

Human Writes

State Human Rights Committee Newsletter

Volume II, Issue 4

Fall 2007

Welcome

Welcome to the eighth edition of Human Writes, a quarterly newsletter from the State Human Rights Committee (SHRC). The purpose of this newsletter is to share ideas, problems, solutions and other items of mutual interest among the Local Human Rights Committees and the SHRC. Please submit your thoughts and ideas to:

DMHMRSAS
Office of Human Rights
P.O. Box 1797
Richmond, VA 23218
SHRC.newsletter@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov

Musings on the Seminar

The 2007 LHRC/SHRC Seminar is now a memory, but what a memory it is! It was wonderful to see so many of you in Richmond on September 13th and 14th. Over 230 local human rights committee members, state human rights committee members, providers, family members, advocates and others attended all or part of the seminar.

You might be interested to know that 57, which is 80%, of the local human rights committees were represented. Two local committees sent 6 representatives each. Southside Virginia Training Center, Health Planning Region V, and many other committees were represented by more than one individual.

The survey results were overwhelmingly positive! The rating for the Seminar as a whole was 4.18 out of 5. Most of you both enjoyed the seminar and learned a great deal.

A special thanks goes out to all the presenters and staff who worked so hard to make the seminar a success. Plans are already underway for next year's seminar. We hope to have a tentative date soon!

*–Margaret Walsh
Office of Human Rights*

As I sat on the platform of the Open Forum, looking at the room full of almost complete strangers, I wondered what I should say by way of introduction. I wanted to say "I am just like you." I am not sure what brought me to this position. The series of life stories brought me to this situation where I would be answering questions about what has grown into not just interest but a passion for me.

The seminar was supposed to allow LHRC members to ask questions of the SHRC, but none of us knew what kind of questions to expect. We could all give you facts about how the committee functioned. It is much more difficult to express to others the empathy and the group dynamics that makes a committee

feel that it is functioning and truly making a difference.

The questions from the LHRC members reflected such a wide range of topics that they allowed us to answer in such a way that the audience must have been amazed to see the variety of opinions reflected by such a diverse committee. As we spoke and answered the questions, we knew that our visits to local meetings were valuable. The local meetings helped us build and enforce the idea of working together to ensure the rights of those whom we are charged with protecting.

Many of you spoke to us later to express your thanks for the opportunity to meet the state committee, but in reality, we thank you for your interest. We will be delighted to attend your meetings, and we will be glad to answer any questions you did not have time to ask.

Please consider applying for state committee membership if your interest in our mission has changed to become a passion also. It is a fine way to serve.

*-Carmen Thompson
Beautiful Smith Mountain Lake*

Seven facility-based advocates, Randy, Stanley, Mike, Tim, BJ, Deb and I polished up our acting skills, let down our guard (a little) and took you on a whirlwind tour of How To Conduct a Hearing.

Credit goes to Randy for re-thinking and revamping the training, complete with a new case and format. The audience WAS the LHRC. They heard the testimony, questioned the witnesses, and entered into the fact-finding and deliberation phase. Too many unanswered questions, not enough time to go into depth, but the process was at least experienced in a most humorous and attention-grabbing way.

Our practice session on Thursday was awful. We were tired, scattered, some arriving immediately after a five-hour trip down. Friday, after lunch, time to roll-and we clicked. The audience wasted no time in joining in. Thanks to those with their own unique humor-and I'm sure you know who you are!

I think the new focus on the fact-finding was successful. I have served as technical advisor to one LHRC since the training, and the members did an excellent, careful job during the deliberation and fact-finding process.

On the long drive home that evening, (yes it was in the pouring rain), I was on a natural high from thoroughly enjoying the seminar. I did decide that next time, we should probably hold this session just once. The second presentation that afternoon didn't work nearly as well. It had been a long day; the audience was very small. The irony being that it just doesn't work as well without you- The LHRC.

*-Sonia Smith
Office of Human Rights*

I was asked by a member of the State Human Rights Newsletter Committee to submit my impressions of the workshop, "LHRC Reviews and Approvals" in which I was a participant. However, before I share my impressions of the workshop's success, I would like to share a behind-the-scenes incident that occurred prior to the start of the seminar.

Invariably, the best made plans generally have a few mishaps. This seminar would be no different. It appears that the audio system had a few crossed wires. While testing the microphones, it was discovered that each presenter could be heard in the adjoining room simultaneously. Fortunately, prior to show time, the technicians prevailed.

In my opinion, the workshop, "LHRC Reviews and Approvals" was well received. The audience was very attentive and asked relevant questions with respect to program rules, informed consent, types of variances approved by the State Human Rights Committee (SHRC), and time frames with regards to the review of policies and procedures.

