

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

.....*Speaking with one voice to meet the critical needs of people with mental illness*

Grassroots Advocacy Network Kansas Voices for Mental Health Make a difference. Advocate.

Background

The most enduring and powerful motivator for policy makers on mental health issues is hearing real stories from people who live with mental illness, as well as stories from friends, family and mental health professionals. However, many people hesitate to share their stories or to contact their elected officials because they don't know what to say or how to say it. Powerful and personal stories serve as a springboard for confident advocacy and a grassroots network that can deliver the votes on key policy reforms. The purpose of this project is to help individuals learn to share their story and to become more engaged as advocates in their home districts.

Project Description

Sponsored by the Kansas Mental Health Coalition, Kansas Voices for Mental Health is an expanding grassroots network of mental health advocates across the state. We are committed to developing the capacity to influence every House and Senate member and County Commissioner on the Coalition's issues through the advocacy network.

In order to realize this goal, this project will focus on the following strategies:

- Recruit individuals who have a desire to be part of a statewide advocacy network.
- Educate policy makers at all levels on mental health issues endorsed by the Coalition.
- Provide training to help advocates translate their stories into powerful advocacy messages.
- Encourage advocates to effectively share their stories with policy makers in a variety of settings.
- Communicate with advocates about issues and opportunities to connect with policy makers.

How to Get Involved

- *Apply to become a Legislative District Advocate.* This is an opportunity for individuals with lived experience of mental illness as well as for family members, providers and anyone who has a stake in our mental health system. This includes Board members and staff, law enforcement officers and other advocates.
 - Sign up online at the Coalition's website:
<http://kansasmentalhealthcoalition.onefireplace.com/>
 - Navigate to the Grassroots Advocacy Network and find the link to Sign Up Online.
- *Attend a training event: Attend a Grassroots Advocacy Network training event in a location near you as the training becomes available. Help us bring a training event to your area by working with a local organization to recruit a core group of six individuals who are interested in joining the Network.*
- *Be an advocate:* The expectation is that being selected as a district advocate will require a limited but ongoing time commitment to remain abreast of the issues and to seek out opportunities to meet with elected officials.

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