Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021 Annual Report

A year of innovation, strategy, change, and growth

November 2021

Voice and Vision is a nonprofit organization that helps individuals and families living with mental health challenges, addictions and disabilities. Our name describes what we do. We listen to the voice of people about their quality of life and advocate for change. We also help people reach their vision by providing education, mentoring, and individualized support.
Dear Friend of Voice & Vision,

We submit this annual report to you with humility and thanksgiving because you helped us overcome many challenges this past fiscal year. We know you had to work through many difficulties yourself, and some of you had great losses, for which we are very sorry. Some of our neighbors throughout the communities we serve, Bucks, Chester, and Delaware Counties, experienced an intensity in their mental health challenges, addictions, and disabilities, while expressing fear, hopelessness, grief, uncertainty, and a need for increased support. Voice and Vision’s commitment never wavered as we helped and supported all those who participated in our services and identified others that could benefit by the specific support and interventions we have to offer.

Everyone who works at Voice and Vision is in recovery from a mental health or addiction challenge, has a physical or intellectual disability, or is a family member of someone living with these challenges. This lived experience means we are a “Family Organization,” blessed with a deep understanding of the resiliency journey with its many trials and triumphs. How fortunate we felt that Voice and Vision continued strong in fiscal year 20/21 during a pandemic, implementing many changes to alleviate fear and ensure the overall health and safety, to the best of our ability, of our teams and the individuals and families we serve.

Stress associated with the pandemic and political unrest as well as ethnic trauma and division impacted people’s mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Yet, Voice and Vision’s amazing and creative staff rose to the challenges, adjusted to a virtual world, and even added several new initiatives to provide support, education, and resources. For example, we helped College Plus students obtain the support, equipment, and tools needed to become a virtual student. Compeer created support groups and workshops and helped friendships become virtual. We released our newest Help and Hope Guide on Substance Use, and started a listening group called “Love One Another,” with the first series focused on racial injustice. With HIPAA compliant Zoom accounts, additional cell phones, and targeted training, we supported our teams in their new work. Throughout this report we share the work you helped us accomplish and some stories about the impact of Voice and Vision’s services.

As we approach a new year, we look forward to serving more people, offering new and expanded services, and celebrating our 25th year in service in Southeastern Pennsylvania. We thank every board member, employee, volunteer, county, managed care organization, foundation, service provider, donor, and individuals and family members who helped us come this far and who will help us continue to offer our unique services.

Voice and Vision is here to help, so please reach out. We hope your new year is full of health, peace, new beginnings, hope, and joy.

With Much Gratitude,
Valerie Melroy, CEO

Mission

Voice and Vision, Inc. challenges the human service system and the broader community to value the gifts and strengths of all people and to see and hear that labels of mental illness, addictions and disabilities need not stop people from living out their dreams.

Philosophy

Voice and Vision cultivates the inherent strength in the human spirit.
Voice and Vision believes in the limitless possibilities within each person.
Impact of Voice and Vision Services

*We lead the way in designing services that promote hope, nurture resiliency, and encourage a bright future in support of the voice and vision of all people living with mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities.*

**WATCHDOG SERVICES**
Mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and staffed by people with "lived experience," our watchdog services are designed to assist county and state oversight agencies in monitoring and evaluating mental health, drug and alcohol, and intellectual disability systems and services.

**Consumer/Family Satisfaction (C/FST) and Member/Family Satisfaction (M/FST) Teams:** Teams conduct interviews, focus groups, or online surveys with individuals who use behavioral health services (or their parent/guardians) to gather data on treatment and service access, delivery, and outcomes. Teams partner with providers, funders, and oversight agencies to share the data and provide recommendations for change where needed. Teams also educate people interviewed about resources available in their county based on their situation. Teams are currently contracted by Bucks, Chester, and Delaware Counties.

**Bucks County Independent Monitoring for Quality Team (IM4Q):** In a process guided by "Everyday Lives" principles, team members, impacted by disability themselves or by someone close to them, interview individuals registered with the intellectual disability system and their families about the quality of their lives, what is working, and what changes they would like to see. Reports, which include considerations developed through the IM4Q interview process, are submitted to county and state officials to bring about needed changes pertaining to individual lives and to overall services and supports.

**PEER SUPPORT SERVICES**
Our Peer Support services offer people who live with behavioral health concerns opportunities to connect to a peer or volunteer who can help them identify a vision for their future, develop strategies needed to achieve their goals, and overcome obstacles that prevent them from living out their dreams and enjoying their lives.