The following presentations were given:

Gianna Mitchell, Restrictions on Freedoms of Everyday Life

Stewart Prost, Use of Seclusion, Restraint and Time Out

Anne Stiles, Authorized Representatives and Informed Consent

Beverly Games, Policies, Procedures and Practices,

Margie L. Nevins, a LHRC member, shared a very poignant account of an individual that wanted the LHRC to uphold his right to self-determination and not have the facility force treatment.

All of the presenters did an outstanding job.

Beverly Games
Office of Human Rights

Members of the SHRC thank all LKRVC attendees for their enthusiastic participation in the Seminar. Most importantly, we thank you for your many suggestions for improving future Seminars. You've shown us the road; we will cheerfully follow it.

SHRC Hail and Farewell

We welcome two new members to the SHRC in this issue.

Mr. Donald H. Lyons of Hillsville

Donald was a State Police Officer for 32 years. The last 13 of those years, he was a supervisor in the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, drug investigative unit, serving the 15 westernmost counties of Southwestern Virginia. He also represented the Department of State Police on the Command Group of four drug task forces.

The past four years Donald has been a member of the Local Human Rights Committee for Southwestern Virginia Training Center in Hillsville, Virginia.

Dr. Jannie W. Robinson of Chesapeake

Jannie is currently providing individual and group counseling in a private practice located in Chesapeake. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Virginia. She earned an MSW from VCU in 1976 and worked for Henrico Mental Health and Family and Childrens' Services of Richmond to obtain the required hours of supervision for licensure. She obtained training in substance abuse through a state-sponsored program in 1999. Additionally, she received a BS in Education with emphasis in Special Education from VCU in 1980.

"I serve on the LHRC in the Tidewater area where I have gained a wealth of knowledge about the responsibilities of service providers and the need for due diligence to consumers. My experiences, education and/or training cover the whole spectrum of mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse issues which I believe will assist me in providing support to the state board," said Jannie.

Meet The Advocate

Each edition of Human Writes will profile one of the Advocates

This issue introduces Tim Simmons. Advocate with Region II. Tim is the advocate for the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute as well as six other facilities, which have psychiatric programs: Fairfax Hospital, Woodburn Center for Community Mental Health, Mt. Vernon Hospital, Virginia Hospital Center, Prince William Hospital, and Dominion Hospital, plus 28 community providers of mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services. This seemingly-overwhelming assignment is what it appears to be: formidable. It is not always possible to stay on top of needs and Tim often monitors complaints or other problems via voice mail. He then follows up, seeking the least restrictive solution, always striving for a win-win answer.

Tim has a much more expansive history of advocacy work than his youthful appearance would suggest. His previous work includes therapeutic foster care, the establishment of a group home for hard-to-place mentally retarded clients, which was successful in spite of obstacles and disbelief on the part of other professionals of its chance for success. He along with a great team, established the first community-based sex offender program in the state of Maryland. This list is not all-inclusive.

Personally, Tim has two daughters and three grandchildren. He is single, being divorced. He has been a minister since 1979, serving at the Metropolitan Baptist Church in D. C. in youth ministry and outreach.

Tim regards himself as a change agent who seeks cutting-edge models in human rights to find resolutions. He views education as the key to effecting change.

Meet The LHRC Honoree

Each edition of Human Writes will profile an outstanding LHRC member

This issue introduces Ms. Nancy Cartier, a consumer of services from North West Community Services Board and a resident at Shenandoah Valley Community Residences. She has served on the NWCSB/LHRC for two years, where her insights, comments, and motions are helpful to the work of the committee and her personality is uplifting to all.

Nancy commutes to work regularly at a workshop in Front Royal as well as attending LHRC meetings. She likes to travel and has visited her sister in Oregon. She plans to travel to Oregon again in December.

She enjoys serving on the LHRC because she genuinely likes the other members of the committee and feels like she is making a contribution.

Update on Revised Regulations

As you know the Rules and Regulations to Assure the Rights of Individuals Receiving Services from Providers Licensed, Funded or Operated by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services went into affect on September 19, 2007. Training activities on the revised regulations are well underway the first of which was the LHRC/SHRC Seminar. The Department has made a DVD titled "Overview of the Changes to the Human Rights Regulations" that was mailed to providers, advocates and interested persons. The DVD covers, in detail, the changes to the regulations including several sections in their entirety. The hope is that the DVD may be used as a training resource and guide for revising policies.

In addition, the Department is sponsoring several free, daylong trainings on the human rights regulations throughout the state in October and November. Information about the dates, times and locations of these trainings can be found on the Department web page <http://www.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov/>. Other information related to the implementation of the revised regulations can be found on the Department web page including the regulations and training resources. Additional resources will be added as developed.

Questions about the regulations may be submitted via email to Margaret.walsh@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov or cohrreg@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov.