



In our own words:

'I'd found myself in exactly the right environment.'

My name is **Cassandra**, and I've had social anxiety disorder and depression since elementary school. Both originated from consistent bullying throughout my school years. When I first came to the PROS clinic in Oneida four years ago, fear was the driving emotion behind everything I did (and everything I avoided doing). I was afraid to drive, afraid to talk to people, afraid to apply for jobs. But upon arriving at PROS, I resolved to throw everything I had into working to change that.

Luckily for me, I'd found myself in exactly the right environment to foster the growth that I was seeking. I was paired with Amanda — a wonderful therapist whose guidance and support have made all the difference — and entered into the many groups PROS had available.

"CBT" taught me to examine the thoughts behind my anxiety and depression through an analytical lens, and "DBT" taught me how to cope with the emotions behind them. "Self-Esteem" forced me to start trying to see the good in myself, and "Embracing Imperfections" helped me to start accepting the bad. "Assert Yourself" trained me in the art of standing up for myself and expressing my needs, and "Boundaries" taught me how to handle it when people cross lines. "Social Anxiety Self-Help" put me in a group of peers who shared my challenges, and gave me an arena in which to put my new coping skills to the test.

The counselors challenged me to do more than I thought myself capable of. And because of their faith in me, I was a little less surprised every time I succeeded. At PROS, I found a whole community of people who believe in each other; counselors and peers alike.



**Success stories
from PROS**

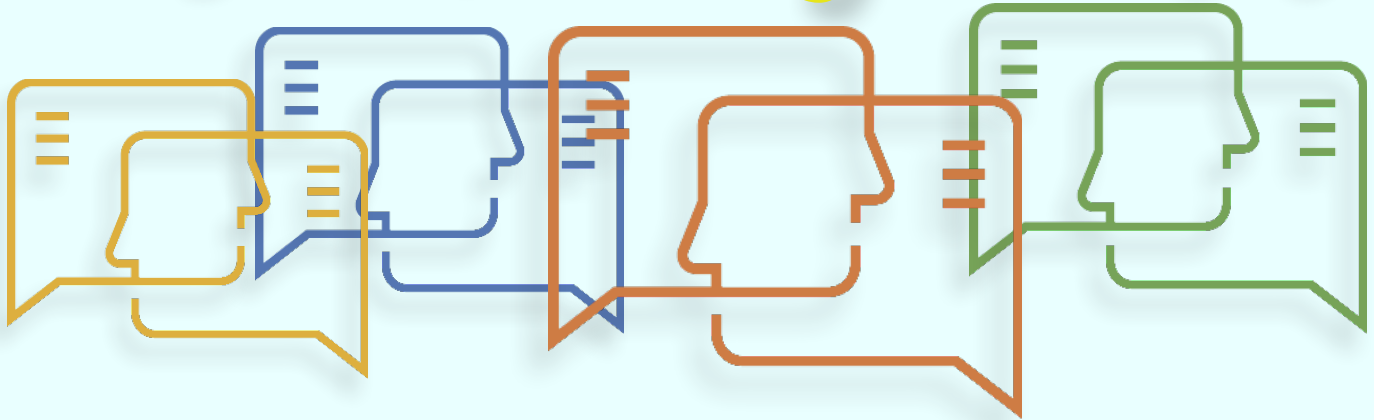
Today, fear is still a constant hum in the background of my mind. But now, there's a difference. Because now, I've learned how to work through it, work around it, work past it. I'm more confident in my ability to handle challenges. I have more faith in my skills. I no longer view myself as unworthy of success, or of love. I have more self-worth today than I've had since I was a child. And it makes all the difference.

Today I drive to Syracuse and to Rome regularly without thinking twice about it. I've made new friends and attend social groups regularly. I've worked as a receptionist in a busy dental office for three years, and have reached the point where I can go into work in the morning without fear. And I've applied for a position teaching English in Japan, which has been my dream for a long time.