**College Plus and TAP (Tuition Assistance Program)** offer Bucks County students in mental health recovery an opportunity to experience hope, increased self-esteem, and reduced fear as they seek to achieve their educational/career goals. Our certified peer support staff provide continual mentoring throughout the semester based on each student's individual needs.

**Compeer** matches caring adult volunteers in one-to-one, co-equal friendships with people of the same gender who are in mental health recovery. The compeer volunteer and person in recovery connect once a week to enjoy shared interests together.

**CompeerCORPS** connects a Veteran with another Veteran in mental health recovery to develop friendship and offer supportive help as needed. This connection reduces the feeling of loneliness and isolation many recovering Veterans experience and gives them a sense of empowerment, control, and hope.

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Voice and Vision believes knowledge is power. We offer relevant, practical information through workshops, Help and Hope Guides, Family Advocates, the Outreach and Education Program, Project H.E.A.L (Help, Empathize, Advocate, Listen), and webinars/training videos.

**Family Advocates**, our newest service, provides expert advocacy support to individuals and families facing difficult challenges related to mental health, substance use, trauma, juvenile justice, special education, school discipline, or truancy. Staff works intensively with each individual and family to develop an advocacy plan to address their specific issues and concerns with follow-up provided as needed.

In 2020/21 Family Advocates engaged in a systems advocacy initiative to reduce incarceration of people with mental health challenges. They also hosted a discussion group, “Love One Another,” designed to increase understanding and awareness of racism. In 2021, Family Advocates secured funding to launch (in 2022) their Fill the Glass podcast dedicated to educating listeners about important issues related to mental health, addiction, and disability, and to honor excellence and encourage improvements in the way individuals and families are served.

**Behavioral Health Outreach & Education Initiative (O&E)** was created in response to findings that people who are Black/African American were less likely than some other racial/ethnic groups to seek treatment for behavioral health needs, yet many will go to their faith communities first for help. Our team outreached to faith-based and community groups in Chester County primarily serving people who are Black/African American to build trusting relationships and offer education and resources about mental health, addictions, and recovery based on each group’s needs. The goals were to help people access treatment, be a bridge between service providers and faith-based groups, and to promote spirituality as an important part of wholistic treatment and long-term recovery.

**Workshops & Webinars**

Inspired by the successes of the Outreach & Education Initiative, including the Get Up Off That Thing virtual conference in December, workshops, webinars, and trainings continue to be offered in 2021. The webinar It’s About the Journey: Supporting Our Children with Autism to Live Their Best Life was presented at no cost. Voice and Vision also hosted the following trainings and webinars: De-escalation Training; Being Intentionally Grateful In An Emotional Crisis; How Has the State of Society Affected Minority Mental Health?
Spotlight on Voice and Vision Services

**College Plus/TAP**

“**College Plus** gave me options, support, and hope for the future. As someone who struggles with depression, I often feel stuck. College Plus gave me a chance to move forward. Being able to take a college course allowed me to expand my support network, participate in college resources and clubs, and pursue my dreams. Meeting to discuss my H.A.N.D. plan, I felt ‘wow, these people get me, and I can overcome my challenges.’ I am extremely grateful for the opportunity.”

~College Plus Student, K.T.

“In another family, a parent called about her elementary school child who, diagnosed with autism and uses a wheelchair, was being severely bullied in school. The parent was coached, a hallmark of Family Advocate services, and an advocacy letter was sent to the school requesting they address safety and learning issues and arrange for a private placement. The parent called back with gratitude that all the concerns were addressed based on the child's needs.

In 2020, the M/FST in Delaware County conducted a satisfaction survey project in which thirty-six Family Advocate service participants were interviewed.

When asked how helpful these services have been, 100% said “most helpful” in the following areas:

- explaining legal rights or information
- connecting them to resources to support their child or family member
- listening to their situation
- and offering support

**Positive Comments Shared about the Family Advocates service:**

- “It's very valuable to speak with knowledgeable people who care about your situation.”
- “They showed me what needed to be done and didn't do it for me, and I like that.”

**Family Advocates** offer a wide array of advocacy support to families impacted by mental health, substance use, and/or disability concerns. One example of this support involves a young teen who was arrested and suspended from school after abusing marijuana. The teen's family reached out to Voice and Vision, and our **Family Advocates** provided the parents with moral support, resources about marijuana abuse, and referrals to helpful therapy and support groups.

