A Pandemic Positive: FAVOR’s Got an Intern!

Written by Stephen Jacobsen, UConn School of Social Work Intern

Seventeen months into this pandemic, FAVOR, Inc. had the privilege to partner with UConn School of Social Work’s Field Placement office and welcome our first graduate school intern. We asked if he’d like to officially introduce himself in the newsletter. Here’s what he had to say:

“Hello, my name is Stephen Jacobsen. I am an UConn Master of Social Work intern here at FAVOR. I hope to learn not only from my supervisors and co-workers, but the families and communities we support. I am a person with autism and an advocate for neurodivergent adults, children, and families. My internship began the end of August and will continue through the spring of next year. This work has connected me with so many dedicated community leaders and helping professionals. I work closely with the Eastern region team and look forward to fostering relationships, facilitating community conversations in the region and working with service providers in the area.

Our families and communities continue to find themselves in an unprecedented time in Connecticut. The ongoing pandemics have inspired many of us to reflect on and examine many of our needs and those of our neighbors that have gone under the radar. We encourage, not only reaching out to service providers and community resources like FAVOR, but becoming actively engaged and teaching us about what resources are aiding you the most. We aim to understand what supports your community needs.

We are so grateful for Stephen’s insight and presence within the organization and in any space he joins. Thank you Stephen and thank you UConn!
Welcome to Our New Staff!

We’ve been in a pandemic. We’ve heard about “The Great Resignation.” Yet we’ve still be able to embrace some amazing new staff members here at FAVOR. Please help us officially welcome them all to the FAVOR family!

Charissa Williams  
(FPSS-Beacon-Southwest)  
Coreen Herman  
(FPSS-Western)  
Cynthia Renner  
(FPSS-Beacon-Western)  
Darrin McCalla  
(FPSS-Beacon-Eastern)  
Keisha Martin-Velez  
(FSM-Southwest)  
Kristin Graham  
(FSM-South Central)  
Danielle Verderame  
(FSM-Central)  
Paul Guerrero  
(FSM-North Central)  
Sara (Gennie) Busse  
(FPSS-North Central)  
Shannon Ozkan  
(FPSS-Eastern)  
Stephen Jacobsen  
(Family Engagement-Intern)

Let’s also congratulate Jenny Bridges on her new position as Operations Manager and Jacquese Patterson on her new position as FAVOR Learning and Leadership Academy Coordinator!
Season’s Griefings
Written by Renee Wright, Southwest Family Peer Support Specialist

The second holiday season in the global pandemic is definitely more scary than merry! Typical holiday stressors seem tame compared with the mountain of loss and grief that people are facing daily. Some, like me, can count a loved one who recently passed away for each day of Christmas. In the midst of these tragic times, many youth are experiencing a mental-health crisis that’s every bit as life-threatening.

This fall, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children’s Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National State of Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health. The declaration was made on October 19th, 2021 and outlined the crisis’s severity:

“As health professionals dedicated to the care of children and adolescents, we have witnessed soaring rates of mental health challenges among children, adolescents, and their families over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating the situation that existed prior to the pandemic . . . The pandemic has intensified this crisis: across the country we have witnessed dramatic increases in Emergency Department visits for all mental health emergencies including suspected suicide attempts . . . The pandemic has struck at the safety and stability of families. More than 140,000 children in the United States lost a primary and/or secondary caregiver, with youth of color disproportionately impacted.”
- Source: https://DeclarationNationalCrisis.pdf

The holidays have traditionally been a time for children and adolescents to enjoy. Unfortunately, our youngest are currently experiencing unparalleled levels of emotional suffering. Although this is the season of giving, for many, it is also the season of grieving. If nothing else, let us share the gifts of compassion, support and encouragement to all - particularly our youth!
Winter Coat Drive

Though the cold winter months we will be collecting donations to purchase coats, hats, scarves, mittens and gloves which will be donated to families in need.

Help Keep Our Children Warm this Winter season with your generosity!

Donations will benefit children and young adults throughout CT regions.

Donations can be made through our online platform at http://www.favor-ct.org/donate/

For more information on how to donate and become involved contact:

Danielle Verderame | Family Systems Manager
dVerderame@favor-ct.org | 203-623-0378

FAVOR, Inc. would like to thank LJ, the store manager at the GAP Factory, of Clinton Premium Outlets, and her staff for the generous donations made to the FAVOR, Inc. coat drive. We look forward to working with you as one of our new community partners!
FAVORs Learning & Leadership Academy (FLLA)

FAVOR’s Learning & Leadership Academy (FLLA) provides virtual networking trainings, community conversations, and informational sessions statewide. This virtual learning collaborative is designed to provide infrastructure to guide and mentor youth & family champions interested in developing their leadership and peer support skills. Youth/young adults and families are encouraged to participate in ongoing trainings around family advocacy, data, mental health, support group facilitation, and more.

Please visit FAVOR’s website for a full listing of free trainings/workshops offered: Learning & Leadership Academy. If you have any questions, please contact us here: 203-707-0740 or favorlla@favor-ct.org

Upcoming Trainings

How To Be Your Child’s Best Advocate – January 18, 2022 from 12:00pm – 2pm
Agents of Change – January 20, 2022 from 2:00pm – 4:00pm
Cómo Ser el Mejor Defensor/a De Su Hijo/a – January 25, 2022 from 5:30pm – 7:30pm

Persuasive Storytelling – February 3, 2022 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm
Data 101: Part 1 – February 8, 2022 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm
Data 101: Part 2 – February 10, 2022 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm
Data 201 – February 15, 2022 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm
CONNECTing Youth – February 17, 2022 from 4:00pm – 5:00pm

From all of us at FAVOR, we hope everyone had an enjoyable, safe and warm holiday season!
Get to know the CONNECTing to Care workgroups

Written by our CONNECT partners at Beacon Health Options and Stephanie Luscak
(Continued)

Social Marketing and Communications
The Social Marketing and Communications workgroup uses social marketing and communications strategies to enhance awareness and information sharing about mental health, suicide prevention and the available behavioral health services in our state. Informational campaigns are used to reduce stigma and discrimination, and promote system of care development, principles, and philosophy.

