



NEW JERSEY GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON *Mental Health Stigma*

STOPPING STIGMA

NEWSLETTER

Eliminating Stigma to Ensure Equity for All

OCTOBER 2023 ISSUE VOLUME 1

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Message from Debra L. Wentz, PhD

Chair, New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma



Welcome to the inaugural edition of the New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma's newsletter, *Stopping Stigma!* All of us on the Council are proud to unveil this publication, as well as our new website, as integral components of our ongoing mission to eliminate stigma and ensure equity for all.

In fact, I have had the honor of being chosen by Governor Richard J. Codey to be a member of the Council at its inception. The Council was established in 2005, as recommended by the Governor's Task Force on Mental Health that he created the previous year. Serving on the Council and now leading it are extremely important to me. We are able to highlight the need for equity for all regardless of culture, language and other characteristics. In addition, we work to develop sensitivity, and we spearhead initiatives and best practices that stop stigma.

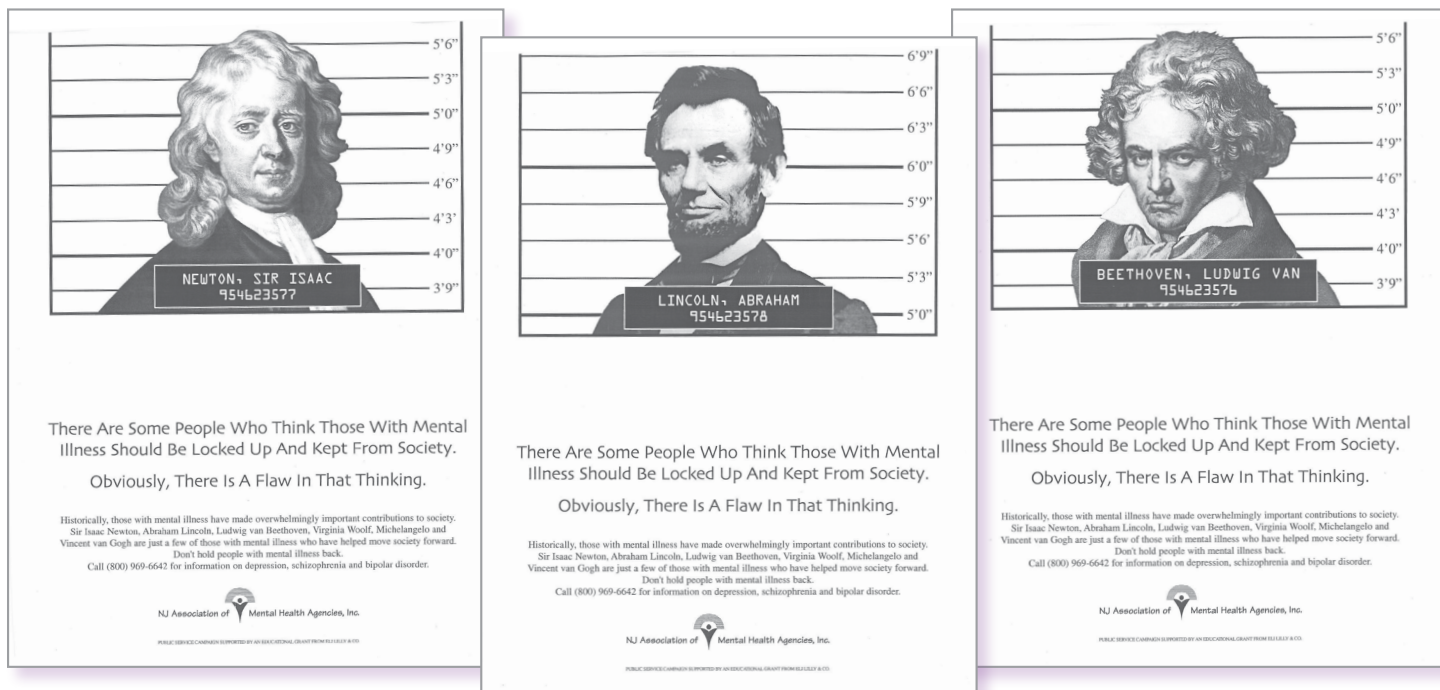
The Council has continued to build on the principles of diversity and equity since our inception because mental health is ubiquitous and we want to make sure universally that everyone has access to all the necessary services and supports to recover.

