

In our own words:

‘I was able to start feeling like I could accomplish my goals.’

Submitted by Jean

My name is Jean and I have been at St. Joseph’s HHC PROS in Syracuse for just over a year. When I came into PROS I did not think that it would help me in the ways that it has. PROS has healed me tremendously.

The depression and the anxiety groups helped me to understand what was happening in my mind and my body. I was able to learn skills to help me manage the symptoms that I was now learning about in CRS WSM “Back from the Blues” and CRS WSM “Acting on Anxiety.”

The Healthy Relationship classes (CRS BLS “I Deserve a Healthy Relationship”) gave me a space to talk and be expressive. It gave me the strength to set healthy boundaries at home with my husband and children. Through the structure of the group and the fact that I was able to express myself in there, I was able to let my husband know I wanted to work.



Once I was able to say I wanted to work, I was able to start feeling like I could accomplish my goals. I am working now and even though I can’t be in groups all the time, I can still Zoom into them when I want or need to.

I am so proud of myself even though it is scary. I am changed now, and I know my abilities. I am happy! I feel like I am a new person and PROS has helped me get there!

Editor’s Note: *Thank you for sharing Jean! It’s brave to make changes even if you find them scary. I wish you the best and a happy new year!*



“Mask-xiety”

With the removal of [NYS masking requirements](#) (for many PROS), some programs are left asking: “What now?” While some celebrate the easing of restrictions, other participants may be nervous. During the COVID-19 pandemic masking has become a part of everyday life. It might be an interesting time to offer services that help people recognize non-verbal cues that haven’t been focused on since the pandemic disruption. Consider the unique social needs of your programs participants and what groups you may want to introduce.

As a reminder, your agency should develop protocols to have in place to help address any COVID-19 surge in your local community. It may be helpful to leave any 6-foot distance markers in place in case you need to return to using them.

A note from Dr. Flávio Casoy, OMH’s Medical Director for Adult Community Services and Managed Care Services: While masks are no longer required in PROS programs, their use remains highly encouraged as we go into the winter months. Masks are still required in clinic and hospital settings. Additionally, everyone is strongly encouraged to wear a mask whenever in a crowded indoor space, when in the company of an older person or someone with chronic medical problems, and for anyone who might be feeling ill. Individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 should remain at home and not place others at risk.

ADVENTURE-BASED! Counseling in PROS

Adventure-Based Counseling, or ABC, is an experiential learning program that helps to engage PROS participants in a new way – through *active* participation! Behavioral Health Services North (BHSN) blends PROS services with grant funding to engage participants in a variety of activities such as hiking, map and compass reading, rock climbing, rappelling, kayaking, geocaching, snowshoeing and X-country skiing in the winter.

The sessions are co-facilitated by PROS staff and licensed guides who are certified in wilderness first aid, as well as combinations of hiking, camping, boating, and tier 2 rock climbing. BHSN uses grant funding to offset the cost of operations, staffing, and equipment related to ABC. ABC activities are often delivered within the context of PROS Wellness Self-Management services, however other services categories have been used at times, depending on the planned interventions.

ABC has consistently been one of the most popular groups. The group has been able to engage participants who want an alternative to lecture-based classes. While some of the activities sound potentially scary, all individuals choose the level of participation that is comfortable for them, which is known as “challenge by choice.”

BHSN shared that this program has helped individuals with co-occurring mental health and addiction diagnoses, forensic involvement, trauma histories, medical conditions, mobility impairments, as well as individuals whose economic circumstances and living situations don't currently allow them to participate in these types of healthy activities.

In one instance, BHSN created a volunteer role within the ABC program to help a long-time participant take an important step toward professional growth. Completing activities as a group has helped some participants to build their confidence and given them the courage to change other areas of their lives.

While most programs do not currently have grant funding to implement a complete Adventure-Based Counseling group, there are many opportunities for PROS programs to get creative and support participants with “opting outside” through challenge-based groups and classes.



ABC Facilitators **Gabrielle McGinley** (left) and **Laura Markey** rock climbing.



ABC Operation Manager **Scott Friedman** doing some winter hiking.

Congratulations!

Postgraduate PROS & MHA of Nassau County PROS for winning the PROS Participant Survey gift card raffle. We received more than 600 surveys from PROS participants across the state, and we look forward to sharing results soon. Thank you to everyone who helped get the word out and assisted participants in accessing the survey!

Healthy Relationships

Sexual health has historically been a difficult topic to discuss, but it remains a critical topic for *everyone* to be educated on. Many PROS programs have a Sexual Health class as a part of their group schedule, but it can be a difficult topic to engage PROS participants with. For several years, **Kathryn Murphy**, from St. Joseph's Health Center PROS Program in Syracuse, has been offering a popular group that combines sexual education, healthy relationship building, and dating in a modern world. Here are some of the helpful tips Kathryn shared on how to run an engaging Healthy Relationships class or group.



