



# The Cutting Edge

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN NJ

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

Carolyn Beauchamp, President and CEO

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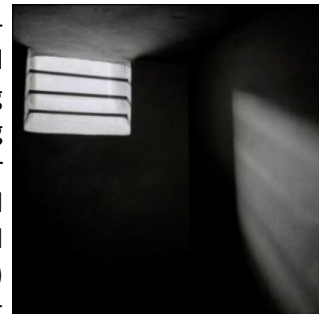
## Highlight on MHANJ Advocacy Efforts: Medicaid Transportation Concerns

Transportation is integral to getting people the help and services they need. Medication appointments and doctor's visits are necessary to successfully achieving wellness and recovery. The MHANJ is concerned that without reliable and safe transportation, behavioral health consumers will experience disruptions in treatment.

Following several complaints and concerns that have been brought to the MHANJ's attention regarding LogistiCare, MHANJ's Government Affairs team has been working to fully understand the issues, in order to advocate for positive change. To do so, the MHANJ has been holding forums with consumers from around the state.

## A Look at Key Solitary Confinement Reforms in New Jersey's Justice Systems: Understanding the Need for Change

Solitary confinement can lead to long-term and persistent mental and behavioral health problems, including psychotic symptoms and self-harming behaviors. As a long standing advocate for the preservation and promotion of mental health throughout New Jersey, the Mental Health Association in New Jersey (MHANJ) opposes the use of solitary confinement for youth under the age of 21, as well as for vulnerable adult populations, which includes those with mental illness, in both the adult and juvenile justice systems.



"Solitary confinement is counter-productive, and has been shown to worsen psychiatric conditions, increase aggression, lead to increased risk of suicidality, and can even leave prisoners with permanent psychological damage," explains Carolyn Beauchamp, President and CEO of the MHANJ.

In New Jersey State prisons and jails, there are approximately 40,073 total incarcerated individuals, according to The Sentencing Project. The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics found that, nationally, nearly 56% of State prisoners, 45% of Federal prisoners and 64% of jail inmates had a mental health condition.

The negative effects of isolation on youth are of considerable concern. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry explains that youth placed in solitary confinement tend to experience paranoia, depression and even psychosis. The Academy concludes that "due to their developmental vulnerability, juvenile offenders are at particular risk of such adverse reactions."

Through these forums and meetings, the MHANJ has identified four key areas of concern:

- 1. Punctuality and Reliability** - late pick-up or no pick-up to and/or from medical appointments
- 2. Safety of Transportation Services** - filling the vehicles beyond the legal occupancy capacity, "rough" driving, etc.
- 3. Disposition of Staff** - reports of rude or disrespectful treatment of consumers by LogistiCare drivers and staff
- 4. Handling of Complaints** - lack of responsiveness when consumers file complaints about LogistiCare services

*The Cutting Edge* will continue to follow this, and report on updates in future issues.



### **Please Join Us!**

The MHANJ Fight Stigma, Walk/Run for Awareness in Northern New Jersey is coming up soon! Please join us and take a stand against the stigma of mental illness and addiction.

The Walk will benefit the Mental Health Association in New Jersey, in partnership

## **New Jersey Takes Legislative Action to Reform the Use of Solitary Confinement**

There is much documentation that illustrates the adverse effects of solitary confinement for members of vulnerable populations, which includes adults with mental illness as well as youth. As a result of this evidence, New Jersey State and Federal legislators are working to reform these practices.

The MHANJ supports the passage of [S2003/A4299](#) (Pou/Sumter), a juvenile justice reform bill, that was signed into law by Governor Christie on August 10, 2015, as a first-step in the right direction towards fully reforming the Juvenile Justice System into one that focuses on the rehabilitation of juveniles. In this legislation, solitary confinement - referred to as room restriction - is not to be used unless a juvenile "poses an immediate and substantial risk of harm to others or to the security of the facility, and all other less-restrictive options have been exhausted." Additionally, the new law limits the amount of time a youth can spend in room restriction based on age, and mandates that mental health and educational services continue while the youth is in room restriction.

The MHANJ will continue to advocate for greater protections of youth in the Juvenile Justice System to ensure that they are not subject to solitary confinement of any kind.

[Click here for more solitary confinement legislation.](#)

### **Room Restriction Limitations in S2003/A4299:**

- A juvenile can spend no more than 8 consecutive hours in room restriction without being released for at least 2 hours for recreation or exercise during a 24 hour period.
- <15 years old - no longer than 2 consecutive days
- 16-18 years old - no longer than 3 consecutive days
- >18 years old - no longer than 5 consecutive days
- No juvenile shall be subject to room restriction for more than 10 total days in a calendar month.