Since I entered the mental health field, I made eliminating stigma and discrimination a priority. The first activity I undertook when I joined the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies

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Message from Debra L. Wentz, PhD, Chair New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma

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as President and CEO in 1995 was the *Mugshots* campaign to dispel the many myths surrounding mental illness. I conducted stakeholder focus groups to talk about stigma and then I conceptualized the campaign and oversaw its production and multimedia distribution. Media outlets, including major networks, released the campaign numerous times over three years. It was an unprecedented long life for a public service announcement because the message was so compelling.

Back then, I was struck by how stigmatized mental illness was, and I am still dismayed by the ongoing pervasiveness of stigma, although enormous progress has been made over the years and most significantly since the COVID pandemic. In the 1990s and earlier, I did not know if I had had any direct experience with anyone with serious mental illness because no one revealed it, due to stigma. I later learned that I did indeed have such encounters, but unknowingly.

The *Mugshots* campaign was one of the most impactful projects to raise visibility about individuals with mental illness. It went a long way in starting to change the public's perception of people with mental illness and helped lead to many policy achievements, including the New Jersey parity law and the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

Over the years, the Council made further strides toward eradicating stigma. We had a series of Ambassador Awards programs and each time, we were able to focus on a different target audience, such as business leaders, educators, first responders and religious organizations. After a hiatus of several years, we hit the ground running with a media roundtable to mark the 2022 October Mental Illness Awareness Week and the creation of the Stigma-Free Zone Learning Collaborative, which has already held two educational sessions and an awards/celebration event and is

planning many more (see details beginning on page 8). This initiative is extremely important and will undoubtedly continue to grow. It is a powerful vehicle for engaging individuals from local communities to counties to the entire state population, educating people about mental illness and providing resources to overcome stigma.

When the Council hosted a mental health roundtable featuring Otto Wahl, PhD, Professor Emeritus, University of Hartford and Author of *Media Madness: Public Images of Mental Illness*, other mental health stakeholders and news reporters in October 2022, the goal was to educate members of the media to accurately portray people with mental illness without perpetuating stereotypes and instead to illustrate with facts so that stigma can be overcome.

The Council is a strong platform to very visibly reach government – local, state and national – and educate the media and public to work layer by layer, unfolding the stigma and discrimination. Despite some progress years ago and today, we still have a long way to go to eliminate stigma – whether it is demanding parity in insurance and access, fighting the feelings of self-stigma and shame, or helping individuals to not have negative perceptions by highlighting successes people can achieve while having mental illness (e.g., education, careers) and being integrated into society. We also demonstrate that mental illness touches everyone, regardless of fame, fortune, race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation and all other demographic characteristics.

We need to always focus on eliminating stigma; not just during formal observation events, such as Mental Health Month (May), National Recovery Month and National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (September) and Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 1st through 7th this year). **Every single day**, it is imperative that we all do everything we can to fight stigma. Achievement of this goal will literally save lives because without stigma, individuals will be open

to speaking about and seeking help for their mental health challenges. As a result, their risk of suicide will be greatly reduced and potentially eliminated and hope and recovery will prevail.

Over the years, I have seen people's lives put on hold because of serious mental illness and stigma. People with mental illness can have meaningful lives. There are many examples of individuals succeeding in education, careers, relationships and involvement in their communities. One powerful illustration is Council Member Emily Grossman, who is featured in this publication as her book, *Unlocked: 25 Keys to Recovering from Depression, Anxiety or Bipolar Disorder*, will be published this month.

I always believed in the importance of having a central place where we can unify everyone's voice in fighting stigma and discrimination. It is why I am proud to serve on the Council with an amazing group of individuals, whom you will start to get to know in this newsletter.

All of us on the New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma look forward to working with you on our mission to eradicate stigma and increase access to life-saving and -enhancing mental health services to help everyone achieve recovery. Here's to "Stopping Stigma"!