Yes, there is still fear in me. But today, that fear is paired with hope, and with courage. Today, for the first time since childhood, I can sincerely say that I'm proud of myself. I can't begin to tell you how much that means to me. And I will always be grateful to PROS for giving me the tools I needed to make these changes.

Editor's Note: Thank you Cassandra for sharing your powerful story of how PROS services have helped you grow to find courage and hope!

Using **Creativity!** to Engage



Providers report a different response from individuals considering PROS when they talk about the program as a “place to learn how to reach your goals” rather than refer to it as a “mental health program.”

Looking for openings to connect with each person is important and can be an ice breaker. One program found that by tossing a basketball over to a young adult who had formerly played got him to loosen up and be playful, and from there they were able to grow a rapport that made the rest of the intake process flow more easily than sitting with a desk between them. Engagement can be creative!

Naming Classes

Providers statewide find that they get more interest in enrollment when their new schedule uses a clever title for a service. Let’s face it, other than OMH staff, no one really wants to read a schedule that states you are signed up for “CRS-WSM-Problem Solving”, “CRS-BLST” and “IR-IDDT”.

For a participant, it is more enticing to consider showing up to spend your day involved in classes such as “Getting Passed your Past- WSM” or “So You Think You Can Talk? - BLST” as named by Phoenix House PROS in Long Island.

While each program is required to have a Master Schedule available that itemizes the technical name per NYS Regulations for each class

that you are offering, you can certainly also use more enticing names to draw participants to the classes.

One area we have seen this frequently happen is with tobacco cessation services, using names like “Kickin’ Butts -IR IRGA” or “Kickin’ Ash and Thinking about Kickin’ Ash – CRS-WSM-Coping Skills”.

Here are a few other creative names that we’ve seen:

- “Laugh Clinic” (WSM- coping skills), “Boosting Confidence” (WSM-problem solving), “PROS Got Talent” (SSDS) and “Deal with It!” (BLST) from Phoenix House, Nassau County.
- “Seeking Safety” (IR Relapse Prevention) and “What have you done for you lately?” (CRS-WSM-Coping Skills) from Tompkins County PROS.
- “Got Joy?” (CRS-CST) “Why Work?” (IRGA) from Samaritan PRO, Rensselaer County.

Creative Curriculum

Creativity in developing curriculum is also essential to keeping participants engaged. Worksheets are handy, but not all subject matter is best approached by talking.

At one time, Samaritan PROS offered a class for women who had a history of trauma and abuse which caused them to suffer from a lack confidence - most did not like to even see

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Tele-Mental Health is Now Available in PROS

Through the administrative action (AA) process via MHPD, Clinic Treatment services can now be delivered by psychiatrists or psychiatric nurse practitioners via the use of modern technology. Upon AA support, PROS programs may be granted this flexibility, for a limited period, in areas where there is a prescriber shortage. For these services, PROS participants must still be present at the PROS licensed space while the practitioner may be in a remote location. Please note, there are limited geographical areas of New York State where Medicare allows reimbursement of Tele-mental Health. Programs are encouraged to explore these considerations.

For more information, go to: <https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/guidance/telemental-guidance.pdf>.



NYAPRS' 2019 Rehabilitation & Recovery Academy

A well-attended Rehab & Recovery Academy was held in November at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga Springs. Uplifting keynote speaker, **Ken Nwadike, Jr.**, shared how he turned his struggles growing up into worldwide activism for peace through improved communications

in tense crisis situations, and how he began the "Free Hugs" campaign. Other highlights included scheduled time for providers to engage in open discussions about employment, community inclusion, transition aged youth, and integrating primary care with behavioral health. There was a great turnout of PROS programs at the Academy and we hope to see even more next year. Thanks to NYAPRS for coordinating this annual event and the collaboration with the Center for Rehabilitation and Recovery and the Center for Practice Innovation.



Collective
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Using Creativity! *Continued from the previous page*

themselves in the mirror. They offered a BLST class that felt like a day spa where women were taught how to appropriately apply makeup for professional settings and learned about how to style their hair in different ways.