Workgroup Contact: Kenisha Creary, Beacon Health Options, kenisha.creary@beaconhealthoptions.com
Designated Meeting Time: Second Thursday of every month | 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Trauma-Informed School Mental Health Taskforce
The vision of the Trauma-Informed School Mental Health Taskforce is that Connecticut will ensure that every student and family achieves equitable academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical well-being. The Taskforce supports activities to support systems organization and accountability within schools; health promotion, prevention, and early identification through a trauma-informed lens; integration amongst pediatric primary care and the behavioral health system; and ensuring equitable access to culturally appropriate care.

Workgroup Contact: Jeana Bracey, Child Health and Development Institute, bracey@uchc.edu
Designated Meeting Time: Fourth Monday of every other month | 9:30 – 11 am

Workforce Development
The Workforce Development workgroup supports increased capacity, knowledge and skills of youth, families, providers and community members related to Connecticut’s Network of Care transformation efforts. The goal of the workgroup is to train, support, and mentor youth and families to provide leadership in the care, delivery, and oversight of their own care and the system of services.

Workgroup Contact: Maguena Deslandes, FAVOR, madetona@favor-ct.org
Designated Meeting Time: Second Friday of every month | 1:00 – 2:00 pm
WeAre In This Together

Get to know the CONNECTing to Care workgroups
Written by our CONNECT partners at Beacon Health Options and Stephanie Luscak

CONNECTing to Care is the statewide effort to integrate ALL child-serving systems into a Network of Care that equally and effectively serves all of Connecticut’s children and families. In accordance with Connecticut’s Behavioral Health Plan for Children, families, state agencies, and service providers work together in partnership to implement changes that promote wellness and help children and families thrive in their communities. This work happens at local, regional and state levels.

Connecting to Care workgroups focus on specific areas of the work. These workgroups are inviting family members and youth to participate in their work. Incentives are available for participating family members and youth.

Please check out these five workgroups and contact the chairperson, if you are interested in participating or would like to find out more.

CareHubs
The CareHub workgroup is developing a family driven model that better integrates pediatric healthcare, behavioral healthcare and school supports. An important piece of this work is the goal of having all providers utilize one individualized coordinated plan of care that supports a child’s social, emotional, and physical health.

Workgroup Contact: Daniela Giordano, Beacon Health Options,
Daniela.giordano@beaconhealthoptions.com
Designated Meeting Time: Second Friday of every month | 9:00 – 10:30 am

CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards)
The CLAS workgroup promotes the use of the enhanced national Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards into Connecticut’s Network of Care, to ensure that care is equitable for all of Connecticut’s families. The workgroup supports activities such as ongoing technical assistance and learning communities for organizations and providers committed to incorporating racial justice and health equity planning into their organizational processes, policies, and practices.

Workgroup Contact: Lisa Palazzo, Beacon Health Options,
lisa.palazzo@beaconhealthoptions.com
Designated Meeting time: Fourth Friday of every month | 12:30 – 2:00 pm

Want more information on FAVOR services and supports? Visit our website! http://www.favor-ct.org/about-us/newsletter/
Our Programs

Connecticut Medical Home Initiative (CMHI) at FAVOR
Provides eligibility information on applying for durable medical equipment and other approved extended goods and services including prescribed medications & specialized nutritional support formulas.
CMHI at FAVOR also provides eligibility information about consideration for respite funding. Respite is care provided in or out of the home, for the purpose of giving relief to the family/caregiver from the daily responsibilities of providing care to the child or youth with special health care needs.
Contact: Amanda M. Knef, Director/Coordinator, 860-729-4153 Aknef@favor-ct.org and Iris Hellandbrand, Assistant Coordinator, 860-436-6544 Ihellandbrand@favor-ct.org
1-855-436-6544 Fax: 860-563-3961 CTMedicalHome@favor-ct.org

Family Peer Support Specialist Program (FPSS)
- Assist parents and family members to be equal partners in all levels of assessment, planning and implementation of services for their children.
- Assist family members in accessing appropriate supports and services, that are family centered and community based.
- Assist family members by providing education, support and training families on how to become advocates for their own children.
Contact: Carolyn Westerholm (203) 943-1431 cwesterholm@favor-ct.org and

Family System Managers Program (FSM)
- Collaborate with partner organizations and encourage family participation in policy development and the legislative process.
- Offer training, technical assistance and support to parents and caregivers to assist them in becoming active partners in the Systems of Care network.
- Strengthen the family voice to self-advocate and engage in building the parent/service provider partnership.
Contact: Maguena Deslandes (860) 463-0758 madetona@favor-ct.org

Learning and Leadership Academy (LLA)
- Providing infrastructure to guide and mentor youth and family champions interested in developing their leadership and peer support skills.
- Allows school and community communication through online training participation.
- Virtual Learning & Leadership Academy is convenient and promotes community learning and reflection.
Contact: Jacquese Patterson (203) 707-0740 jpatterson@favor-ct.org

Call Us at: (860) 563-3232
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/FavorCt/
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