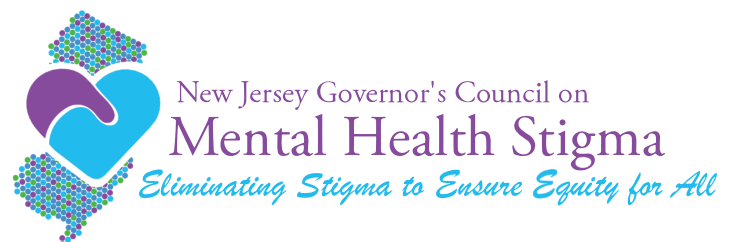
With warmest wishes,



Debra L. Wentz, PhD

Chair

New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma



Council Members Continue Progress toward Eliminating Stigma



The New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma has two long-time members —Chair Debra L. Wentz, PhD, who has served since the Council was established in 2005 under Executive Order #58 by Governor Richard J. Codey and is featured in the front page article, and Amy Spagnolo, PhD, Associate Professor, Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions, Rutgers School of Health Professions, who was appointed in 2009 — as well as more recent appointees.

“Over the years, we made great headway in our mission to eradicate stigma from every

sphere of society — business, schools, health care, military, etcetera —and after a hiatus due to COVID and a transition in leadership, we made up for lost time when the Council resumed its activities in 2021,” Dr. Wentz said. In fact, the silver lining of the pandemic was significant progress toward eliminating stigma, as more people were experiencing mental health challenges — many for the first time — and discussing them more openly than in the past. The Council capitalized on this visibility by launching projects and hosting events, along with increasing focus on diversity, equity and inclusion

for all age, religious, cultural and other groups through all of its initiatives.

“We are grateful to the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, where the Council is housed, and Assistant Commissioner Valerie Mielke. She has always been tremendously supportive of the Council and the initiatives we have undertaken and are planning for the future,” Dr. Wentz added.

“The Council has done a lot to create awareness of mental health and debunk misperceptions

of what stigma means and its impact on individuals and society. It has provided individuals with the facts of mental illness and resources. The group has also brought communities together to develop awareness campaigns specific to each local community and impacted campaigns that were much more broad,” Assistant Commissioner Mielke said.

Additional impactful achievements included honoring individuals and organizations that are making a positive difference in their communities through a series of Ambassador Awards.

“Recognition not only boosts the individuals doing this great work, but it also builds awareness among those not working so positively in this space and shows how they can work in this space differently,” Assistant Commissioner Mielke said. “Not only do the individuals such as law enforcement personnel have direct, positive impact with those they interact with, but they also set the tone and serve as models for individuals working in the same roles so they can do the same.”

Recipients of the 2023 Stigma-Free Ambassador Awards



Cynthia Chazen
Stigma-Free Ambassador
Demarest, NJ



Julie DeSimone, LSW
Stigma-Free Zone Sub-committee
Member
Director of Community Health
New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute



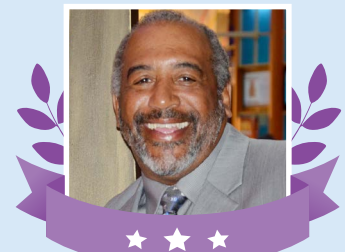
Shelby Klein, LSW
Stigma-Free Zone Sub-committee
Member
Director, Bergen County Division of
Mental Health and Addiction Services



Pamela A. Major, MA
Stigma-Free Zone Sub-committee
Member
Founder, Melia Bloom



Mary Ann Uzzi
Stigma-Free Zone Sub-committee
Member
Founder, Stigma-Free Initiative,
Paramus, NJ



Mark T. Williams, BSN, RN-BC
Stigma-Free Zone Sub-committee Member
President, NAMI NJ
Chair, Somerset County Stigma-Free
Initiative
Vice President, Woods Service Board of
Trustees

Meet the Council Members

Amy Spagnolo, PhD, Associate Professor, Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions at Rutgers School of Health Professions, Council Member since 2009, Stigma-Free Subcommittee Co-chair



“The greatest reward of serving on the Council is having a hand in the ways we can achieve the government’s anti-stigma work in various New Jersey communities. We have the opportunity to highlight and acknowledge a

multitude of groups doing this important work and do this in both celebratory and serious manners because the mission is serious.”

“Over the past 14 years, the Council’s directive and core mission have evolved. Initially, it was important for the Council to represent the state’s interests in providing education and normalizing the need to seek support and treatment to manage those conditions. Over time, I think our Council recognized we would have a greater impact by partnering with organizations and individuals doing that work on the ground. Because we have significant reach, the Council became a platform to connect people doing this important work.”