This gave them practice at seeing themselves in a new light as they worked towards overcoming their inner self dread, all the while building self-esteem before job hunting.

A program in the Western NY region noticed that they had several participants who did not tend to speak up in traditional classroom styled services but who happened to enjoy role playing

games such as Dungeons and Dragons. A billable class was developed in which social skills were focused on and intentionally practiced while participating in the game. An added benefit, these participants developed friendships with each other that reached beyond the program.

The recommendation is to think creatively and imagine all the different opportunities that are available for you to facilitate recovery. Try new ways to engage participants and monitor what works best for your program.

If you want to discuss a concept further, you can contact **Laura Davis** at: laura.davis@omh.ny.gov.

Helpful Tips for CAIRS Users

- Any staff granted access to CAIRS should review the training opportunities available under the Help Tab. There is a *CAIRS for PROS Training video* and a full **Training Manual**.
- Go to the Start-up Tab in the upper left side, and click on Notes. There you can view a list of Successful PROS Registrations and see a reason when someone is *not* successfully enrolled with Medicaid. It is imperative that you or your billing staff check this list a day or two after enrolling someone new, and to check frequently to see if someone loses Medicaid coverage.
- Whenever someone is discharged, they should be **promptly** disenrolled in CAIRS. In the event you discover an old, open episode for someone who no longer attends PROS, staff need to check the client's records and **input the actual date of discharge into CAIRS**; it is not acceptable to discharge someone with a gap of years, or even months, between the last claim and the discharge date. There are multiple risks of discharging someone but not closing their CAIRS episode in a timely manner. **Another provider, such as a clinic, may not get paid because of their continued enrollment in PROS.** Because the PROS enrollment code in the Medicaid system blocks the payment, it could lead to a refusal to serve the person, disrupting their continued care and recovery while creating a safety risk and/or increasing risk of relapse. Also, you will be creating a future workload problem because at some point your agency must discharge each person, and the staff will have to dig out old records...making it a more time consuming process.

Resources

- **Supervision in PROS - CPI** is pleased to announce a new and improved "Supervisor Resources" button highlighting available online tools and training recommended for supervisors and managers. To access the revised button, login to: <https://rfmh.csod.com>, and click on the "Supervisor Resources" button in the lower right.
- **Nicotine Replacement Therapy** – a 15-minute YouTube video that you may want to incorporate into your services. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is a way to prevent withdrawal symptoms and cravings. NRT can be used in situations where you can't smoke or smoking isn't allowed. NRT is a way to support someone who isn't ready to quit. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOEpWE8GY0Q>.
- A NEW e-learning course on the **CTAC-MCTAC Self Learning Center** regarding **Trauma Informed Care**. The CTAC-MCTAC Self-Learning Center is an opportunity for self-paced online learning of quality information to build knowledge and capacity. The Self-Learning Center consists of an online platform that provides users with self-learning modules and resources to improve clinical and organizational practices. New users are invited to create a profile, enroll in courses, and track their own progress through the Self-Learning Center. The specific goal of the Trauma Informed Care modules is to raise awareness for all staff (leadership, administrative, maintenance, clinical, and direct service providers) regarding Trauma Informed Care principles and practices. If you have any questions, please contact: lms.info@nyu.edu.
- **"At Its Heart, Suicide Prevention is Hopeful Work"** It's hard to talk about what you can't see. If your program is looking for ways to raise awareness about the risk of suicide, there is a set of icons you are free to use on your own promotional materials from the Policy Research Association at: <https://www.prainc.com/suicide-prevention-icons>. These icons use imagery to convey important, highlight concepts, and simplify complex subjects. Depicting suicide prevention concepts can be challenging without raising ideas that can be discouraging at best or triggering at worst. At its heart, suicide prevention is hopeful work rooted in the strengths of individuals and those around them.

PROS Newsletter Archive: *PROS Newsletter* began in Fall 2016. To check previous editions, you can view the entire PROS Newsletter collection on the NYAPRS Clearinghouse: <http://pros.nyaprs.org/resources>.



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.