



The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is the voice of the community on issues related to the quality and responsiveness of mental health and substance use disorder services.

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Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force Congratulates 2022 Award Recipients

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force congratulates the remarkable recipients of our 2022 awards recognizing outstanding leadership and mental health advocacy. The awards will be presented Tuesday, November 15, at the 2022 Karen Avery Forum, "*Empowering Families: Peer and Community Mental Health Support for Child Welfare Involved Parents and Families*".

Karen Avery Award

Barbara Beckert will be the ninth recipient of the *Karen Avery Award*. It was Barbara who was the catalyst in establishing the Karen Avery Award to honor Karen Avery's legacy as an advocate, mentor, peer, and leader in advancing the rights of people with disabilities.

Barbara is Director of External Advocacy for Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW). She staffs the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force (MHTF), and DRW's PAIMI Advisory Council which provides input for DRW's mental health advocacy. Barbara co-chairs the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health Legislative Policy Committee. She leads DRW's Voting Access advocacy, and co-leads the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition, in partnership with the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. She coordinates DRW's public policy work and is involved with systems advocacy on Medicaid, children's services, justice reform, transportation, long term care, mental health, and voting.



The nomination highlighted Barbara's endless list of contributions and achievements to the roles she holds in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin, stating: "Barbara has worked hours on top of hours on advancing the rights of people in all aspects of their lives. She has gone above and beyond when it comes to working with people and their rights." As Coordinator for the MHTF, Barbara strives for peer involvement at all levels of the organization: It may be someone presenting at a monthly meeting, sharing testimony to the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board, or serving on the Steering Committee. *If Karen Avery was with us today she would smile, reach out, grab Barbara's hand and say, "Great job Barbara!"*

Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award

Katie Holtz will be the third recipient of the *Marie C. Perry Rising Leader Award*. Inspired by the dedication of our inaugural recipient, the Award honors Marie's memory and recognizes visionary leadership by an individual who is a rising leader in the Milwaukee area mental health community.

Katie is an attorney manager with the Public Defender in Milwaukee focusing on youth, parents, and mental health clients. Before starting at the State Public Defender (SPD), Katie was a clinical supervisor at the Remington Center at the University of Wisconsin Madison. She loves training and mentoring new attorneys. She volunteers for Girls on the Run and was a Big Sister for more than 12 years. Katie has run five marathons and has an adorable six-year-old.



Katie is a champion for the rights of people with mental illness and/or disabilities and gives strength to the consumer voice in the court system and community. During the pandemic, she took a lead role in collaborating with mental health stakeholders to ensure the rights of individuals in Chapter 51 proceedings, that hearings were held on time, and that clients had the opportunity to talk with their lawyers, amidst the uncertainty that enveloped all of us.

The nomination noted that: *"Katie pours her heart into a client's story and case. She takes her passionate stories to the frontlines and makes people listen --Judges, Commissioners, Adversary Counsels, Doctors, Social Workers, advocates, politicians and community members. Katie holds everyone accountable to ensure clients' rights and freedoms are protected and she does not take "no" for an answer. She does this because she knows from her experience and interactions with her child and adult clients that being in a mental health hospital is frightening and traumatizing and patients are entitled to extra care and compassion."*

As the recipient of the Marie C. Perry award, Katie will receive a scholarship for conference registration, fees, and logistics or continuing education to further her professional development. This was generously endowed by Marie's family.

Outstanding Achievement Award

Patricia Obletz will be the sixth recipient of the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force *Outstanding Achievement Award*. Patricia's activism began when she lived in New York and was outraged by the mistreatment of people with mental illness in state and county mental health institutions. She joined forces with Darby Penney and other activists in the New York State Office of Mental Health to advocate for change.



During her time in Milwaukee, Patricia has been a tireless advocate to improve conditions in the justice system for people with mental illness. She has worked to advance diversion from the justice system and expand supports and services for re-entry. As a community activist for justice reform, and a longtime member of the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force Steering Committee, Patricia has provided dedicated leadership for efforts to address the intersection of mental illness and criminal justice system. She has generously shared her writing skills and provided a platform for the Mental Health Task Force and other community advocates to increase awareness and advance advocacy on her blog "Peace of Mind". Patricia is a respected artist and much of her artwork reflects her lifelong passion for justice. Her work is in public and private conditions coast to coast.

Congratulations to the 2022 Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force award recipients. We thank them for their dedicated advocacy. Join us November 15th at 2 PM on Zoom for the 2022 Karen Avery Forum, which will include the awards presentation.

- [Register for the 2022 Karen Avery Forum here.](#)
- [View the forum flyer with information about forum speakers](#) (PDF)
- View Forum information [here.](#)