Susan Tellone, RN, BSN, MSN, CSN, Council Member since 2021, Stigma-Free Subcommittee Co-chair and Clinical Director, Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide



“My work with the Stigma Council was a natural progression from local to county to statewide. On a very local level, my community had one of the largest suicide contagions recorded in the

U.S. I worked with our county [Monmouth] Stigma-Free initiative and I have been a Council member since it was reactivated. I am very honored to be a part of it. To put forth specific things to break down stigma is very rewarding to me. It has been one of the biggest hurdles in mental health since I started my career 40 years ago.”

“The Learning Collaborative kickoff in February 2023 had a great turnout from all over the state. There is much motivation and excitement to see we are back on track. Just getting people connected has a huge impact.”

Emily Grossman, MA, CPRP, NYCPS-P, Council Member since 2016, Founder, Emily Grossman Peer Life Coaching and Training Services



“Stigma is still a real problem. It is very important to have people fight against it, especially at the government level.”

“I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1996.

No celebrities were out talking about mental illness and no one talked about it back then. I felt ashamed and embarrassed. This has changed. People are more open and that gives me hope. This is why I do this work. We can help transform society as opposed to being a deterrent to society.”

“The more individuals come out and talk about their mental illnesses, the better — not just celebrities, but people others can relate to more than celebrities. That is where stigma starts to get erased. Recovery is possible. I am living proof, and there are people all around the world in this position.”

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Meet the Council Members

David Jacobs, Council Member since 2017, President and Owner, Olde Tyme Syrups and Sundae Toppings



“I originally heard about the Council because I am always seeking ideas and resources for my daughter Marci. I wanted to volunteer and accomplish something. My wife and I had great success with Marci being her advocates and we thought,

‘Why couldn’t we do it for others?’ I find it rewarding being able to assist people who have different types of disabilities.”

“We should get more involved and offer time to school systems to discuss the Council and what we offer to help schools help parents. Parents should have a strong voice and follow through for their children.”

“When talking to youth and older people who have had or are experiencing difficult times, the Council connects them to services. People of all ages have similar problems. The more we get out there, the more people will learn and more Stigma-Free Zones will be created.”

Reverend Jose C. López, Council Member since 2021, State Chaplain, New Jersey Department of Corrections



“The personal rewards I am gaining from this role include the opportunity to make a positive impact on the community and contribute to the fight against mental health stigma. I have been a clinical chaplain

for 28 years, and fighting stigma is the most important work I do.”

“Since the establishment of the Council, progress has been made, but there is still much work to be done, especially at a time when misinformation and lack of updated information about mental health are prevalent.”

“Remember, mental health affects us all, and by standing together, we can create a more inclusive and empathetic society. Stigma only perpetuates discrimination and prevents individuals from seeking help and support. The Stigma Council and its resources are here to provide support and education, to break down the barriers of stigma, and to promote understanding and acceptance.”

Plans are under way to feature additional Council members — Heidi Castrillon, Founder and CEO of BIZ REPUBLIC, and Dr. Janon Wilson, LPC, ACS, HS-BCP, Owner and Clinical Director of Compass Counseling & Psychotherapy —in the next issue of *Stopping Stigma*.



Heidi Castrillon
Founder and CEO
BIZ REPUBLIC

“I am extremely grateful to all of the Council members. Though we are a small group and all of us have very busy schedules and many other responsibilities, everyone’s passion and determination to eradicate stigma and open doors to recovery and wellness for others are far-reaching in their impact,” Dr. Wentz said. *“We definitely are making progress in stopping stigma!”*

Stigma-Free Zone Learning Collaborative Increases Statewide Momentum



Glenn Close, Actress and Founder of Bring Change to Mind, said, “What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, and more unashamed conversation” and this is exactly what Stigma-Free Zones (SFZs) are accomplishing. The nation’s first SFZ was established in Hoboken in 2011. Then, in 2013, Paramus became an SFZ and inspired all other Bergen County towns to do the same. Communities, colleges, businesses and hospitals throughout the state followed suit soon afterwards.

“Becoming a Stigma-Free Zone means making a commitment to creating a safe, welcoming environment based on principles of tolerance and acceptance, without fear of ridicule, harassment, and bullying,” as defined by Stigma Free Society (www.stigmafreesociety.com).

To further build momentum for having SFZ’s created throughout the state, the New Jersey Governor’s Council on Mental Health Stigma launched the SFZ Learning Collaborative (LC) in 2022 as one of its major initiatives when the group was reactivated after a hiatus.

