

Maladjusted – Feb 3, 2015 – Campbell River

Community Action Report

Theatre for Living from Vancouver presented a play called Maladjusted at the Thunderbird Hall in Campbell River Feb. 3, 2015. The play was written and is performed by people with lived experience in the mental health and substance use system in BC.

The story focuses on a teenage girl named Dani coping with the loss of her friend who committed suicide, as well as her mother Mia who is worried about her own daughter's state of mind. (Mom herself has some issues as well.) We also see the girl with her psychologist Dr. Devreaux and how his treatment of her is affected by budget cuts and staffing issues. His colleague Abby, also frustrated by the system, tries her best to help her client Jack, a homeless, mentally ill young man. He meets Frank when he goes to the recovery house Abby recommends as a way of getting off the streets. Frank is bound by the house rules and acts according to them and not with compassion when doing Jack's intake to the facility. Jack and Dani's world intertwine and come to a head at the end of the play without any resolution.

The play was written this way to allow for audience interaction and participation. Many of the play's scenes are run through a second time with the audience given permission to shout "Stop!" and take over a character's role. This way they can try to fix/heal the problem from within the play, drawing on their own experiences with the Campbell River mental health and substance use system. For example, a woman took over the part of Dani and her interactions with Dr. Devreaux produced a different outcome. Actor Dani let her mother remain in the room for the appointment and accepted the doctors' diagnosis of Bipolar II and meds. Audience Dani asks her mother to leave, which created a more truthful dialogue with the doctor. She didn't want to go on meds and didn't think she was crazy. But she decided to try individual and group (with her mom) therapy.

It's important to note that not every facility/office/staff operates the same as the ones portrayed in such a negative a light in the play. Having said that, **there is still room for improvement in our community.**

- We have no confirmed information as to whether or not we will be getting mental health beds in our new hospital, which is scheduled to be completed by late 2017. Our current psych ward is in Comox. Patients are usually sent home before they should be because of lack of beds.
- There is a gap when youth grow out of the mental health office of the Ministry of Children and Families at age 18 and the age (19) they can access Mental Health and Substance Use

- Newly diagnosed 18-year-olds are also left in the lurch. Children and Youth MH Services won't take them on because by the time they get through the wait list, the individual will be 19. MHSU won't see them until they turn 19.
- MHSU also refuses individuals who didn't graduate at 18 and are continuing with education.
- Intakes at the Mental Health and Substance Use office can take up to 3 weeks
- There is constant staff turnover at said office, which causes added instability for the clients
- The waitlist at the men's recovery house can be 6-8 weeks.
- There isn't enough safe, affordable housing for single people, especially men. (The local transition society operates both second and third stage housing for women, but there are always waitlists for those).
- The wait to get on welfare can last up to 2-3 months, disability is even longer.
- Campbell River has a high suicide rate, especially among young people.

Recommendations from the play

First of all there were comments on the need for more

- **Compassion** from staff, doctors and even from the patients towards themselves
- **Support** for parents and families as well as patients

And

- **better response** especially to crisis needs
- **more resources and funds for mental health services**

Info for Mental Health and Substance Use Professionals, Ministry of Health:

- **More time** needs to be given to clients to assess their needs and where the best place is for them to get the best possible help.
- Time needs to be given to explain rules/procedures for whatever facility they are going to.
- They need to be more included in the decision making process as to where the best place is for them.
- Workers need to be continually updated about programs and resources in the community, so they can give their clients the best suited options.
- Clients need to be respected and workers need to be able to keep themselves safe.

- Medication as the first line of treatment needs to be reassessed.
- Staff need to be able to communicate with each other – especially about the pressures of their jobs. They need more support, time/workshops on self-care, safe place/time to de-brief with peers.
- There needs to be better care for **youth** with mental health and addictions.
- Younger staff (and peer support) to help them.
- They need privacy and respect, but their **parents** also need more support.
- PRIORITY given to establishing and maintaining **stability, continuity** of care for clients.
- Staff need to be more patient and more caring and more understanding.
- Equality between caregivers and clients
- **Respect**
- Patients need to be treated as people, as humans, they need to be made to feel welcome.
- Transparency
- Security
- Safety
- Privacy respected

Info for Local and Provincial Govt officials (BC Housing especially)

There needs to be more safe, affordable housing options instead of sending clients to where they really don't need to go because it's the only option. (And as a result they don't get the help they need and use a resource that someone else needs.) In the play Jack is sent to a recovery facility, not because he has an addictions issue, but because he's homeless.

School District 72

- There needs to be more communication between schools and families about what is happening with their children.
- There needs to be more support for families and for schools.