



Greater Reading Mental Health Alliance Year in Review – 2021

While 2021 was a year that continued to find many struggling to overcome the barriers of the Covid-19 pandemic, GRMHA pushed forward and even grew a little!

In the spring and summer of 2021 we faced a major undertaking of developing and implementing a new, more efficient and user friendly electronic health record system. This proved to be a major undertaking for a few staff who spent countless hours learning the new system, on calls and virtual meetings for development, and helping staff learn the new system.

With the warmer weather and loosening of some pandemic restrictions, we held our first annual golf tournament fundraiser, partnered with a local bicycle club and were the recipient of part of their fundraising proceeds, and will be holding a hockey event fundraiser in early 2022.

We continued to provide peer support services to consumers in need with a steady stream of referrals especially in the last two quarters of the year. Our rep payee services continued to grow and we were finally approved through the Social Security Administration to be fee for service in 2022. This allows us to take rep payee consumers from anywhere in Berks County.

Our Educational advocates have found themselves quite busy with the resumption of in person learning in the fall of 2021. Many children in Berks County are struggling to catch up from a year of virtual learning. The advocates are working diligently to get through their current waiting list to assist as many children and families as possible.

In addition to peer support and rep payee services, we were awarded and began a County contract for guardianship services through the Berks County Area Agency on Aging. This has shown itself to be a highly needed service which has resulted in GRMHA requesting and being approved for a new part time position. This position will be fully funded for one year (2022) due to a one-time investment grant which the United Way Board of Directors graciously approved. In addition, both Wendy Seidel and James Trupp and became national certified guardians.

GRMHA has also continued to further develop it's support group services, resuming 3 face to face groups and starting a new group for pregnancy and infant loss. In addition, we have begun the initial phases to create the first ever Berks County LOSS team to respond to surviving relatives and friends who are affected by a suicide. With the help of the Berks County Suicide Prevention Task Force and in conjunction with RUOk Berks, we will be developing resource information to provide to Coroners and Funeral homes in Berks County, starting a second location for the Survivors of Suicide support group and beginning the task of forming the LOSS team.

This is only a glimpse into the work that goes on at GRMHA daily. The work we do here is critical to the betterment of Berks County and I remain grateful that I have the privilege to be a part of it.

Stay well,
Wendy