“We had such good experiences as a Council in the past when we recognized different groups engaged in anti-stigma efforts,” said Amy Spagnolo, PhD, Council Member and Co-chair of its SFZ Subcommittee. “When we resumed activities of the Council, it seemed apropos to celebrate Stigma-Free Zone Ambassadors. Once we began planning for this celebration, we started to think more broadly about the importance of bringing people together to share ideas, resources and lessons learned. A Learning Collaborative fit that bill.

With the support of the volunteer subcommittee members of the Council, we were able to host two Learning Collaborative sessions this year. More than 100 New Jersey stakeholders attended each one,” added Dr. Spagnolo, who also serves as an Associate Professor, Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions at the Rutgers School of Health Professions.

“We have to do everything in our power to make sure youth and adults know they can seek help,” said Council Member and SFZ Subcommittee Co-chair Susan Tellone, RN, BSN, MSN, CSN, who also serves as Clinical Director at the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide. “Every small step in fighting stigma is a bigger step in getting individuals to receive the support they need.”

NEW JERSEY PROUD TO BE STIGMA-FREE



“When I learned what the Stigma-Free Zones in New Jersey are doing, I initially thought it was just posting a sign in a town. Then, I learned what it entails, what towns are doing, and I’m amazed by how many people are involved and their enthusiasm,” said Council and SFZ Subcommittee Member, Emily Grossman, MA, CPRP, NYCPS-P, who is also the Founder of Emily Grossman Peer Life Coaching and Training Services and author of *Unlocked: 25 Keys to Recovering from Depression, Anxiety or Bipolar Disorder*, which will be published in October 2023. (See the article about Grossman and her book on page 13.)

“When stigma does not exist, individuals are much more likely to receive the support they need to recognize the possibilities in their lives and to work to make them their realities. Through educational programs in communities, schools and other settings, we can make a life-changing impact, and such an effect has been achieved by Stigma-Free Zones throughout the state,” said Council Chair Debra L. Wentz, PhD, who also serves as President and CEO of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies and Executive Director of the New Jersey Mental Health Institute.

Learning Collaborative Starts Strongly with 100+ Kickoff Participants

According to Tellone, the kickoff of the SFZ Learning Collaborative (LC) that was held virtually in February 2023 was a “gelling by getting

people together. There is a power of collective energy and many amazing separate initiatives, and pulling them all together will result in an even greater impact,” she said.

More than 100 individuals participated in this lively discussion and demonstrated much enthusiasm for keeping the SFZ movement going strongly in their communities. Several individuals who have been involved in creating SFZ’s and other initiatives shared their advice based on their experiences, so others who plan to establish SFZ’s don’t need to recreate the wheel and can hit the ground running.

Fittingly, some of the experienced individuals are known as Stigma-Free Zone Ambassadors and were honored during an in-person celebration on August 16, 2023, during which they also shared the greatest successes, rewards and lessons learned from creating SFZs.

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SFZ Ambassadors Receive Honors and Inspire Others during Celebration Event

During this event, Dr. Spagnolo moderated the panel discussion with the Stigma-Free Zone Ambassadors. She recognized the participants' "passion and commitment to eliminating stigma" and their "dedication over the past year to developing the first Stigma-Free Zone Learning Collaborative".

Below are the Ambassadors/honorees and the experiences they shared:

Cynthia Chazen, Stigma-Free Ambassador, Demarest, NJ:

"The Paramus Stigma-Free Initiative proves that grassroots advocacy is a very powerful thing. The greatest success is seeing 11 years later continued interest in grassroots advocacy and many people who want to get involved with this cause."



Julie DeSimone, LSW, Stigma-Free Zone Subcommittee Member; Director of Community Health, New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute:



"We have made the conversation more inclusive. Post-pandemic, there has been a huge appetite for work related to mental health challenges. We need to look to others besides mental healthcare professionals for solutions."

Shelby Klein, LSW, Stigma-Free Zone Subcommittee Member; Director, Bergen County Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services:

"A huge success in Bergen County was revitalizing efforts in the post-COVID world. We held a sticker design contest and all 70 towns participated with hundreds of entries."



