

CSP Logo designed by
Chris Ford

Community Support Journal



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Montgomery County
Community Support Program Committee

Involuntary treatment not needed in Montco CSP votes to write letter objecting to AOT law

By: *Kathie Mitchell, Newsletter Editor*
Sue Shannon, HopeWorx Executor Director

Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), also known as involuntary treatment, was discussed at the CSP meeting in November with the overwhelming consensus being that the forced treatment of people in distress was not necessary in Montgomery County.

The committee made a motion and voted to send a letter urging the county to opt out of the AOT law.

Pam Howard, the administrator of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Early Intervention, presented information about the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) law.



~ A home like the one above could be used as a peer respite and is one alternative to forced treatment.

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Love Works and FamilyWorx spread Holiday Cheer

By: Akilah Williams, AdvocacyWorx Program Director

When a local family informed FamilyWorx, last year, that they needed food and presents for Christmas, Love Works stepped in, along with other community partners, and provided food from their food pantry. This was the beginning of a cooperative relationship between the two non-profit organizations that includes partnering with FamilyWorx to support families again this year by opening up access to their clothing penn to families in need.

Families can come and pick out clothing, a need that has only increased over the past few years due to inflation and stagnant wages.

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AOT—continued from page one

She began by talking about involuntary treatment, which in her very far reaching vision, would not be needed. The work at the county is building the blocks and tools to keep things moving to add crisis resources and other resources to create a system that serves everyone's needs without involuntary intervention.


Howard presented information about the AOT law – the law allows the court to order individuals to use treatment services, if they have a history of violence or the inability to take care of themselves. 3 counties out of 67 are piloting implementation of this law currently, using money that is not ongoing. Other counties have not implemented for a variety of reasons, including financial, philosophical and lack of resources.

To implement this law, there would need to be additional resources in the court system, in the county MH office, and treatment would have to be paid for - not everyone will have insurance coverage. As a county, there is a need for resources to provide services, including state money that comes in block grants, which has not been increased, even for cost of living (COLA) since 2007. The purchasing power of that money has decreased dramatically. So, to implement AOT, which requires use of services, the services have to be well funded.

In the past, the CSP committee has sent letters to Montgomery County to urge the county not to opt in, because of a lack of resources, because involuntary treatment is not trauma informed and because involuntary treatment is a violation of an individual's civil rights. The county listened to that feedback and took it into account. Howard said she knows this is an issue that is important to continue to discuss, to get feedback from as many stakeholders as possible and she is interested in working with CSP to help with that.

Anna Trout, Crisis and Diversion Director, said the county has learned a lot from the involuntary options that existed before the AOT law – it is challenging to implement for everyone involved, including providers. For example, added Howard, Peer Support is a service that can be mandated, but any understanding of Peer Support would include that involuntary treatment is against the basic principles of the service.

In addition, Trout said there is a difference between legal criteria and clinical criteria for crisis. Legal criteria is whether an individual is a risk to himself or others from a public safety standpoint – is this risk serious enough to override civil liberties? On the other hand, clinical criteria is very specific to the individual themselves. To address crisis effectively as a system, all of the services in the system need to be effective and accessible.



Everyone agreed that more alternatives are needed in treatments; more choices, more options, and more paths so that people do not end up in crisis situations that lead to even more crises for families and for communities.

Some Questions/Feedback:

- Does the AOT law lower the threshold for involuntary commitment? A: Yes, it extends the lookback into a person's history from one month to 4 years, and changes the definition of inability to care for oneself.
- Who gets to decide if a person meets the criteria? A: Pam responded that this is an important and big question, and if anything like this were implemented, she would bring people, including individuals and their family members to a table to talk about this question.
- Can we get more support for families, so they don't look at the last resort of involuntary treatment? Pam thanked her for the feedback and said the county is always looking to provide resources in more areas, like schools, and for transition age youth.

Bill Myers, CEO of MCES, thanked Pam for the very clear presentation and he said that he agreed with everything that had been said, including about how stretched resources are right now, and that involuntary treatment is challenging to provide already, and from MCES's experience, expanding involuntary treatment is less effective.

Love Works - Continued from page one

“This is our busy time of year and there have been a lot of people coming in for food and clothing,” said Jessica Melniczak, one of three co-founders of Love Works.

Although Love Works officially became a non-profit in November 2021, the three co-founders, Jessica Melniczak, Tori Conicello-Emery, and George Searfross, have been doing this work over the past ten years.

George, the pastor of the Hope Church, began this ministry to provide tangible acts of love 17 years ago. Jessica ran the program for over ten years, often volunteering her time. Then Tori came to the church in an administrative capacity nine years ago, and the program continued to expand, especially during the pandemic.



L to R: Jessica Melniczak, George Searfross, Tori Conicello-Emery, and Jim Runkle

The church, seeing the need, gave Love Works a separate building to use, which allowed them to expand even further.

Even though it is partnered with a church, it is not a religious non-profit. However, Love Works cannot discount how much the non-profit and church are intricately linked in that it would not exist without the partnership and support of the church.

In addition to their food pantry and clothing penn, they also offer a family-based music therapy group for children aged 0-5 and their caregivers.

They have formed a partnership with Beal Bank, in King of Prussia, to offer financial literacy to their community partners.

Their co-op community garden produced over 300 pounds of food in its first season of operation.

For more information about Love Works Resource Center visit [Love Works Resource Center \(loveworksrc.org\)](https://loveworksrc.org)



L to R: Tori Conicello-Emery, Akilah Williams, HopeWorx

CSP voices concern over alleged abuse at state forensic hospital



FROM THE NOVEMBER CSP MINUTES—

The committee raised concerns about alleged abuse at the Norristown State Hospital Forensic Unit that was detailed in an article in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The information, reported by a state hospital employee, outlined a long term culture of abuse of patients by staff.

The Committee raised important questions during the discussion:

- Why isn't this subject to mandated reporter laws?
- Is the forensic hospital regulated by the state psychiatric hospital regulations?
- Is there an ombudsman? Is there any way for a person to make a complaint without going through their direct support staff?

A decision was made to have the advocacy committee write a letter to the state asking these questions and expressing CSP's concern that this not be buried, that there be an investigation and that the results of that investigation be shared transparently. This letter can also be shared with CSPs across the region and the state as well as with NAMI chapters, to either sign on to our letter or to provide a template for them to send their own letters. The state is definitely hearing from the southeast regional county administrators and other stakeholders. We should coordinate so that the state knows there is a collective voice around this issue.

According to the report, several patients at the forensic unit alleged incidents of abuse which included assaults and burns. Many of those patients were assaulted out of the view of security cameras by employees who claimed the patients fell out of bed, said seven current and former employees.



Winter is here and Hopeworx, Inc. is looking for ways to support people who are homeless. They are working on putting together some Winter Care Backpacks. Below is a list of things they would like to see in the care packs.

Donation lists:

Necessities – The things highlighted are currently on top of the needs list, however we will take whatever you can donate

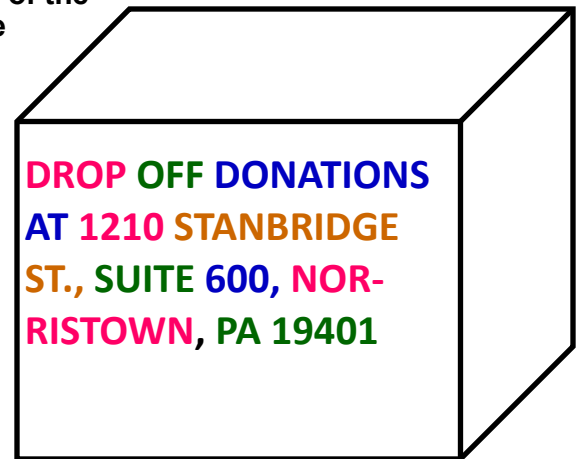
- Deodorant
- Lotions
- Bottled water
- Gallon / Quart size Ziploc bag
- Hats
- Ski mask
- Gloves
- Hand warmers
- Blistex
- Travel size Hand sanitizers
- Wipes
- Whistles

Non-Perishable Foods

- Instant oatmeal packs
- Granola bars
- Energy bars
- Easy Open Pull-Top Lids ready to eat can foods - Tuna, Chicken, Vienna sausage, sardines
- Cracker packs
- Trail mix
- Raisins and/or Peanuts
- Fruit/ applesauce (with spoon)
- Gum/hard candy
- Hot cocoa/ spiced cider mixes
- On-the-go coffee mixes
- Tea packets
- Beef jerky sticks

Other

- Note of Encouragement
- Grocery store gift card





PAPSC WELLNESS VIDEO PROJECT

make a video of you
doing something for
your wellness as a
peer professional



Deadline:
Thursday,
June 1st,
2023

Get a \$10

gift card to our
store
one entry
per person
videos will be
compiled for our
YouTube
Channel



Questions?

