

University of Massachusetts Medical School
Department of Psychiatry
Adolescent Treatment Programs
Mentoring Program

July 2013

Dear

I appreciate your interest in learning more about the Mentoring Program serving the adolescents at the Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital.

Many of the youth who presently reside on one of the four Adolescent Treatment Programs at the Hospital have no visitors, receive no telephone calls and have no involved family members. As Director of Parent and Community Engagement for the Department of Psychiatry, University of Massachusetts Medical School, I spend much of my time working with the teens, staff, and community agencies and with those family members or guardians who are involved with their adolescents.

Having a committed, stable adult in their lives is one of the most important variables that will make it possible for our youth with mental health challenges to “make it” in our society. In order to find that special group of people who are willing to make a commitment to visit and stay in touch with our youth while they are on the unit, we launched a “Mentorship Program” in 2010 and are presently seeking to recruit more volunteers. Below please find a description of our youth and the program. Attached are a Job Description and an Application.

Our Youth

The four UMass Adolescent Treatment Programs residing at Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital serve sixty male and female adolescents with ages ranging from 13-19 years old. They come from all over the state and are referred to us by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Mental Health and come directly from other short term hospital units where they have not made the significant strides necessary for them to return to the community. In addition to having significant emotional disorders the majority of the youth have suffered some type of trauma. Most of the adolescents have had many hospital admissions prior to coming to us and have often not been at home or in their community for many years. Unfortunately, a high percentage of the youth who are in our programs are in the custody of the Department of Children and Families. Many of these youth do not have consistent family involvement and or other natural supports that visit or make regular telephone calls. No one from outside the program is checking in to see how they are doing.

Despite the adversity they face, our youth have many strengths and we have the benefit of seeing them heal and progress while they are in our programs. They love to give back to the community and have been involved with animal shelters, food pantries, the NEADS program, preparing packages for the military overseas and visiting the elderly in nearby nursing homes. They have also been active in raising money by participating in cancer walks and selling crafts.

Our Programs

Our programs provide the highest level of long term intensive residential treatment in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the average length of stay is six to nine months. We strive to provide a healing treatment environment and focus on each youth's strengths and resiliency. Our programs provide individualized treatment including psychiatric services, medical care, individual and family therapy, occupational therapy and milieu treatment and pet therapy. Each unit has at least one dog in residence each day. We also have a full day school program which is located at the hospital and accredited by the Massachusetts Department of Education. For those who are feeling safe, outside walks are taken daily as well as weekly excursions to the library, to the mall and to play soccer and volleyball in Westboro.

Mentors

Research has shown that in addition to the treatment our programs provide, having a significant adult in their life is the variable that can be the most meaningful and effective factor to success. Having someone to give them a call on a consistent basis, send a note, share a hobby and provide encouragement is what could make the difference for many of our youth. It is essential that these teenagers see that people outside of the hospital know they are struggling and working hard and are thinking of them. This kind of connection can help our adolescents restore trust and feel the sense of hope that can propel them to take the difficult steps needed for a successful future.

We are seeking adults who will commit to:

- . Regular visits
- . Weekly telephone calls
- . Remembering their youth at birthdays and holidays

If you are interested in becoming a Mentor for a youth in one of our Adolescent Treatment Programs you are asked to complete and return the attached application, come for an interview, agree to have a CORI (required background check) and participate in a short training program prior to being assigned to a teenager.

If you have questions or thoughts, please call me at 508 368 0512 or email laurah.myers@umassmed.edu. I am available to attend a meeting or to make a presentation on our program if you are a member of any organization that might be interested.

Thank you so much for your interest in this important program. Those presently serving as Mentors continually express how meaningful these special relationships have become in their lives.

Sincerely,

Laura H. Myers, MSW EdD
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University of Mass. Medical School