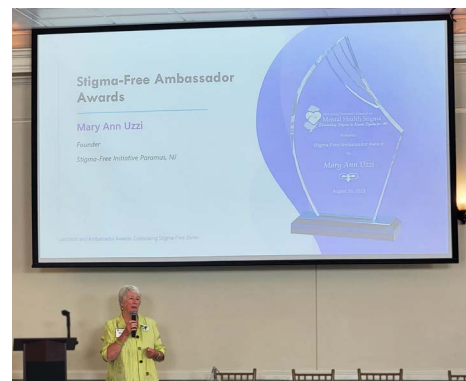
Pamela A. Major, MA, Stigma-Free Zone Subcommittee Member; Founder, Melia Bloom and Interfaith Program Coordinator for Mercy Center’s Community Victim Advocacy Program:



“The greatest success was developing the Monmouth County Stigma-Free Committee. We had a ‘Statue of Liberty’ approach – if you want to come, come – and we had people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders, educators, mayors and many others. It’s still going strong after five years.”

Mary Ann Uzzi, Stigma-Free Zone Subcommittee Member; Founder, Stigma-Free Initiative, Paramus, NJ:

“I am so proud that this initiative spread to all Bergen County municipalities and statewide. When we started 11 years ago, so many people suffered in silence and didn’t know where to go. We changed that. The most rewarding part has been hearing personal stories of individuals who were touched by our advocacy.”



Mark T. Williams, BSN, RN-BC, Stigma-Free Zone Subcommittee Member; Chair, Somerset County Stigma-Free Committee; Stigma-Free Ambassador, North Plainfield, NJ; President, NAMI NJ Board of Directors; and Vice President, Woods Service Board of Trustees:



“The greatest reward was my church being honored for its stigma-free initiative. We moved the entire congregation forward to embrace the inherent promise, worth and dignity of every individual.”

The Council is housed within and supported by the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Assistant Commissioner Valerie Mielke, MSW

was invited to address the attendees of the event. She thanked the Council members for “dedicating time specifically to address issues related to stigma” and expressed

her “deepest gratitude to this year’s awardees, for their impact not only on how individuals are perceiving mental illnesses, but also on how they are receiving services.”

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She also acknowledged the honorees' effectiveness in influencing the development of policies that support access to mental health services, for which elimination of stigma is essential.

"Events such as this are so important. People put a lot of work into the Stigma-Free Zones, and the events are spaces to recognize them," Grossman said.

"We need good stories, good energy, inspiration and motivation. Celebrating the amazing things people do is very uplifting," Tellone added. "Small changes make a big difference. They spur other people to do small things and spark a ripple effect."

Periodic Learning Collaborative Sessions Are Planned

Following the successful kickoff in February, the LC presented a webinar, *Bringing Communities Together – Key Lessons Learned and*

How To's for Successful Community Engagement in Anti-Stigma Efforts across the Life Span in May. In addition to regular educational sessions, the LC plans to hold quarterly meetings to share resources and what works and what does not work.

"We know the challenges, but we don't always know the successes. We need to recognize and sustain the commitment and momentum," Tellone said. "We can do better as we work together," she emphasized.

"We plan to grow the Learning Collaborative with more sessions and resources, as well as many initiatives throughout the state," Dr. Spagnolo said and noted that future topics will include general mental health tips and school-based initiatives.

Initiative Leaders Anticipate Long-Term Progress

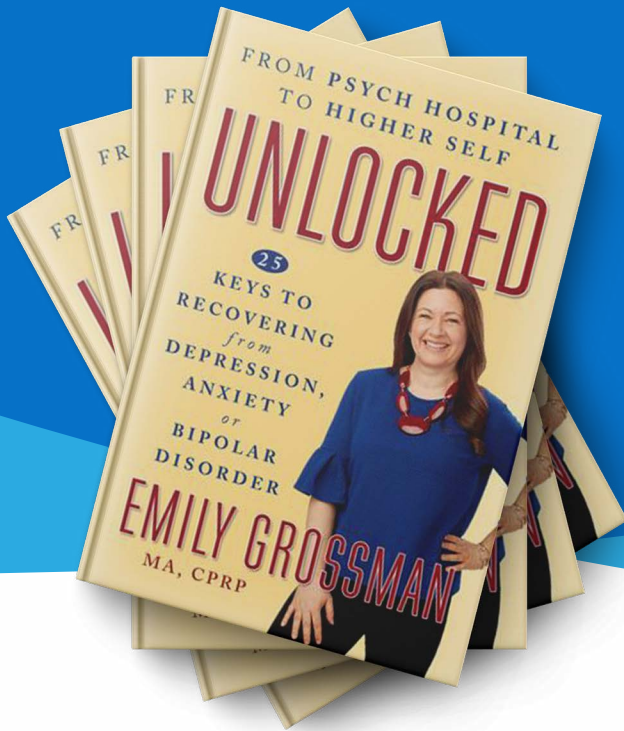
"Over time, I believe that the greatest impact of Stigma-Free Zones will be the awareness building throughout the community. Declaring towns and municipalities, school districts, faith communities, etc. as stigma-free can help reduce the judgment and shame associated with mental illnesses," Dr. Spagnolo said. "This increased awareness can translate into culture change, so people who experience mental health conditions feel supported by their communities and neighbors and are encouraged to seek treatment and support."