Reach out to info@paps.org





Please join us for a

Holiday POTLUCK PARTY

On December 16th at 3pm - 5pm

At HopeWorx, 1210 Stanbridge St,
suite 600, Norristown, PA 19401

rsyb

Beth Buress
bburgess@hopeworxinc.org
610 270 368



Happy New Year!

International Human Rights Day December 10th



Stand Up for Human Rights



ARTICLE 1

ALL HUMAN BEINGS
ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL
IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION
OF HUMAN RIGHTS



75 UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS

DIGNITY, FREEDOM & JUSTICE FOR ALL

Shattering Stigma Podcast with NAMI Montgomery County PA

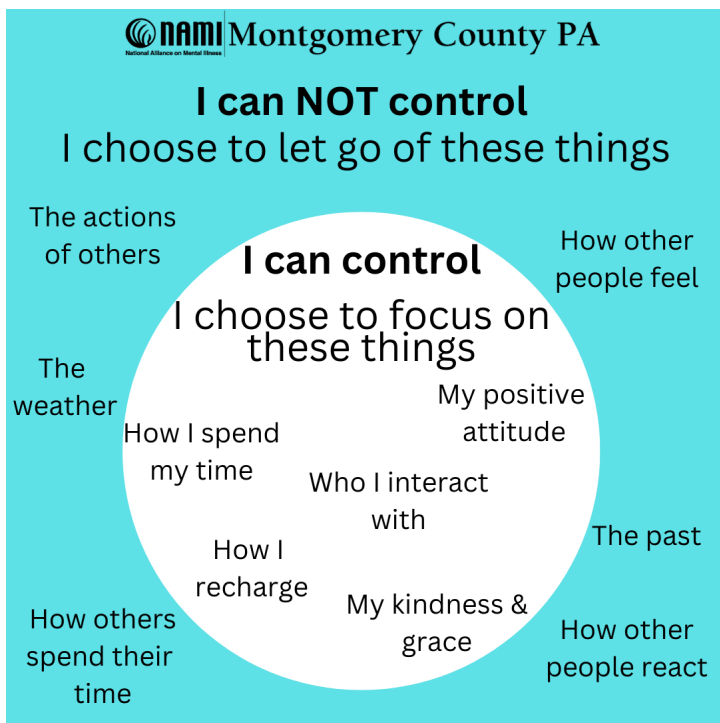
Sharing stories about mental health!

This podcast will feature individuals who will share their lived experience with mental illness; either living with a mental illness, or whose lives are impacted by one. We will discuss why mental health is important, what you can do to become an advocate, and shatter stigma related to mental illness.

The podcast is available on Apple Podcast, Spotify, Google Podcast, and Amazon Podcast.



[Click here to listen!](#)



The month of December can bring stress and feelings of uneasiness with the approaching holidays, family gatherings, and potential commitments. During times of stress, it's important to remember what is IN your control and OUTSIDE of your control. Using control circles can help you focus on things you can control and let go of things you cannot control.

Outside of your circle, you can NOT control the weather, the actions of others, how others spend their time, the emotions of others, the past, and how people react to various situations.

Within your circle, you CAN control your own attitude, how you spend your time, who you interact with, how you recharge, and how you practice kindness and grace.

SHATTERING STIGMA PODCAST with

 **NAMI** | Montgomery County PA
National Alliance on Mental Illness



Available on Apple Podcast, Spotify,
Google Podcast, and Amazon
Podcast.

Montgomery County Seeks Public Input on New County Comprehensive Plan

The [Montgomery County Planning Commission](#) (MCPC) invites everyone to take part in the planning for the county's upcoming 2050 comprehensive plan. The plan, [Montco 2050: A Comprehensive Plan for a Changing World](#), will guide overall growth and future development and will help the county in making planning decisions with an outlook to the year 2050. The plan will look at broad issues that affect everyone's quality of life in the county, such as land uses; housing; traffic and transit; parks, trails, and open spaces; health; utilities and infrastructure; natural and historic resources; and economic development.

