

In our own words:

Bill B:

'The program helped me to achieve my vocational goals.'

I started at the Gathering Place PROS (Hempstead, NY) in the fall of 2013. I initially started the program because I lived in a shelter, and I had to be out of the shelter during the day.

So, I went in for an intake for PROS, and started that day. I liked the program immediately, and I liked the structure of the program. PROS had a lot of groups in several different areas of interest.

At first, I did not have a specific goal in mind, but rather I was just trying to find a place to go during the day. Early on at PROS, I was frequently in and out of the psychiatric hospital. This was due to the toxic environment that I was living in at the shelter. I now live in supported housing through SAIL. I have lived in SAIL housing for the past five years, and I am very happy.

During one of my hospital stays, I was interviewed for SAIL Housing and Emergency Medicaid, which I do not think would have been possible if I was not in the PROS program at MHA. I received Benefits and Financial Management services, which has helped me immensely because I had never been good with my money, and they have taught me about budgeting.

While at PROS, I became involved in employment services as a way to support my recovery. A PROS advisor meets with you a couple times over the month, you have lunch or breakfast with the advisor and you discuss how you are doing on the job, and any other concerns you may have. I have reached my vocational goal of working part-time in a fulfilling role as a Peer Specialist. I work at MHA in the Specialized Opportunities for Achieving Recovery (SOAR) program, a "drop-in" style socialization program.

As a Peer Specialist, I am able to share my recovery story to provide empathy and understanding to those also with mental health challenges. I also appreciate the fact that the director of PROS and SOAR had the faith in me that I would do well in the position that I hold. I have worked at SOAR for about two years, first as a volunteer, and then as a paid employee. I have a great relationship with my supervisor and coworkers. The most important relationship I have is with myself. I feel I have a reason to wake up every morning.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I feel that PROS is a great program as it can help people achieve goals that they might have thought impossible. I have learned that if you work hard enough for something it can become attainable.

Editor's Note: Bill's story is an inspiration because it shows that someone who has been homeless can find connections through PROS to help them find stability and pathways to belong fully in their own community. Thank you. Bill, for sharing your story!

*Success stories
from PROS*



Virtual Services

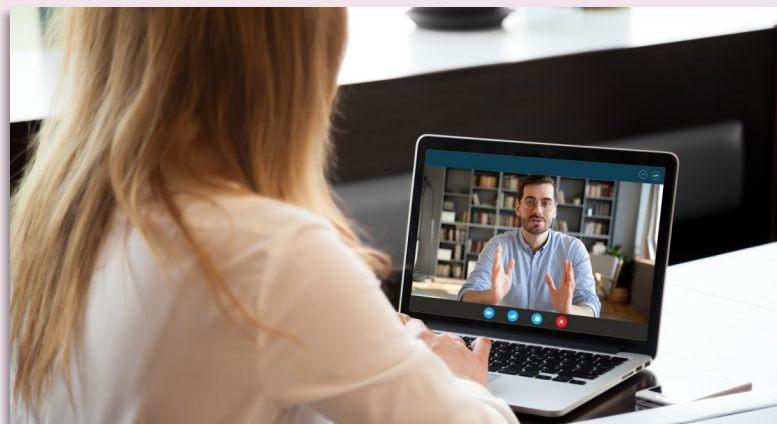
Just as PROS providers were becoming comfortable with the concept of offering services off-site in natural settings, we unexpectedly took another step in adapting curriculum to best serve individuals by pivoting quickly to offer virtual services. Emergency Telehealth guidance was released in response to the COVID-19 crisis, so providers quickly learned to operationalize expanded telehealth practices. PROS programs statewide report that they are taking extraordinary steps to engage participants.

Statewide, providers swiftly learned how to use and offer new electronic platforms and to teach participants how to use technology. There are stories of clients teaching staff how to install apps, and of staff finding equipment for clients. Providers discovered ways to help participants access the need for additional phone minutes – some purchasing phone cards, others finding resources on the Federal Communications Commission’s webpage (www.fcc.gov). While some clients express a dislike of talking on the phone, others have been willing to share more about themselves from the comfort of their own home.

