

**National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations
August 7, 2006 Teleconference Notes**

Mission Statement

The National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations (NCMHCSO) will ensure that consumer/survivors have a major voice in the development and implementation of healthcare, mental health, and social policies at the local, state, and national levels empowering people to recover and lead a full life in the community.

Participating:

Dan Fisher, Judi Chamberlin and Judene Shelley, National Empowerment Center, MA
Joseph Rogers, National Self-Help Clearinghouse, PA
Mike Finkle and Emily Hoffman, On Our Own of MD
Peter Ashenden, Mental Health Empowerment Project, NY
Jack Bucher, Collaborative Support Programs of NJ Inc.
Mary Blake, Consumer Action Network (CAN), DC
Christine Allison, WE CAN! of Colorado
Kay Rote, Oklahoma Mental Health Consumer Council
Cassandra Nudel and Lauren Spiro, VOCAL (Virginia)
Annette Deonorine, Advocacy Unlimited, CT
Kay Rote, Oklahoma MH Consumer Council
Joleen Smith, Texas MH Consumers
Andrew Phelps, NO List, CA
Doreen Mills, Kentucky Consumer Advocates
Clifford Thurston, Washington New Century Consumer Coalition
Dave Saunders, W VA MH Consumer's Association

1. Status of hiring a Public Policy Director for our DC office.

Three strong candidates are being interviewed on Thursday, August 10, 2006 at the Bazelon Center in DC by Mike Finkle, Effie Smith, and Dan Fisher.

2. Process for gaining membership in the Coalition

The draft Membership Application was distributed to everyone. Peter Ashenden, chair of the Membership Committee, asked for suggestions and comments on the form to be returned to the Membership Committee, via Judene's email, j.shelley@comcast.net by August 17, 2006. After that time, a final application will go out to all to be filled out and returned.

Joseph Rogers asked about the draft form and organizations that represent regions. He suggested that it would simplify the process to have one group per state at least in the beginning. Joseph suggested that we ask the state organizations to work it out, to decide who will be the representative. Groups could designate a person to represent all of their groups. A state could form a coalition or network of independent organizations.

Judi Chamberlin asked what we might do if there is a regional organization in a state that has no statewide organization. It was suggested that the regional organization could be encouraged to reach out and involve the rest of the state, too.

Discussion followed about the possibility of having a “provisional status” for organizations that are in the process of developing statewide. This could be an incentive to organize statewide. It was suggested that the group consider flexible ways of what to do in special circumstances.

The Membership committee will come up with recommendations.

3. Finalized mission statement and statement of purpose

Dan asked if everyone was in agreement with the mission statement and statement of purpose. Mary Blake said that some versions of the latest statements were missing the words “and lead” in the phrase: “recover and lead a full life.” Those words will be included.

Dan said that a website was set up with minimal information at www.ncmhcsso.org. An interactive map of the country with the organizations participating, and links to their websites, will be added. There could be a blog, yet Joseph said someone would need to respond to things and keep it fresh.

Dan asked if there were any other suggestions for the website to let him know.

Joseph Rogers next told about a group of people brought together hosted by National Self-Help Clearinghouse in July. They decided to form an organization, National Alliance of Peer Specialists. This is a trade organization of people who are working in the field and being paid as Peer Specialists. This focused effort on Peer Specialists should be complementary to the National Coalition.

4. How to best affect policies in at federal and state levels: prioritizing our issues and drafting our positions through a white paper, voting, educating legislators, or involvement in policy formation.

Dan said it was important to prioritize the DC activities that our organization gets involved in. He suggested having people rank what they feel are the most important issues. He also spoke of the importance of having allies and allied organizations. The Bazelon Center and AAPD (American Association of People with Disabilities) have stepped forward. NMHA can also help introduce them to people to learn how they work in DC. It was suggested that we have a local DC advisory group. The National Coalition could also have per diem people participate at times.

Mary Blake and Effie Smith, of DC CAN volunteered to do whatever they can to support the cause. We want to keep as many people in the conversation as possible.

Jack Bucher suggested that we need to ask what kind of inkind services? Would Bazelon Center provide more than office space? The Bazelon Center has a policy staff that can be very supportive and have a lot of contacts on the hill.

It was suggested that we have a local DC advisory group of people who are very close to our movement and could help open doors for our person. The National Coalition could also have per diem people participate at times. Peter Ashenden said he would try to facilitate a meeting with Jane Porter, the new USPRA public policy person. Joseph suggested we get together the “friends of” the National Coalition for the next grant we apply for.

5. Fundraising, incorporation, and membership fees

The group discussed the possibility of organizational dues and membership fees. Joseph suggested .5% of an organization’s annual budget (1/2 of 1%)

Kay Rote said that some states don’t have funds separate from their grants and contracts. She suggested for those states that have only restricted funds, we need to give ideas about how to fundraise the money outside of their state contract. Joseph then suggested that the fee could be .5% of just the money that is not part of a contract or part of restricted funds that couldn’t be used for this membership fee.

Kay Rote, chair of the fundraising and incorporation committee, said that 5 people have volunteered to help with incorporation. Dan said that Kay is very experienced at completing the nonprofit incorporation process. Kay asked for volunteers who would like to join fundraising. Mary Blake volunteered. Kay will send another email asking for volunteers; Kay’s email is jkrote@msn.com

It was suggested that people will pay membership as they know it is a truly independent organization that works for their interests. Kay is identifying organizations that might give grants. Joseph said that foundations will ask if the people you represent support your effort; financial contributions are one way to show that you are truly representing a constituency. Mary said that CAN is not a membership organization, yet they have been able to get foundation money. They have other ways to demonstrate that they represent the people they serve.

The Committee will come to some consensus on possible membership fees and bring it to the entire group later.

6. Publicity: Press release, DC event, article, and website

The following possible publicity ideas were presented briefly:

- a. We could ask Susan Rogers to help. She might help us write a press release/article that could be put up at websites and circulated.
- b. Joseph said his organization would be happy to do something on Peer newswire
- c. Bill Anthony volunteered previously to do an article.
- d. Lauren Spiro suggested a DC event that would come out with a strong message of who we are and our priority issues, such as Recovery and Self-determination, perhaps

a panel, may get televised on C-span; use the event as an opportunity to show our strength and who supports us; such as, Bazelon Center, AAPD, NMHA, and members of congress; Someone might want to sponsor us and make it a nice event with hors d'ouvres or a lunch. We may want to do the event on capitol hill, get free space and be convenient for legislators and their staff to come. An event that addresses some of the issues; has support from our legislators.

e. Joseph suggested we might get some “no cost” piece of legislation introduced and could make a fanfare around it. Joseph would also introduce us to the new head of the MHA: David Hern.

f. We could start looking now for a room in the DC area since it would likely need to be booked 6-9 months in advance.

g. Jack Bucher suggested we might have a resource table at Alternatives to promote who we are.

7. Meeting at Alternatives

Thursday night, October 26, 2006 will be the meeting of this organization in Portland at a separate location near Alternatives.

Other ideas suggested were:

- a. Give a plaque to someone, such as a Lifetime Achievement Award
- b. Consider a positive public expression such as a ceremony in a public park, folk singers, a photograph opportunity, broadly appealing, doesn't have to be against anything
- c. There is a conference happening in Eugene; other events could be scheduled leading up to Alternatives.
- d. Possibility of scheduling an event at a public library with a panel, a talk, educational opportunity. Might be called “Everything you wanted to know about mental health but were afraid to ask.”

The next general meeting of the National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations will be on Thursday, September 14, 2006 at 3:30 p.m. EST.