



## Cape Mental Health

all about ability

### Historical Timeline

#### Before Cape Mental Health

- Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century people with mental illnesses were thought to be possessed by evil spirits. Medical doctors focused on physical ailments.
- **1790s** Jean-Baptiste Pussin and Phillippe Pinel (regarded as the father of psychiatry) were the first to remove the chains of mental patients in asylums in France, pioneering a more therapeutic approach to treatment.
- **1824** 'mental patients' were kept at Somerset Hospital and on Robben Island
- **1846** Robben Island was converted from a prison into an asylum
- **1880** National Association for the Protection of the Insane and the Prevention of Insanity was formed in USA – possibly world's first organisation for people with psychiatric illness
- **1891** patients transferred from Robben Island to a new asylum - Valkenberg Hospital
- Prior to **1913**, the only major consideration in provision of mental health services in SA was to protect society from those who were considered 'morally defective'.
- No distinction between people who were mentally ill or intellectually disabled.

#### The Early Days

- **24 June 1913** – a 'drawing room' meeting was called in Cape Town by the Child Life Protection Society to discuss vagrancy and prostitution among young women with 'mental handicap'. Fifteen men and women were elected, with Sir John Graham as Chairperson of the **SA Society for the Care of the Feeble-minded**.
- Initially the focus was to lobby for mental health legislation and to motivate for more hospitals so that mentally ill people would not have to be put in jail with criminals.
- The **Mental Disorders Act** promulgated in **1916** with Dr JT Dunston appointed first Commissioner for Mental Hygiene. There was no provision for funding so CMH sent to a deputation to Prime Minister General Smuts to plead for finance. His advice "Start yourselves, when private endeavour has made a beginning Government will help."
- **1916** the then named Cape Province Committee for the Care of the Feeble-minded split into two - Cape Town Committee for the Care of Mental Defectives (today known as Adam's Farm) and the **Cape Province Committee for Mental Hygiene** (CMH today).
- **1917 Adams Farm**, Retreat officially opened – a home for 'feeble-minded European Girls'
- **1920** The Cape Province Committee, Witwatersrand Committee and a number of child protection societies met in Bloemfontein to form the **National Committee for Mental Hygiene and the Care of the Feeble-minded**, which subsequently became the National Council for Mental Health and which is now the **SA Federation for Mental Health**.
- **1933** CMH started actively lobbying Government for institutions for non-white people
- **1946** name changed to **Cape Mental Health Society**
- **1948 World Federation for Mental Health** formed (CMH as a founding member)
- **1948** CMH formed first Child Guidance Clinic for 'Coloured' children

- **1948** Special Schools Act provided for compulsory education of children with mild intellectual disability (but often schools were not provided)

## 20th Century - Medical Breakthroughs & Care in the Community

- **1949** and **1950s** psychotropic effects of lithium were discovered, followed by first anti-psychotic medication and benzo-diazepines. These developments allowed patients to receive better treatment and reduced length of hospitalisation. However community facilities had yet to be developed.
- CMH opened the first non-racial out-patient clinic for children with psychiatric problems and started counselling services.
- **1953** CMH opened its first home for 'Coloured' children with intellectual disability at **Garden Home**, Maitland housing 24 'mentally defective' girls and boys aged two to 12 years.
- **1956 Torrance Home**, Steenberg opened – one of the first homes for non-white boys, aged 10 to 18 years.
- **1960s** The Van Wyk Committee advocated for compulsory education of all so-called 'educable' children with mental disabilities. Attitudes began to change toward people with mental disabilities being able to learn, grow and develop. CMH was at the forefront of developing facilities in all communities including special care centres for children with profound intellectual disability, special schools and protective workshops to provide employment opportunities.
- **1962** first Day Centre for children with intellectual disability opened at CMH in District Six
- **1969** moved to current headquarters – 22 Ivy Street, Observatory with 14 staff. The building had previously been used as a brothel.
- **1970 Garden Home** opened in Athlone with 50 fifty 'Coloured' girls resident
- **1977** the appointment of CMH's first black social worker
- **1978** supported a parent group – the Nompumelelo Association to start a small day care centre
- **1979 Mary Harding Centre** built in Athlone, for children with ID
- **1980** Launch of CMH **Protective Workshops** for adults with ID, first one opens at Retreat
- **1983 Athlone Protective Workshop** opened
- **1986 Fountain House SA** opens in Observatory, a psycho-social rehabilitation day centre
- **1987 Mitchell's Plain Protective Workshop** opened
- **1987 Erika Special Care and Education Centre** opened in Mitchell's Plain
- **1988 Ethembeni Special Care & Education Centre** opened in Nyanga East

## 1990s - Advocacy, Employment and Opportunity

- **1990 Garden Pot Centre** started at Athlone Workshop to generate funding and create employment and training opportunities
- **1991 Sexual Abuse Victim Empowerment (SAVE)** programme provides psychometric assessment, court preparation, case planning and assistance through the court process for victims with intellectual disability.
- **1991 Imizamo Yethu Special Care and Education Centre** opens in Khayelitsha
- **1994** CMH hosted the first ever Cape Town International Kite Festival at Blouberg. This annual event, now Africa's biggest Kite Festival, is next happening next on 2 & 3 November 2013 at Muizenberg.
- **1995 Rainbow Foundation** community support groups through Cape Town formalised
- **1995** First psychiatric consumer representative joins CMH's General Committee and subsequently SAFMH.

- **1997 Learning for Life** training programme was developed by CMH in consultation with University of Cape Town's Department of Psychiatry.
- **1999 Cape Consumer Advocacy Body (CCAB)** formed – first advocacy group for people with psychiatric disabilities.

## 21st Century – Education, Employment & Training

- **2001** Learning for Life received the Education Africa Western Cape Premier Award.
- **2002 K1 School for Learners with Special Educational Needs** opened in Khayelitsha after years of lobbying by CMH.
- **2002** Launch of **Siyanceda Community Youth Service Project** a pioneering training and employment programme for youth with intellectual disability
- **2005** Learning for Life registered with the Health and Welfare SETA as an accredited course
- **2006** Launch of the **Training Workshops Unlimited 'Self Advocacy Group'**
- **2007** SAVE receives a Silver Impumelelo Innovations Award
- **2008** Gwendoline Daniels became the first person with intellectual disability to be elected by her peers as their representative on CMH's Board
- **2010** Landmark judgement by High Court of SA that the State was violating rights of children with mental disabilities by not providing basic education. CMH initiated the **Right to Education Campaign** lobbying for this judgement.
- **2011** hosted the **World Mental Health Congress** in Cape Town
- **2011** opening of the **Heideveld Special Care and Education Centre**, a state of the art centre for children with profound mental and physical disabilities.
- **2012** adopted '**all about ability**' as the organisation's slogan
- **2012** March for human rights for people with intellectual disability to Western Cape Legislature

## Today

- In **2011/2012** CMH provided direct services to 3,347 (index) services-users, but if service-users and their families are included, then the actual number of beneficiaries for the year was 15,061.
- We now offer a range of 22 community-based programmes and landmark advocacy initiatives for the development and rights of people with mental disabilities (both intellectual and psychiatric) and for the promotion of mental health.

## Organisations pioneered by Cape Mental Health

AIDS Prevention and Relief Services, Belmont Recreational Club, Blouville School for Learners with Special Educational Needs (Retreat), the Down's Syndrome Association, Joyce Chevalier Centre (Fish Hoek), Mary Harding Centre (Athlone), Peter Pan Centre (Maitland), Rape Crisis, SA Federation for Mental Health, World Federation for Mental Health.

## Awards (see separate document)

## Contacts

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