Connect Participants to Health Providers

It is valuable for PROS staff to encourage participants to be aware of their physical health, so St. Joe's spends the first session focusing on which types of doctors should be visited based on person-centered need (Primary Care, OB/GYN, etc.). Staff also cover what medical testing should be done routinely and educate on how those tests are able to be done. For example, St. Joe's PROS educates participants about prostate screenings and how they can be done via a blood test, which is covered by Medicaid. This type of information can be an incredible relief to individuals with a trauma history. If a person is uncomfortable going alone to health appointments, St. Joe's also assists the participant with advocating for themselves to bring a support person into the examination room. Many health providers will allow patients to bring an emotional support person into the office if they are notified ahead of time. This could include a peer worker, friend, or family member.

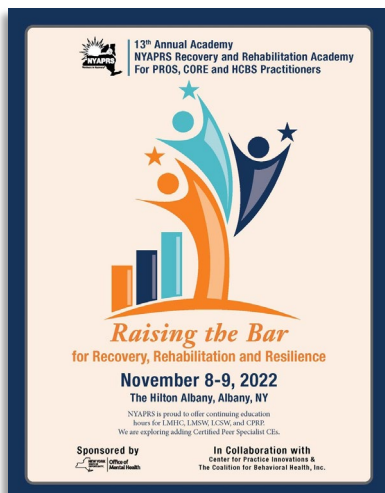
Talk about Sexual Health & Safety in the Digital World

Providing education on physical sexual health is only half of the equation in keeping participants safe while navigating modern dating. St. Joe's PROS also covers topics related to dating app safety, how to plan a safe first date, education on catfishing, and how sharing some personal information online can have negative consequences.

All Inclusive Groups

Additionally, the curriculum includes discussion on gender stereotypes and gender diversity, including an entire module to discuss gender stereotypes and gender diversity, including defining LGBTQ+, and how someone in the LGBTQ+ community may have unique challenges when it comes to sexual health and dating. Having this group integrated has led to participants having engaging discussion on these topics and assisted some with figuring out their identity. St. Joe's PROS has been able to connect participants who want to learn more or seek additional support with local LGBTQ+ groups.

Recovery and Rehabilitation Academy 2022



The New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS) hosted the annual Rehabilitation and Recovery Academy in person, November 8 and 9, 2022, in collaboration with the Coalition for Behavioral Health, Center for Practice Innovations, and OMH.

PROS programs and other rehabilitation providers from across the state were able to gather in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.

A highlight of this year's conference was the keynote address, "The Personal Transformative Power of Recovery and Lived Experience," by **Stephanie Campbell**. Ms. Campbell discussed her experience in recovery and how the perspective of people with lived experience can be invaluable. Be sure to check out the [NYAPRS website](#) for more information speakers and copies of presentation slides.

Thank you for joining us in person and we look forward to seeing you all next year!

Note from the Editor



After a decade with the Rehabilitation Team, **Laura Davis** (left) has retired. Laura has been the editor of the PROS Newsletter since its creation in 2015. Laura set the standard for dedication, kindness, and character. We in the Rehabilitation Services Unit will miss her greatly!

Stephanie D. Rodriguez (right) will be stepping in as editor of the PROS Newsletter. If you have any questions about the newsletter please email Stephanie at: stephanied.rodriguez@omh.ny.gov.



Data Tip

CAIRS UPDATE: Effective November 2, 2022

CAIRS Users will notice a change in the gender identification section of Client Demographics, which will allow the system to record Male, Female, and X genders. One question will ask for the biological sex assigned at birth, the other will ask for the gender/sex as it appears on official documents. For new clients, both questions must be answered. For existing clients, the Client Record will default to M or F assigned at birth and leave the other question blank **until the provider makes any other change** in CAIRS, at which time the provider will need to identify which gender (M, F, X) is used on official documents.



Resources

- Words Matter: Strategies to Reduce Bias in Electronic Health Records**
<https://www.chcs.org/resource/words-matter-strategies-to-reduce-bias-in-electronic-health-records/>
 This tool outlines considerations for providers on how to write EHR notes that promote patient-centered care and dignity, include: (1) trusting patients and avoiding communicating disbelief; (2) being mindful when using quotes; (3) learning to recognize and avoid stigmatizing language; (4) focusing on positive themes and humanizing details; and (5) educating providers and providers-in-training.
- Transition Age Youth: Considerations for Increasing and Maintaining Engagement**
<https://www.ctacny.org/trainings/transition-age-youth-considerations-for-increasing-and-maintaining-engagement/>
 This webinar for providers working with Transition Aged Youth (TAY) focuses on evidence-based programs and practical engagement activities and tools for consideration when working with TAY.
- To further spread awareness about 988. “What is 988?” digital infographic is available in four different languages.** You can find the social media graphics in English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese by visiting [New York’s 988 webpage](#) under the header “NY 988 Social Media Graphics”. These resources will be updated regularly as OMH creates and posts new social media graphics to educate New Yorkers on 988. Please be sure to check back periodically for the latest content to share.

To access past newsletters since 2022: <https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/pros/newsletter.html>. Newsletters from 2015-2021 are archived at: Resources – Rehabilitation & Recovery Clearinghouse. Visit: [\(https://pros.nyaprs.org/resources/\)](https://pros.nyaprs.org/resources/)



Office of
Mental Health

This newsletter is written by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Treatment, and Care Coordination at the New York State Office of Mental Health.

Please distribute to all PROS staff.