

About the classes...

In 2011, AdvocacyWorx developed an interactive educational course designed to provide peer advocacy, problem solving information and support for individuals who have behavioral health and justice related issues.

In collaboration with Dr. Gail Van Zelfde, a forensic psychologist who worked at the Forensic Center of Norristown State Hospital, peer advocates with lived experience of criminal justice involvement developed a 14-week course which focuses on helping people develop good decision making skills to foster successful living in the community and to avoid reoffending and reincarceration.

The classes began at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility in Eagleville, PA, and Central Behavioral Health, a mental health agency in Norristown, PA. The classes are facilitated by Certified Peer Specialists who have lived experience with behavioral health and criminal justice systems.

This brochure provides information about the class and feedback from individuals who participated in it.

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A peer advocacy team working together to help adults using behavioral health services to:
resolve problems
learn self-advocacy
effect systems change

Know your rights!

ADVOCACYWORX (formerly Community Advocates of Montgomery County)

presents

F.Y.I.
(formerly It's T.I.M.E.)



Find Yourself Inside

F.Y.I. is a peer facilitated interactive class providing education to help people involved with the justice system learn to develop good decision making skills to live a meaningful life in the community and avoid reoffending and incarceration.

This pamphlet includes comments from incarcerated individuals and people in community corrections as well as an overview of the 14-week course.



Here's what people said about the justice & recovery class at Central:

“The class has helped me learn my strong points and my weak points.”

“How to deal with the legal system with the help of peer support.”

“How to keep clean and stay away from drugs.”

“I learned better understanding of my actions and errors.”

“How to deal with my behavior problems.”

“I have learned how to act or react on things. How to approach my peers.”

“We learned about mental illness, signs, symptoms and triggers.”

“How to deal with society and life in general.”

“I have learned that you have to think about the consequences behind everything that you do.”

F.Y.I.

Find Yourself Inside

Topics discussed in the class:

Week 1: Orientation.

Week 2: Understanding the criminal justice system.

Week 3: Motivation.

Week 4: Risk Factors. Research shows there are typical risk factors that are shared by people who commit crimes. We will discuss these risk factors.

Week 5: Mental/Emotional & Substance Use Disorders.

Week 6: Trauma.

Week 7: Identifying Triggers. What are triggers? How do they affect my behavior?

Week 8: Distorted Thinking I — Descriptions of distorted thinking are presented and we learn to identify our thoughts about ourselves, the thoughts that are distorted or not accurate, and how to change them into healthy, positive ones.

Week 9: Distorted Thinking II —The 10 Thinking Traps & how distorted thinking can lead to anti-social activity.

Week 10: Mindfulness & Yoga.

Week 11: Problem Solving Skills.

Week 12: Anger Management.

Week 13: Making the Most of My Resources/ I am a Resource.

Week 14: Wrap Up/ Evaluation.

At MCCF people participating in this training found it very valuable:

“Community Advocates class got me to take a good look at how my thinking has gotten me in trouble and taught me ways to change and/or prevent it.”

“I think distorted thinking (self-serving) is something I do. I have realized ways to avoid altercations. This class helps me be more social...helps me get ready for the outside.”

“It gives me hope to know someone (people) are helping me on my case.”

“What I think of this class and learned about is when I get out of here, jail that is, to stay away from people, places and things. Also what I got out of class is some tools like control my behavior and think before I act or react.”

“Some of the things we talked about make me think that things are not as bad as I think they are.”

“Try not to give up thinking that no one cares, and try to find better ways of dealing with problems knowing that what you do and think may sometime help or hurt other people.”

“If this class and Advocacy Team were around twenty years ago, I might not of had to go through the living hell my life has been since the early 1990s.”