Communications between residential providers and PROS providers has also had to increase as residential staff are at times hard pressed to find space or technology to gather groups of residents safely or tie up the phone lines; one used grant funding to purchase a large screen to allow a group to sit further apart while viewing Zoom groups.

In some areas, PROS staff began making home visits to provide injections as needed, or to deliver food, or materials for group participation. Providers are literally seeing more about the lives of the people they work with either through “Zoom meetings” or home visits. Others have mailed recreational craft supplies or curriculum materials to help keep participants engaged in wellness; some encourage the sharing of craft projects via private Facebook groups as one way to maintain a sense of community between members.

As everyone grows more comfortable using technology, more group services are being offered that address both immediate needs related to the health crisis, and the forward facing goals of participants.



- Coping Skills and Problem-Solving “Zoom classes” are being offered flexibly as “pop-up” groups as needed - even on weekends - to address the heightened anxiety level some participants are experiencing. On the other hand, others are finding adhering to the regular class schedule offers the stability and routine that can be helpful. WSM related to health is important as some participants may need repeated instruction and explanation about the need to adhere to social distancing protocols.
- Community Living Exploration groups are taking place using the online tours of botanical gardens, art museums, and opera – so many participants might not be able to typically afford tickets (or travel) to visit all the places currently available online to explore; new passions might be discovered!
- IDDT - Given that COVID-19 makes breathing challenging, there is an uptick in interest in smoking cessation classes. Addiction specialists caution that the stimulus checks could be a temptation to some to gamble or buy alcohol or drugs and that these are topics to discuss in advance.

The continuation of intakes is important for the community, and assists in opening up hospital beds. One program suggested using a script during telephone interviews to ensure that all essential points are raised. When introducing someone new to the program, it is better to set up time to meet each staff 1:1 via telehealth meetings rather than overwhelm them with an introduction to a large group of faces at once.

The response by PROS providers has been incredibly impressive to say the least, yet it is not a surprise that you have been able to rise to the challenge to provide nothing short of remarkable care. OMH thanks each of you for all the effort you have given to keep our community surviving and thriving during these stressful circumstances.

Successfully Supporting Employment - **AND** each other - during COVID-19 Crisis

Ronnie M. has been a member of the St Joseph's Health PROS (Syracuse) community since March of 2018. He was a self-referral at the encouragement of his community supervision workers. From day one, Ronnie's goal was to get to work. Through his hard work and upbeat attitude, and PROS services, Ronnie secured part-time employment doing janitorial work at a local homeless shelter.

"My Recovery Coach, **Ms. Wandalee**, has been by my side and helping me with everything. She encourages me every day to do what I do because I can do it". Ronnie was happy and proud with this daily work because he knew he was making a difference.

In the wake of COVID 19, many individuals in our community lost their employment or saw a major reduction in their hours and Ronnie was no exception. Quickly responding to Ronnie's loss of

employment, staff and Ronnie designed a plan to assist Ronnie with maintaining his employment skills and most importantly maintaining his sense of being "the helper". Ronnie came up with the plan of being part of our employment skills training program and offered to do the cleaning and sanitizing in the PROS program.

This daily work routine is assisting not only Ronnie with his continued recovery. He is instrumental in keeping the health and recovery of others moving forward because he maintains a safe and healthy environment for everyone who walks into the PROS program every day and more than that, he does this with a smile on his face.

Seeing recovery in action is important for all the members of PROS but it is just as important for the staff as well. Ronnie reminds us every day that even though we are distancing ourselves physically, we can always come together in recovery.

Kudos to CPI! A New Online Training wins industry award

The **Center for Practice Innovation** new online **Psychosocial Rehabilitation training module**, has won the industry Horizon Interactive Award another industry award in the category of Training and eLearning. Congratulations CPI!