### **MHANJ Attends Senator Lesniak's Roundtable Discussion on Solitary Confinement**

with Monarch Housing Associates.

### Northern NJ Walk/Run

Sat., October 3, 2015

Non-competitive Walk and 5K Run

[CLICK HERE NOW for more information and to register.](#)

#### How Can You Help?

For more information about having a team, leadership opportunities, sponsorship and/or volunteering, please contact Stacy Greene, Statewide Director of Development, at 973-571-4100, ext. 128, or [sgreene@mhanj.org](mailto:sgreene@mhanj.org).

#### We'd Love to Hear from YOU!

Please contact MHANJ Community Advocate, Cynthia Spadola at [cspadola@mhanj.org](mailto:cspadola@mhanj.org) with your questions, comments, feed-back, concerns and advocacy issues!

#### Stay in Touch - Follow Us on Social Media



Barb Johnston, Director of Policy and Advocacy for the MHANJ is shown with Senator Raymond J. Lesniak at the Roundtable discussion on Solitary Confinement at Kean University.

The MHANJ joined other interested parties in a roundtable discussion organized by Senator Raymond J. Lesniak regarding reforms to solitary confinement on July 22, 2015 at Kean University. The MHANJ supports [S2588](#), legislation Senator Lesniak is sponsoring -- which is aimed at limiting the use of solitary confinement for adults and youth in adult prisons and jails in New Jersey -- but is

advocating that it must include language protecting youth in the Juvenile Justice System as well.

This event was intended to foster a discussion between different stakeholders and advocacy groups with various positions on solitary confinement with the intention of gaining a better understanding of what is needed to implement the proposed reforms.

Barb Johnston, the MHANJ's Director of Policy and Advocacy, participated in the discussion. Barb, along with Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ) representatives August Pozgay and Sean Benoit, spoke about the importance of protecting all incarcerated youth from the damaging effects of solitary confinement. S2588, as it is currently written, eliminates the use of isolated confinement for members of "vulnerable populations" in adult state correctional facilities. The bill defines a member of a vulnerable population as any inmate who: is 21 years of age or younger; is 55 years of age or older; has a disability based on a mental illness; has a developmental disability; has a serious medical condition which cannot effectively be treated in isolated confinement; is pregnant; or has a significant auditory or visual impairment. This would protect youth who are waived to the adult system, but not youth serving time in the juvenile system. Together, Barb, August and Sean strongly recommended that S2588 include youth incarcerated in juvenile facilities as well as those sentenced to adult facilities.

Those present at the event included Senator Linda Greenstein, Assemblywoman Nancy Pinkin, and Assemblyman Jamel Holley, as well as representatives from MHANJ, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), New Jersey Psychiatric Association (NJPA), members of the New Jersey Association of Parole Wardens, lawyers

Would you like to help  
MHANJ continue its  
advocacy initiatives?



and other advocates, as well as news media, students and other interested parties.

The MHANJ will continue to focus advocacy efforts on ensuring that members of vulnerable populations, in both the adult and juvenile justice systems, are not subjected to solitary confinement.

[Click here to read more.](#)

## MHANJ Participates in Dignity March in Washington, D.C.

On Monday, August 24, 2015, Bob Kley, Vice President and COO of the MHANJ, along with several MHANJ employees from throughout New Jersey traveled down to Washington D.C. to participate in the 2015 Destination Dignity



March. Destination Dignity is a collaborative project designed to raise awareness and public engagement around improving mental health treatment and outcomes in America. (Back row) Bob Kley, (center row, left to right), Emma Shelby, Cynthia Spadola, Amy Hassa and Carolyn Quinn and (front row, left to right) Michele Green and Rachel Odea participated in the Dignity March.

The March began at a rally at the National Mall where speakers enlivened the crowd and addressed issues such as the criminalization of mental illness, rates of unemployment and homelessness, underfunding of services, the need for improved access to treatment and the stigma that continues to surround mental illness.

[Click here for more information about Destination Dignity.](#)

**Destination Dignity Calls for:**



End  
Homelessness



End negative  
media  
portrayals



End fail-first  
systems



End  
criminalization  
of mental  
illness

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## **King's Park: Stories from an American Mental Institution Film Screening**

The MHANJ along with Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey (CSPNJ) and the Rutgers School of Social Work will be hosting a free film screening of the documentary King's Park: Stories from an American Mental Institution, on October 9, 2015. Following the viewing, there will be a discussion with the Filmmaker, Lucy Winer. CEUs for social work, licensed professional counselors, and certified psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners are included when you pre-register. Registration had been extended to October 6. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

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**Mental Health  
Association  
in New Jersey, Inc.**

Learn more about [MHANJ's Government Affairs](#) efforts.

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