



## MILWAUKEE MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

# Celebrating ten years of education, advocacy and collaboration

### Our Accomplishments

Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force hasn't just changed the mental health system. It's changed our community.

- **New knowledge, energy, and commitment** to innovation and reform resulting from a series of eight successful summits addressing challenges critical to building a responsive, effective mental health community beginning with the very first **Milwaukee Mental Health Summit** in 2004 and including

Crisis Intervention Team Summit (2004)

Stigma: Barriers and Solutions (2006)

Mapping a New Road to Recovery: Addressing Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System (2008)

Wisconsin Warrior Summit (2009)

Mental Health: Race, Ethnicity, Culture (2010)

Youth Mental Health Summit (2012)

Understanding Recovery (2014)

- **Substantially improved law enforcement capability** to address the needs of people in mental health crisis through the provision of Crisis Intervention Training and ongoing collaboration between the MHTF, NAMI, and the Milwaukee Police Department. While more training is needed, Milwaukee has CIT capacity in each of the City's five police districts with 1 In 4 officers trained in this critical set of skills. The MHTF has been a consistent, powerful force behind CIT, beginning with its efforts to replicate the Memphis model and working with law enforcement since 2005 to customize CIT to local needs.

*"What is the Task Force's greatest accomplishment? It's **staying power**. The need for advocacy for mental health issues was self-evident but there were several earlier attempts to put together a coalition that failed. The earlier efforts always started with someone making a list of issues that needed advocacy but those efforts never got any traction after an initial meeting or two. Things didn't really gel until Tom Hlavacek said the way to organize was to pick a single issue and build upon the success of that effort. His genius led to the summit concerning CIT and the rest is history."*

– Bob Wrenn

- **Innovative community options for people in crisis** through the establishment of two Crisis Resource Centers, welcoming places that people facing immediate difficult challenges can go for help and support. The MHTF was instrumental in the process that led to initial CRC funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that established the first CRC on the south side and in advocating for a second CRC to serve the north side. The MHTF has also been a strong advocate for increased Mobile Crisis Team capacity and additional crisis stabilization beds. All of these options are geared toward helping people where they live and **reducing emergency and inpatient stays**.





- **High value placed on the contributions of individuals with lived experience** and changed expectations about the role of peers in every component of policy development, service delivery, and program evaluation. The sea change represented by the peer movement is felt in the public and private health care systems, community-based agencies, the Mental Health Redesign process and the new Mental Health Board and it started with the MHTF. One indicator: **119 Certified Peer Specialists in Milwaukee County**, up from just 16 in 2011.

*“One of the highlights that comes to mind is the **collaboration that resulted in the birth of the south side Crisis Resource Center** in 2007. I remember a big meeting with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in the summer of 2007 with a tremendous group: peers with lived experience, incredible support from local Foundations, key partners from Milwaukee Police Department and Milwaukee County Sheriff, and many stakeholders from the Mental Health Task Force. By the end of the meeting, I had the amazing sense that RWJ really liked the collaboration and the strong consumer voice and I felt confident that we would get the funding.”*

– Mary Neubauer

- **Informed, assertive voices** at every table where policy and budget decisions are made. The MHTF informs, educates, advocates, and evaluates the impact of every proposal, reform, and line item. MHTF’s efforts resulted in increased investment in community-based services including crisis resource centers and CLASP. The MHTF successfully advocated for the implementation of CRS (Community Recovery Services) and CCS (Comprehensive Community Services) in Milwaukee County; and has been a force in all components of the Mental Health Redesign effort, all part of the focused effort to move to a **recovery-oriented system of care**.

*“Achieving systemic change is a slow painful process and **it takes persistence**. For ten years, once a month, the peers, providers, policy makers, advocates, and family members who make up the MHTF have come together around a common table to continue our work to change the world. For ten years, we have worked collaboratively to realize our vision of improvements in mental health services, giving consumers and families a strong voice, reducing stigma, and implementing recovery principles. We are standing at the crossroads now, as historic change is underway, and the future is uncertain. Now more than ever, we must continue our work, and continue to speak out for justice, equity, and access for people with mental health needs.”*

– Barbara Beckert

- **A changed landscape of recovery-oriented permanent housing** resulting from numerous public-private partnerships, spurred by the advocacy and consistent involvement of the MHTF. New housing that combines affordable, safe, and attractive housing with supportive services, including the presence of certified peer specialists has become available to hundreds of Milwaukee residents. In just six years, the number of recovery-oriented units has grown tenfold from **48 in 2008 to 446 in 2013**. MHTF fostered the community climate that encouraged this remarkable investment.

- **A dynamic, dependable, and safe forum** for tackling Milwaukee’s toughest, most challenging problems. The MHTF has focused on taking the time it takes to fully understand complex issues, hearing the people who need to be heard, and having the difficult discussions that are the foundation for lasting change. In 2004, the MHTF established seven guiding principles addressing **leadership, inclusion, recovery, commitment to the community, respect for diversity, education, and communication**, and has not wavered from that foundation.

*“The Faye McBeath Foundation is pleased to have supported the work and members of the Mental Health Task Force. The Task Force has played a major role in coordinating services, identifying issues and educating the public regarding mental health and mental illness. Its role in Mental Health Redesign and the Mental Health Board are only two of the most recent, recognized roles played by the members and leaders. The Summit on Recovery **pushes the envelope of thinking and practice in the field of mental health**. With so much to be done, we all need to advance our thinking and action. To all those who have been involved, we say thanks and congratulations for your work and leadership.”*

– Scott Gelzer

More information about the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is available at [www.milwaukeemhtf.org](http://www.milwaukeemhtf.org).  
New members are *always* welcome. Contact Disability Rights Wisconsin at 414-773-4646 to be added to the mailing list.