Public opinion is an important element of this planning process. The plan will ultimately reflect the needs of Montgomery County residents, so the county's goal is to hear from as many voices as possible.

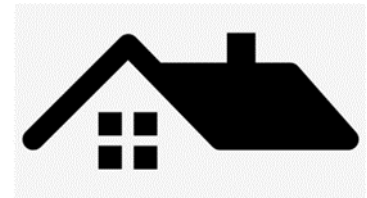
A public survey, offered in Korean, Spanish, and English, is available at www.montcopa.org/montco2050. Paper copies of the survey are also available by calling (610) 278-3727. The public can also visit the [Montco 2050 Padlet](#) to participate by sharing ideas and providing comments.



We're hiring at The Ferns Peer Respite

Be the change that you wish to see in the world!

We have exciting Peer Support employment opportunities as we launch a new venture in Southeastern Pennsylvania, The Ferns Peer Respite. To ensure success as a Peer Respite Peer Support Worker, you will have significant experience with and understanding of advocacy, group facilitation, and peer support, and will be familiar with Intentional Peer Support, Trauma-Informed Practices, and related values and principles. This is a peer role, requiring lived experience. As a peer, you will be someone who has personally experienced crisis, trauma, and/or extreme distress.



The Ferns Peer Respite

a community for learning, healing and growing,
recognizing that distress is a common human experience

We will begin recruiting for Part-Time and Per Diem positions shortly. If you are interested in Part-Time and/or per diem positions at The Ferns, please forward your resume and a cover email to Olivia Bruecks at obruecks@theferns.org. Please be sure to address the following in your cover email:

- Describe why you are interested in the position;
- Confirming that you meet the definition of “peer” as described above;
- Note the days of the week, hours, and/or schedule available to work;
- Whether you are interested in a regularly scheduled Part-Time position or a Per Diem (on-call) position.

Download full Job Description [here](#).



Please feel free to share this flyer with any possible candidates or organizations.



You can find the job description on our website. Click [here](#).

Be the change that you wish to see in the world!

We have exciting Peer Support employment opportunities as we launch a new venture in Southeastern Pennsylvania, The Ferns Peer Respite. To ensure success as a Peer Respite Peer Support Worker, you will have significant experience with and understanding of advocacy, group facilitation, peer support, and will be familiar with Intentional Peer Support, Trauma-Informed Practices, and related values and principles. This is a peer role, requiring lived experience. You will be someone who has personally experienced crisis, trauma, and / or extreme distress.



The Ferns Peer Respite

a community for learning, healing and growing.
recognizing that distress is a common human experience



To see the full job description or apply, please go to:

<https://www.indeed.com/job/peer-support-worker-d5bc3b8f81db77a4>

Who We Are

The Ferns Peer Respite Council is a grass-roots organization evaluating the need for and seeking to establish peer respite in our region. Our members are individuals with lived experience who have experienced crisis, family members of individuals with these experiences, services providers, and community members. For more information about The Ferns Peer Respite, please visit our website at <https://www.hopeworxinc.org/what-we-do/ferns-peer-respite/>

HopeWorx, Inc. is a 501(c)3, established in 1994, and located in Norristown, PA. The mission of HopeWorx is to promote the continued development of a community environment which supports and believes in the expertise and passion of individuals to create and direct their own paths to health and recovery. HopeWorx is the parent company of the Community Satisfaction Team, AdvocacyWorx, CommunityWorx, the Family Satisfaction Team, FamilyWorx, and the fiduciary for The Ferns Peer Respite. the Montgomery County and Southeast Regional CSP committees. For more information about HopeWorx, please visit our website at <https://www.hopeworxinc.org/>

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

— **Barack Obama**

What is Peer Respite?

Peer respite provides a welcoming space for people who feel overwhelmed, to have time, space and relationships that support their self-determination, healing, and growth. We recognize that people are the experts on themselves. Guests stay for one to seven days in a home-like environment. Peer respite staff have learned new responses from our own crises and are ready to compassionately engage as equals with guests, as the guests consider how they want their lives to be different. We offer honest, caring, mutually responsible relationships.