"Buddha said, 'Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.' This profound statement exemplifies not only joy and the power of sharing it, but also the Stigma-Free Ambassadors' ongoing efforts," Dr. Wentz said. "The light they kindle is the illumination they shed on mental illness in order to break down stigma, and the thousands of candles are the thousands of people – and potentially many more – they are enlightening through their educational programs, community events and other endeavors. They are also inspiring many others to join in this vitally important crusade, breathing more and long-lasting life into our mission and undoubtedly bringing us closer every day to achieving it."

To learn more about the Stigma-Free Zone Learning Collaborative and express interest in getting involved, please click [here](#) to complete a brief survey and provide your contact information.



Council Member Emily Grossman Inspires Many through Peer Life Coaching and Uplifting Book, *Unlocked*



In Unlocked, Emily Grossman, who was hospitalized a dozen times with bipolar disorder, and nearly institutionalized in her teens and twenties, shares her own story, and offers 25 keys to recovery.

“Mental health recovery happens, and I'm living proof,” states Emily Grossman, MA, CPRP, NYCPSP, Founder of Emily Grossman Peer Life Coaching and Training Services, on her website, www.emilygrossman.net.

In fact, Grossman created a wealth of evidence that mental health recovery is achievable. In addition to being an entrepreneur, she is a member of the New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma, is frequently engaged as a keynote speaker at conferences throughout the country and was honored as *Peer Specialist of the Year* by the National Council on Mental Wellbeing in 2018.

Grossman's most recent success is her book, *Unlocked: 25 Keys to Recovering from Depression, Anxiety or Bipolar Disorder*, which will be published on October 17, 2023.

All of these accomplishments are certainly inspiring and what further establishes Grossman as a role model is her positive outlook. “I know if there was no mental illness in my life, there would not have been a journey because I wouldn't be seeking it out,” she said.

“When I was diagnosed, I went to several different spiritual leaders for their perspective on why I was experiencing this. Traditionally, we

learn G-d punishes you when you do something bad. I carried that for a long time - that my bipolar disorder was punishment. I read books, such as Deepak Chopra's *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. I needed a spiritual practice that reflected what he wrote about,” Grossman shared.

Ten years later, when she was in graduate school, she became friends with Buddhists and learned the philosophy of the religion and meditation practice. “I speak from the Buddhist lens and keep it ecumenical, and I do meditation daily. It's what took me from surviving to thriving,” Grossman said. “My brain isn't the same as

it used to be. I don't have the same symptoms as I had when I was at the worst with my illness. Medication and therapy helped me survive, but they didn't achieve the changes for me that meditation has.”

Grossman further demonstrated her positive outlook when she said, “I didn't create this illness, but I have a choice in how I live the rest of my life. It's not ‘Why me?’ Obstacles are opportunities to bring me closer to my higher self.”

In her book, Grossman encourages individuals to ask themselves, “What if mental illness is not a crisis, but a springboard to my higher self?” and shares spiritual lessons and strategies. These include learning to trust your instincts, developing critical coping skills, pushing through inertia and riding the waves of intense emotions.

As described in a Kirkus book review, “The tone throughout is gently but strongly encouraging ... her optimism is infectious: Life, she notes, is not about avoiding problems; it's about ‘learning to dive headfirst into the fire, feel you've been almost burned alive, and come out the other side, scars and all.’”

The review on Amazon states, “By applying the ‘keys’ in this book, you will not only feel better, you will live better.” The book can be pre-ordered as a paperback or audiobook or for Kindle.



