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CONTACT: Toni Gardner
Director of Communications
(512) 454-3706, x218
toni@mhatexas.org

VIA HOPE HIRES YOUTH COORDINATOR TO HELP EMPOWER TEXAS YOUTH

Program to improve statewide mental health support for consumers ages 14 to 24

AUSTIN, TX (Friday, June 18, 2010) – In an effort to improve statewide mental health support for youth, Via Hope, Texas Mental Health Resource, a collaborative effort of Department of State Health Services, Mental Health America of Texas and the National Alliance on Mental Illness Texas has hired Lauren Cohen as the youth coordinator. Cohen will be charged with creating alliances and support groups that will give 14 to 24-year-olds a voice and platform for mental health advocacy.

According to Lynn Lasky Clark, president and CEO of Mental Health America of Texas, studies indicate that 1 in 5 children and adolescents (20 percent) may have a diagnosable disorder, and the number of children who have mental disorders range from 7.7 million to 12.8 million.

“We’re excited to fill this critical position, and begin addressing youth development, resilience, recovery, and the transformation of mental health services delivery for youth with serious mental health needs and their families,” said Clark. “Ms. Cohen will help us reach a segment of the population that often times is overlooked, and continue to promote the mental health and wellness of youth.”

“The ways to go about getting young people’s attention are different from reaching adults, because youth are more likely to use social media to gather their information,” said Dennis Bach, Via Hope program director. “Adults mostly want resources to help them to get on with their lives, whereas youth are more likely to have recently been diagnosed and are seeking answers about their diagnosis.”

Cohen, who holds a master’s of science in social work from the University of Texas at Austin, spent two years working with foster youth, and served on a youth leadership organization board. Her outreach methods are mostly focused on using web-based social networking and social media tools, as well as on-line discussion groups, in order to reach this target specific audience.

About Via Hope

Via Hope, Texas Mental Health Resource is a training and technical assistance resource for mental health consumers, their family members, youth consumers, and professionals.

Via Hope provides mental health consumers and family members with information and education that assists with their recovery,

To learn more visit www.viahope.org or call the toll free number at 877-482-8550.

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