Peer respite is different from hospitalization or crisis residential services, and provides an alternative where distress is viewed through the lens of being a common human experience instead of pathology; guests find meaning and growth in the experience.

Subcommittee Reports from November 2022

Due to the presentation and discussions on Assisted Outpatient Treatment and the alleged abuse at the Norristown State Hospital Forensic Unit, there was not time in November for the committee reports.

Advocacy Subcommittee
Community Outreach Subcommittee
Conference Subcommittee

CSP MEETING CALENDER 2022-23

*Meetings are held every third
Thursday, monthly @
Norristown Public Library from
12: 00-2:30pm
The next meeting will be:*

| | |
|----------|----|
| December | 15 |
| January | 19 |
| February | 16 |
| March | 16 |

*Meetings are currently held via
Zoom.*

Montgomery County CSP Executive Committee

2022/2023 Tri-Chairs

Provider Member: Abby Grasso
 Person in Recovery: Danny Kuchler
 Family Member: Kathy Laws

2022/2022 Sub-Committee Chairs

Community Outreach: Dion Despaigne
 Advocacy: Akilah Williams, Julie Whitmore
 Conference: Erin Hewitt, Stacey Volz

2022/2023 Treasurer

Dion Despaigne, CST Specialist

County Liaison - Tracey Riper-Thomas



Fiduciary - HopeWorx, Inc.

1210 Stanbridge Street,
 Suite 600
 Norristown, PA 19401
 610-270-3685

CSP Principles

- * **Consumer Centered/
Consumer Empowered**
- * **Culturally competent**
- * **Able to Meet Special Needs**
- * **Community Based with Natural Supports**
- * **Flexible**
- * **Coordinated**
- * **Accountable**
- * **Strength Based**

Organizations who regularly send representatives to CSP:

Central Behavioral Health, AdvocacyWorx, Community Satisfaction Team of Montgomery County, Magellan Health Services, Montgomery Co. Department of Behavioral Health, Montgomery County Emergency Services (MCES), NAMI Montgomery County, Norristown Vet Center, Resources for Human Development, Salisbury Behavioral Health

Meetings:

12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

3rd Thursday of each month

**Norristown
Public Library
Community Room**

1001 Powell St.

Currently via Zoom

Kathie Mitchell, Newsletter Editor

Join our Mailing list!

We have an email list as well as a regular mailing, to join:

Send an e-mail to:

pjohnson@hopeworxinc.org

Or send your contact info to this mailing address:

1210 Stanbridge St., Suite 600, Norristown, PA 19401

CSP Mission Statement:

Montgomery County's Community Support Program (CSP) brings together individuals that receive mental health services, their family members, providers and the Department of Behavioral Health in an equal partnership to promote recovery and excellence in the delivery of community-based mental health services.

The committee strives to include a balance of people who use services, people who provide services, family members, and interested members of the community at large. The CSP initiatives continue to grow state, regionally and county wide. As the involvement increases CSP has become a place that feedback can truly be given to the county from individuals that receive services and information can be given that suits the needs and requests of those that attend.

CSP Subcommittees:

- * **Advocacy Subcommittee**—Works on legislative, policy, communication, budget, voter education and other issues related to mental health services in the county, statewide and at the federal level when relevant. At the direction of the CSP Committee, the Advocacy Subcommittee gathers information on issues, plans advocacy events and creates a monthly newsletter to provide information to the stakeholder network as well as the community at large about the work of CSP. The newsletter also provides updates on new and changing mental health services provided in Montgomery County. The newsletter editor can be contacted at: kathiemitchell8221@gmail.com.
- * **Community Outreach Subcommittee**—Works on facilitating opportunities for people in the CSP community to be more involved in the Montgomery County community. This includes implementing the Community Connections grants, which provide funding for people to participate in a variety of activities. The committee also implements transportation grants that provide gas cards and SEPTA day passes to CSP community members. The annual CSP Poster Art contest is also organized by this committee.
- * **Conference Subcommittee** – The conference subcommittee will plan and fundraise for the annual Montgomery County CSP Conference.

We invite all peers, family members and providers/professionals to attend.