More Details about Emily Grossman

Emily Grossman is a peer specialist, trainer, consultant and writer. In addition to being named *Peer Specialist of The Year* by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing in 2018, she was awarded a *Self Advocacy Award* in 2023 by *Mental Health News Education*. Grossman coaches adults and young adults with behavioral health struggles and helps to inspire them by sharing her own experience and giving them hope that recovery is possible for them, too.

Grossman is a frequent speaker about mental health recovery throughout the country. She began her work as a peer specialist working in community mental health where she served as a peer specialist for CarePlus NJ and the Mental Health Association in New Jersey.

Grossman has also written for *Huffington Post* about her own recovery from bipolar disorder. She is a Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner and has a Master's degree in Education from Columbia University's Teachers College.

Gov. Murphy Focuses on Youth Mental Health, Unveils Playbook to Support Initiatives Nationwide

On July 13, 2023, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy presented *Strengthening Youth Mental Health: A Governor's Playbook* and announced this focus of his year-long initiative as Chair of the National Governors Association.

"America's youth mental health crisis is a complex issue that transcends both party and geographic lines. Over the past year, we have traveled across the country and spent countless hours meeting with those on the front lines – young people, parents, caregivers, educators, and community leaders – to discuss innovative approaches, thoughtful programs, and effective models for addressing youth mental health," Gov. Murphy was quoted in a press release issued by his office on July 13, 2023. "Together, these form the basis of our *Playbook* that states, policymakers, and stakeholders can use to strengthen youth mental health across the country. The pages of this *Playbook* contain examples of successful policies and initiatives that use this all-hands approach to address youth mental health needs, and it is our hope that more states will implement similar policies to help our youth thrive."

"We are proud and grateful to have a governor who is so concerned about the mental health crisis among our youth and who is actively leading efforts to address it, including initiatives to eliminate



stigma, which is the greatest barrier to individuals seeking help when they need it," said Debra L. Wentz, PhD, Chair of the New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma. "All of us on the Council are heartened by Governor Murphy's dedication to increasing access to help children and youth recover through sound policies and funding."

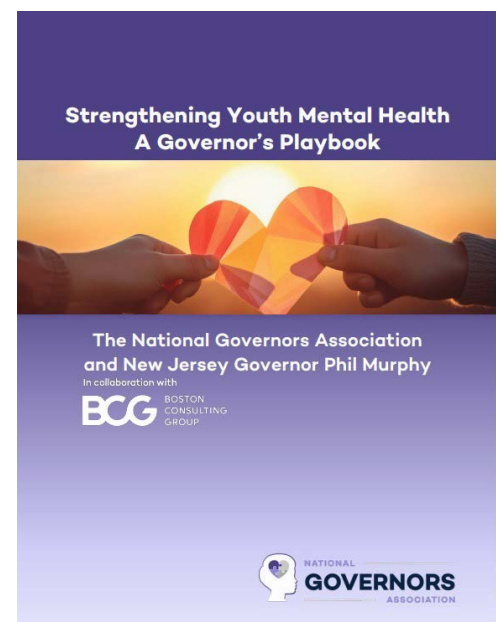
The Strengthening Youth Mental Health Initiative has four main pillars, which are expounded upon in the *Playbook*:

- Addressing Prevention and Building Resilience
- Increasing Awareness and Reducing Stigma
- Ensuring Access and Affordability of Quality Treatment and Care
- Training and Supporting Caregivers and Educators

Mental health strategies shared in the *Playbook* include funding

mental health screening in schools, training educators on youth mental health, utilizing houses of worship and community groups for support, developing digital resources for young people to access support virtually, increasing the number of mental health practitioners by revising licensing requirements, and more.

Click [here](#) for more details about the *Playbook* and to download the publication.





New Jersey Governor's Council on
Mental Health Stigma
Eliminating Stigma to Ensure Equity for All

Mission

The mission of the Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma is to combat mental health stigma as a top priority in New Jersey's effort to create a better mental health system. Through outreach and education, the Council will send a message that mental health stigma must no longer be tolerated.

Council Members

Debra L. Wentz, PhD
COUNCIL CHAIR

Heidi Castrillon

Emily Grossman, MA, CPRP, NYCPS-P

David Jacobs

Rev. Jose C. Lopez

Susan Tellone-McCoy, RN, MSN, CSN

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