**MENTAL ILLNESS GLOSSARY**

**Acute phase (of illness)** – Worsening of a person’s positive psychotic symptoms, often leading to out-of-control or bizarre behavior. Anti-psychotic medications are given to eliminate or reduce these symptoms.

**Advocacy** – Typically refers to activities that are used to raise the profile of an issue and mobilize the forces necessary to change public opinion, policy and practice.

**Affective** - Related to or resulting from the emotions.

**Affective disorder** - Formerly called mood disorder, affective disorder is the name for types of mental illnesses that are characterized by extreme emotional responses and persistent mood disturbances. Bipolar disorder and depression are types of affective disorders.

**Alzheimer's disease** - Usually occurring later in life, Alzheimer's disease is an extremely debilitating condition that is characterized by progressive impairment of overall mental function, including dementia. Scientific research has found that Alzheimer's disease is linked to dying brain cells. Treatment may include behavioral management and medications to slow its progression. It is irreversible.

**Anti-depressant** – Medication for the treatment of depression

**Anti-psychotic** – Medication for the treatment of psychosis

**Apathy** - A symptom of several mental illnesses, apathy is a lack of emotion or interest in things one would ordinarily consider important.

**Bipolar disorder** - Previously referred to as manic depression, bipolar disorder is a serious affective disorder, typically beginning in adolescence or early adulthood, in which dramatic swings between manic "highs" and depressed "lows" alternate with periods of normal mood. A person with bipolar disorder may feel extremely excited with seemingly boundless energy, and then swing to suddenly feel bitterly sad and depressed.

**Case manager** - The health care professional who works directly with individuals, coordinates various activities, and acts as the individuals primary contact with other members of their treatment teams. Case managers are often social workers.

**Cognitive Therapy** – (*Also known as ‘cognitive behavior therapy*’) a therapy aimed at assisting the person to deal with some mental health problems by focusing on the way in which they interpret and react to their experience.

**Conventional Antipsychotics** – The group of antipsychotic medications developed between the 1950’s and 1970’s; also referred to as “neuroleptics” or “traditional” or “classic” antipsychotics. These medications are effective for positive (psychotic) symptoms and less effective for negative symptoms.

**Crisis --** A crisis occurs when an event brings about undue stress. If the stress continues over time, coping skills and ability to regain control deteriorates. Anxiety increases, and disorganization of thoughts begin or persist. A severe disabling condition may follow. *Note: What may be stress-free to one person may be crisis-producing to another.*

**Crisis Intervention**—A timely involvement, providing a person with what he/she cannot provide for him/herself; the use of skills to safely and calmly de-escalate a stressful situation arriving at some level of effective resolution.

**Delusion** - A symptom of many mental illnesses, a delusion is an illogical belief that is held strongly, even in the face of evidence that it is false.

**Dementia** - Frequently seen in older patients, dementia is a decline in overall mental ability, especially memory loss, and is usually accompanied by emotional disturbances and personality changes. Dementia can be caused by several conditions, such as a brain tumor; however, the most common cause is Alzheimer's disease.

**Depo Therapy** – A long-acting form of antipsychotic medication that is given by injection into a muscle approximately every 2-4 weeks.

**Depression** - A spectrum of affective disorders, ranging from passing sad moods to serious, crippling disease requiring medical treatment. Major depression is a "whole body" disorder, impacting the patient's emotions (feelings of guilt and hopelessness or loss of pleasure in once enjoyed activities), thinking (persistent thoughts of death or suicide; difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions), behavior (changes in sleep patterns, appetite, or weight), and even their physical well-being (persistent symptoms, such as headaches or digestive disorders, that do not respond to treatment).

**Discharge planner** - The person on the hospital staff who makes plans for one’s health care outside of the hospital. A discharge planner can be a nurse, doctor, resident/intern, or social worker.

**Dopamine** – A neurotransmitter in the brain. Antipsychotic medications slow down dopamine’s ability to transmit messages between nerve cells in the brain.

**Drug-Induced Psychosis** – Use of or withdrawal from alcohol and drugs can be associated with the appearance of psychotic symptoms. Sometimes these symptoms will rapidly resolve as the effects of the substances wear off. In other cases, the illness may last longer, but begin with a drug-induced psychosis.

**Dual diagnosis** – The presence of two diagnoses at the same time. When speaking of psychotic disorders, the term is usually used to mean a person who has both a major psychiatric disorder such as schizophrenia, and a substance use or alcohol problem.

**Genetic disposition** - A term to describe the degree to which an individual is at genetic risk of an illness being passed on from one generation to the next.

**Hallucination** - A false or distorted perception of objects or events, including sensations of sight, sound, taste, smell, or touch, typically accompanied by a powerful sense of their reality.

**Mania** - A collection of symptoms seen in bipolar disorder and other affective disorders. A manic episode may include exaggerated gaiety; grandiose thoughts and a sense of invincibility; irritability; hyperactivity; hyper-sexuality; poor concentration; and rapid thinking and speaking.

