

Empowering People, Improving Services

**Serving on your Local
Mental Health
Advisory Council**



Produced by the Mental Health Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services, in collaboration with the Local Advisory Council work group of the Minnesota State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health.

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Why LACs

The goal of Local Mental Health Advisory Councils (LACs) is to tap into the knowledge of diverse groups of community members in order to improve mental health services for all Minnesotans.

LACs offer individuals, parents, families and mental health service providers the opportunity to make a real difference in how mental health care is provided in their community, and it offers county and state policy makers the wisdom of people's experiences first-hand.





Established by counties

All counties, alone or in partnership with other counties, should have LACs. Counties, county boards and community leaders use LACs to advise them on a range of mental health topics, such as improving their local mental health and social services systems.

There are many benefits to having an LAC in your county:

- LACs empower individuals with a lived mental illness experience, their parents and families
- Having an active, productive and effective LAC can lead to the improvement of the local mental health system and services for the community
- LACs offer advice to the local mental health system on what is and is not working.

Meetings must be held at least quarterly, but are commonly held monthly.

**Every county
in Minnesota
is required to
have a Local
Advisory
Council.**

Hearing different
points of view
promotes useful
discussions,
meaningful
input and
encourages
problem
solving.

Serving on an LAC

Gathering community members to discuss issues related to mental health services provides a rich variety of perspectives, experiences and ideas. LACs work to include many voices, especially people who have experienced mental illness and their families. They also work to have thoughtful and inclusive discussions focused on solutions and new and creative ideas for their communities.



Jeff's Story

Jeff had been hospitalized at least four times a year for almost 15 years. He moved to Wadena in 2007, where he received community-based services and lived in his own apartment for the first time since 1995. "I was invited to come to the Wadena County LAC meeting," Jeff says. "I was so impressed that my voice was listened to and that I was validated for my input. I felt like a light went on when I walked out of the basement meeting room."

Now Jeff has been an active participant and member of the LAC for eight years, and he has served as chair for two of those years. "When I was elected to be chair I was excited and thought, 'Hey they elected me to be the chair!' I asked other members, 'Can you help me know what to do to get started? Make an agenda?'"

His latest project, with the LAC support, is to create a short educational video that will be used at the local theater to promote LACs and the work they do in the Wadena community.

Reflecting back to why he got involved in his LAC, Jeff adds, "I felt like I had worth again and knew I wanted to be involved in making change in the new community I was living in!"

Your county may have both an adult and a children's mental health LAC, or they may be combined.

Adult LAC

Adult LACs include at least:

- One person with a mental illness
- One family member of an adult with a mental illness
- One mental health professional
- One community support services program representative.

Adult LACs work to:

- **Coordinate**—receives input about coordination of care between regional treatment centers and community-based services
- **Plan**—helps in the development of the county and adult mental health initiative plans and applications by providing needs assessments
- **Inform**—identifies for the county board individuals and agencies where mental health services are available and provides information on how to access these services
- **Recommend**—makes recommendations regarding services provided in the county and reports on unmet mental health needs
- **Report**—reports its recommendations regarding the local mental health system to the State Advisory Council on Mental Health.


Children's LAC

The children's LACs include at least:

- One person who was in a mental health program as a child or adolescent
- One parent of a child or adolescent with serious emotional and behavioral disorder
- One children's mental health professional
- Representatives of minority populations of significant size residing in the county
- One representative of the children's mental health local coordinating council
- One family community support services program representative.

Children's LACs work to:

- Identify needs—seeks input from parents, families, individuals, providers and others about the needs of children and families.
- Coordinate—receives input from local providers regarding coordination of care between services
- Plan—helps in the development of mental health planning for the county
- Inform—Identifies for the county board individuals and agencies where children's mental health services are available and how to access these services
- Recommend—makes recommendations regarding services and reports on unmet mental health needs of children
- Report—reports its recommendations regarding the local mental health system to the State Advisory Council on Mental Health.



We hope you consider
serving your community
on an LAC, and that you
find it rewarding and
empowering.

Next steps

For more information, visit
mn.gov/dhs/lac
or call 651-431-2225

Mental Health Division, Department of Human Services

651-431-2225

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