Perspectives on Mental Health

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House Committee on Health Care
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About Wilda White

Background

- 1980 UVM graduate
- Attorney
- International Management Consultant
- Director, UC Berkeley School of Law Social Justice Center
- Psychiatric Survivor
- Executive Director, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors since July 2015
About VPS

Mission

Vermont Psychiatric Survivors is a statewide, mutual support and civil rights advocacy organization run by and for psychiatric survivors.

Founded in 1983, our primary purpose is to insure the equal rights, protection, and participation of individuals marginalized because of psychiatric labels.

We offer mutual support to psychiatric survivors, publish a newspaper, and advocate and educate to resist and challenge discrimination.
About VPS

Programs

• Patient Representatives
• Peer Advocates/Community Links
• Support Groups
• Peer-Operated Projects
• Counterpoint Newspaper
• Vocational Rehabilitation in partnership with Second Spring
Concerns

- Underfunded community mental health system causing ER and prison boarding
- Uneven quality of care
- System-inflicted trauma from forced drugging
- High rates of disability and unemployment
- Police use of force in response to perceived mental health crises
Causes

• Discrimination/Disenfranchisement
• Insufficient accountability
• Treatment too often results in harm
• Exclusion of psychiatric survivors/patients as stakeholders in problem-solving
• Too few treatment options
Legislative Solutions

- Recognize problem as social justice issue, not solely a health issue
- Declare a State of Emergency
- Follow the money – engage consultants to calculate the cost of our underfunded system; re-purpose money
- Mandate inclusion of psychiatric survivors in problem-solving initiatives
- Hold psychiatrists accountable