were primarily the result of one person's advocacy effort. Group advocacy can be much stronger!

Local boards are very important to the process. Examples in Orange County include the OPC Board, the Senior Center Mental Health Advisory Board, and the Club Nova Community Board. At the State level, legislative advocacy is key. And there are numerous opportunities for advocacy at the Federal level, including Medicaid funding, mental health insurance parity, and funding for services and research (which was cut in the most recent federal budget).

Political advocacy is the equivalent to problem solving. Advocates need to be very specific about their goals, and to plan strategically how they will meet them. Advocates need to have good, factual information. Effective follow-up is essential to the success of any advocacy effort.

The most important qualification of a good advocate is a strong desire and commitment to speak sincerely and authentically -- to speak from the heart. It is also important to keep one's morale up, in order to remain energized for the long haul.

It's important to remember that mental illness, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse issues cross party lines in politics. These are not simply Democratic or Republican issues. So it is important to develop relationships with representatives of both parties.

Advocates need to be proactive. This involves knowing when their issues are coming up in the legislative process, so that they can make calls ahead of time. Even calls from 20 constituents can make a real difference.

Building coalitions is also crucial to the process, because often issues intersect (e.g., transportation and environmental issues).

What are the challenges for an advocate? Some people may have a negative reaction to the importance of your issues. And you may not always know the results of your advocacy efforts. Therefore, it requires patience and perseverance.

Lisa invited CFAC members to list their advocacy issues. The list included:

- Transportation that is affordable and able to cross county lines
- Elimination of stigma
- Adequate MH/DD/SA services (includes adequate funding)
- Complimentary therapies
- Eliminating abuse in the service system and in institutions
- Insurance parity
- Holding service providers accountable for their actions (for example, there is limited liability for Class A violations)
- Understaffed providers

Lisa led an exercise that gave CFAC members an opportunity to practice lobbying skills. Members shared afterward that things they found effective were eye contact, personal stories, connecting, and telling heartfelt personal stories.

Lisa ended her presentation by pointing out that if one person calls 5 people, who then call 5 people, who then call 5 people... that by the 7<sup>th</sup> repetition, more than 78,000 calls will have been made!

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- The revised Bylaws were passed by a unanimous vote.
- Due to a lack of time, the discussion of CFAC membership terms and the PSI workshop were tables until November.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Michael N. informed members that several items needing CFAC input were to be presented to the OPC Board at their meeting later in the month. These were revisions to the OPC Mission Statement, a policy and forms related to IPRS service denials, and procedures for allocation of DD service funds. Dan asked whether members would like to stay late to be able to review these documents (which were distributed with the agenda), or whether they preferred to notify Michael N. individually with any feedback. Members agreed to the latter arrangement and will contact Michael by October 20 if they wish to provide feedback on any of these documents.
- Dan suggested that members decide who will attend any of the upcoming training opportunities included in the Pass Around folder. Pam expressed interest in the W.R.A.P. and Peer Specialist trainings, and members approved her attendance. Allen, Cheryl, and Pam are interested in attending the 2006 Conference of the NC Council of Community Programs. These requests were also approved. Michael B. informed the group that one scholarship was available for each CFAC in NC. Michael N. will request a scholarship when he is registering these members for the conference and hotel.

### **NEXT MONTH'S AGENDA**

Proposed items for the November meeting include:

- A summary presentation of the PSI Workshop
- Discussion of CFAC membership terms
- Election of officers