

AIKEN COUNTY SENIOR TASK FORCE and ABMHC SENIOR PROGRAM

The Aiken County Senior Task Force was created to help meet the needs, primarily from a mental health perspective, of the senior population in Aiken County. Senior caregivers from different agencies, including consumers, family members and professionals, throughout the Aiken County community agreed to participate on a Senior Task Force to evaluate the mental health and related needs of seniors, identify barriers to seniors getting their mental health needs met, and develop a plan to address those needs and barriers. The agencies and programs represented included the Mental Health Association in Aiken County, Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center, Aiken County Council on Aging, Aiken Psychiatric Associates, Aurora Pavilion, the Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Department of Social Services, Eden Gardens of Aiken, Hitchcock Home Health Services, Lower Savannah Council of Governments, Pepperhill Nursing Center, Shadow Oaks, and Southern Home Care Services.

The first official meeting of the task force occurred October 19, 2000. The task force has continued to meet on a monthly basis and determined that the primary mental health and related needs of seniors were overcoming the stigma associated with mental health concerns and in-home services for persons who are homebound. The task force has focused on increasing awareness of issues pertaining to the senior population and on education. The task force members decided to concentrate on a major event which will demonstrate appreciation of seniors and will provide education for seniors on services and programs that are available to them.

On May 4, 2001, the task force, in coordination with the City of Aiken, will present Senior Spectacular, a four-hour event open to the public that will offer education materials, interactive exhibits, speakers, needs assessments and food for the senior population and all interested persons. The emphasis will be on mental and physical health during the aging process. ABMHC will support a booth with educational material about depression, Alzheimer's Disease, end of life issues, caregiving and the center itself. Grant monies will be used to purchase the educational materials.

With the approach of Senior Spectacular the task force is looking to set new goals which will be finalized with the results from the needs assessments distributed at Senior Spectacular. The primary focus of the new goals will be the provision of mental health services. This effort will be led by Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center (ABMHC), a community mental health center offering a full range of outpatient mental health services; Aiken Psychiatric Associates, an outpatient psychiatric service led by a psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of seniors; and Aurora Pavilion, the mental health program of the Aiken Regional Medical Services, which provides inpatient and outpatient services to seniors.

The Senior Task Force participants believe there is a senior population within Aiken County whose needs are not being addressed. The population is the group of seniors who do not qualify for Medicaid nor have the financial resources to meet their own physical and/or mental needs. Seniors with dementia, depression and/or physical complications that render them housebound are often relying on family caretakers who often must forsake their own source of income to help the senior family member. The result can be extreme emotional distress for both the senior and the caretaker. Transportation to community services is sometimes limited due to finances and/or physical limitation, thus severing this group of people from health services. Medicare has few allowances to meet this population's needs,

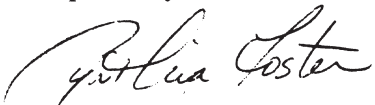
especially from a mental health perspective. Medicare also does not provide for transportation costs to assist these people.

ABMHC's current services to seniors are included in its general Adult Outpatient Program. While these services meet the needs of consumers who can access facility-based programs, it does not adequately address those people who are homebound. The senior population is under-represented in service delivery, with only 4% of the Center's consumers being sixty years or older, while this population makes up 11% of the community's overall population. The Center is currently developing a program specifically designed for the senior population. This program will ensure the proper diagnoses of mental disorders, implementation of best-practice psychotherapy treatment for the senior population, and coordination with other resources in the community, including.

The ABMHC Senior Program will offer individual, group and family therapy services, crisis services, psychiatric and medication services, and education and support group for caregivers. Key components of the program will be the provision of transportation and of in-home services, and the coordination of services with other providers. The Center will bring seniors into the facility for services, and provide professionals to go into the community to offer services within the home environment for persons unable to be transported for physical or emotional reasons. It should be noted that persons suffering with dementia often have a negative reaction to change in routine, including the introduction of new environments. Therefore, it may not be in the best interests of these persons to be seen at ABMHC, but instead in their home environments. The ABMHC Senior Program will coordinate with home health agencies to ensure the provision of in-home services in a manner that is most likely to be well received by seniors in need of these services.

The Center will prepare a detailed plan for senior mental health care and develop a proposal for South Carolina Department of Mental Health federal block grant funds in order to expand its existing on-site services to homebound seniors in the community. We will also evaluate the possibility of an Adult Day Health Program and continue the Center's contract for respite services for persons with Alzheimer's Disease with the Aiken Council on Aging's Life Connections program. Services and programs will be planned and delivered in consultation with the Senior Task Force. The overriding goals of ABMHC's Senior Program will be to ensure the provision of all mental health services needed by seniors, and to achieve parity of service delivery with other populations served by the mental health center.

Respectfully submitted,



Cynthia Foster, Program Coordinator
Adult Outpatient Services
March 16, 2001

SENIOR SPECTACULAR



MAY 4, 2001
10:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.

ODELL WEEKS RECREATION CENTER
WHISKEY ROAD
AIKEN, S.C.

SPEAKERS

EXHIBITORS

FOOD

DOOR PRIZES

SCREENINGS

BAKE - OFF
CONTEST



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL
STACEY BRITTON AT 641-7700

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