The CPI training module provides a quick paced, interactive overview of Psychosocial Rehabilitation while guiding staff towards improving their own approach to supporting the individuals served.

These are ideal for PROS practitioners and HCBS programs looking to train staff. This free training provides 1 Contact Hour of self-study for Social Work and Mental Health Counselor CE. The one-hour training is followed by a test. **To access this module:**

1. Log into the Learning Community using your username and password at:
<https://rfmh.csod.com/client/rfmh/default.aspx>
2. Click on "Browse for training"
3. Under "**Please click a category below to see training related to that category,**" select **Psychosocial Rehabilitation**
4. Click on "Request" and then "Open curriculum"
5. Click on "Launch"

OMH COVID-19 Guidance for PROS programs:

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/guidance/covid-19-guidance-pros-program-billing.pdf>

[OMH COVID-19 Consolidated Telemental Health Guidance](#) (3/30/2020)

[Telehealth Modifier Use for OMH-licensed/Designated Programs during COVID-19 Emergency](#) (3/26/2020)

[Self-Attestation of Compliance to Offer Telemental Health Services](#) (REVISED - 3/30/2020)

Check the OMH website frequently because the FAQs will be updated periodically.

Resources

Curriculum Related Resources

[The Corona Virus Anxiety Workbook](#) is a free workbook well-designed to be adapted for group services, and is available in multiple languages. Check out other resources available at www.thewellnesssociety.org.

Center for Practice Innovations offers resources specific to wellness during COVID-19.

- CPI vetted a list of [Reliable Sources of Information Concerning COVID-19](#) for providers and consumers.
- CPI released [a training and access](#) to **six new WSM lessons** which can be used remotely (or face-to-face) in individual and group meetings:
 - Understanding the Coronavirus and COVID-19
 - What Is Stress? Why is It Important to Understand Our Stress during the COVID-19 Crisis?
 - Identifying Your Personal Signs of Stress during the COVID-19 Crisis
 - Coping with COVID-19: What works? What doesn't?
 - Being Connected with Other People is More Important Now than Ever
 - Staying Physically Healthy During the COVID-19 Crisis

[COVID-19: Fear Zone, Learning Zone, Growth Zone | Check Your Mental Zone Now](#) – an interesting article that can easily be transformed into a curriculum.

Staffing Resources

[“PROS Remote Groups 101: Getting to Know Zoom”](#) is a very helpful and timely handbook developed by **The Bridge PROS** (NYC) staff to assist staff in facilitating virtual services. They have generously shared it with all of us statewide. Thank you to **Isabel Restrepo** and **Jess Orense** for organizing these tips that will help programs make decisions on how to effectively use this technology for continuing effective group services.

NYAPRS archived this one hour video, **“Taking on the Challenge of Working Remotely and in the Community During the Virus Crisis”** - [PPT](#) – [Recording](#). Further NYAPRS has compiled many other valuable resources for providers [here](#).

The Coalition of Behavioral Health – offers a wide array of webinars and trainings that offer CEUs for Social Work and Mental Health Counseling CEs that support Psychiatric Rehabilitation practices. See here to learn more about [these live webinars](#).

Reducing the Cost of Caring - 7 R's of Battling Compassion Fatigue - a blog for professionals through the **Wellness Council of America** (www.welcoa.org) that addresses the need for self-care for professionals.

SAVE THE DATES!

**September 22 to 24, 2020:
NYAPRS Annual Conference**

Hopefully, in person at the Villa Roma Conference Center, Callicoon, NY, in the beautiful Catskills.

Introducing a new PROS Team member!

Welcome to **Stephanie Rodriguez**, our new Rehabilitation Services Team member. Her commitment to work through challenges is evident from her jumping in on April 2, right during the turbulent changes faced by all programs. She looks forward to meeting all of you, and even her coworkers, in person someday.



Office of
Mental Health

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

Please distribute to all PROS staff.