**Medication non-compliance** – Not following a doctor’s recommended treatment program. This is very common among individuals who are supposed to be taking antipsychotic medications. Often occurs due to lack of insight to one’s illness and is a characteristic of the illness. Other non-compliance factors include medication side effects and cost.

**Mental Illness –** A general term for a wide range of organic brain disorders that involve varying degrees of impaired functioning on one or more levels—personal, social, vocational—and where perceptual, cognitive and/or behavioral symptoms may be exhibited.

**Mood Disorders** – A set of psychiatric diagnoses in which the major problem is mood regulation. Mood may be too low (depression), too high (mania), or too high at some times and too low at others (bipolar disorder). See Affective Disorder.

**Negative Symptoms** – Think of these symptoms as features that are “taken away” or “subtracted” from the individual. They refer to experiences that should be present, but are absent. Some examples of negative symptoms include: blunted emotions, lack of energy, social withdrawal and apathy.

**Neuroleptics** – A term sometimes used to refer to conventional antipsychotic medications because they cause neurological (extrapyramidal) side effects. Because the newer atypical antipsychotics are much less likely to cause extrapyramidal side effects, this term is not used to refer to the newer medications.

**Neurotransmitter** – A chemical that is used to transmit a message between nerve cells in the brain. Two neurotransmitters that are very important in the treatment of schizophrenia are dopamine and serotonin.

**Nurse Practitioner**—Registered nurse with advanced education and training in a clinical specialty certified to perform certain duties of a medical doctor, such as prescribing medication, performing a physical examination, or ordering diagnostic tests.

**Obsessive-compulsive disorder** - A potentially disabling anxiety disorder in which individuals become entrapped in repetitive patterns of thoughts (obsessions) and behaviors (compulsions) that are senseless, distressing, and extremely difficult to overcome.

**Occupational therapist** - A person trained to provide therapy through creative activity that promotes recovery or rehabilitation.

**Panic disorder** – An anxiety disorder in which unprovoked episodes of intense fear, accompanied by physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat and dizziness, occur repeatedly and unexpectedly. People with panic disorder often develop agoraphobia, a fear of being in situations that might provoke another attack, or from which escape might be difficult if one occurred.

**Paranoia** - An insidiously developing pattern of unfounded thoughts and fears that are often based on misinterpretation of actual events. People with paranoia may consider themselves endowed with unique and superior abilities or may have the delusion that others are conspiring to do them harm.

**Phobias** - A group of anxiety disorders characterized by intense, irrational fears, either of particular things or situations, such as snakes, heights, confined spaces, water, or flying (specific phobias) or of being embarrassed or humiliated in a social setting (social phobia).

**Physician assistant** - A person certified to perform certain duties of a medical doctor, such as prescribing medication, performing a physical examination, or ordering diagnostic tests.

**Positive Symptoms** – Symptoms that are ‘added on’. They are features that are present but should be absent such as hallucinations and delusions, disorganized thinking, and agitation.

**Psychiatric resident** - A licensed medical doctor who is being trained in a psychiatric specialty at a hospital.

**Psychiatrist** - A medical doctor who specialized in psychiatry. Psychiatry is a branch of medicine that deals with the study, treatment, and prevention of mental illness.

**Psychologist** - A mental health professional who has completed graduate education and training and is qualified to perform psychological research, testing, and/or therapy.

**Psychosis** - A group of symptoms in major mental illness that include loss of contact with reality, breakdown of normal social functioning, and extreme personality changes. Psychotic episodes may be short-lived or chronic and worsening. People affected may experience hallucinations, delusions, regressive behavior, and an inability to control impulses. (*See also Drug-Induced Psychosis)*

**Psychotherapy** - A form of treatment for mental disorders based primarily on verbal communication between the patient and a mental health professional often combined with prescribed medications. Psychotherapy can be done in one-on-one sessions with a therapist or in a group setting.

**Regressive behavior** - In mental illness, thoughts or actions that are typical of earlier life stages, such as infancy or childhood.

**Schizoaffective Disorder** – A disorder in which the person has the symptoms of both an affective disorder, such as major depression or bipolar illness, and schizophrenia.

**Schizophrenia** - A complex and severe mental illness, thought to be caused by imbalances in brain chemistry, which results in abnormal thinking and behavior. This may include hallucinations, delusions, social withdrawal, distorted thought processes, and/or inappropriate "blunted" emotional expression.

**Schizophreniform Disorder** – This is just like schizophrenia except that the symptoms have lasted for less than six months.

**Social worker** - A graduate of a school of social work who holds either a bachelor's or master's degree and who is trained in effective ways of helping the mentally ill, the poor, the elderly, and other groups in need of assistance.

**Split personality**- A slang term often inaccurately associated with schizophrenia. More accurate term is Multiple Personality Disorder.

**Stigma** - A general term for the widespread fear and misunderstanding of mental illness among uninformed people, together with their negative attitudes toward those who suffer from them.

**Symptom** - A reported feeling or specific observable physical sign of an individuals condition that indicates a physical or mental abnormality.