"Since I first began thinking about returning to school, I was overwhelmed with the idea of getting into more college debt and the possibility of being unsuccessful. When my case manager told me about the College Plus program through Voice and Vision, it seemed like a miracle. It took the huge weight of the financial burden of school off of me and gave me the confidence to choose to go back to school. With one course a semester, I've been able to take my time and gradually build my confidence up to go to work once I receive my certification. I have almost completed the phlebotomy certification course at Bucks, and what once seemed daunting and nearly unattainable for me, is now almost completely in my grasp. I'm grateful for the helping hands that College Plus and TAP have been for me, and hope many more students receive the same kind of hope and encouragement I have.”

~College Plus/TAP Student - A.S.
Compeer/CompeerCORPS

Compeer gives volunteers and people in mental health recovery a unique opportunity to create valuable friendships based on mutual interests. A Compeer volunteer shares her own story of recovery and the mutual benefit of a Compeer friendship:

In my early twenties, I was diagnosed with a mental health disorder. For over 20 years, I tried to work full time and manage my disability. Eventually I went to live in a CRR, like a halfway house for people with mental health challenges, where I started attending Welcome House, a "clubhouse" for adults with a mental health diagnosis. This opened my eyes to a whole new world as I met other people dealing with mental health challenges – but who had little or no support from family or friends. I had never realized, before this, how fortunate I was to have the love of family and friends.

Through the support of Welcome House, I was able to become a Certified Peer Specialist. At Welcome House, I met Olga, Program Director for Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia. When she explained the Compeer program to me – how Compeer matches caring adults in one-to-one friendships with people in mental health recovery – I knew right away that I wanted to volunteer. I was matched with a Compeer friend who I meet for lunch once a month, and during COVID kept in touch with by phone. Knowing I’m helping someone else by being a friend also makes me feel good!

From a Compeer friend...
"They have been there to support me through many years of struggles with mental health, death, and life changes. My Compeer friend (volunteer) has shown me how to never give up on myself and always have a positive outlook on life."

Help & Hope Guide

“The Help and Hope book on substance use is a treasure. There is so much wonderful information and things I never thought of or knew although I’ve lived with family members with addictions for years. The testimonials are so compelling. At times I cried and other times I felt the victory along with the person. This guide gave me practical help and ongoing hope. Thank you.”

“Help and Hope is a good resource for anyone who works with people especially people in ministry or the community who work with people from all different walks of life. The good insight and personal stories put a face to addictions - real people with real stories bring hope and another level of understanding of what addictions can do to a family and our community.”

Karen Plummer, Associate Director, and Maria Miller, Editor & IM4Q Team Leader, receive a Help & Hope Guide donation from the Rotary Club at the Doylestown Bookshop.
Consumer/Member Family Satisfaction Teams

As the coordinator of the Member/Family Satisfaction Team (M/FST), my favorite task is speaking with individuals (and parents of children) receiving behavioral health services to help their voices be heard by decision-makers in Delaware County.

Because Voice and Vision employees all have “lived experience,” people say they don’t feel “judged” when talking to us. While people sometimes think feedback on their services is important only if they are dissatisfied, we also ask questions to see what is working well. Our ability to listen well makes it easier for people to identify what makes them satisfied with their services.

The past year was challenging and sometimes very scary for a lot of people -- losing jobs, children needing to be schooled at home, stay-at-home orders, etc. For many, we were a friendly voice on the phone providing hope, encouragement and support. Being able to provide resources to people in need of them is particularly gratifying. On one occasion in the summer, a participant mentioned that she didn’t have a fan and was “roasting” in her apartment. We were able to speak with our County and a fan was delivered to her that evening. Providers even offer us as a resource to people.

Because of something as simple as interviewing individuals about their services, we are able to make real connections and make people’s lives just a little better. For me, that’s magical.

~ Marylou Shirey, M/FST Coordinator, Delco office

Independent Monitoring for Quality Teams

Our Independent Monitoring for Quality Team typically hits the road in teams of two to visit individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism in their homes or communities. The task is to learn about their everyday lives, observe their surroundings, and identify what helps them with progress and fulfillment. The real question last year was HOW to make this happen? And the answer was, just like we’ve done in the past, good ol’ Voice and Vision teamwork!

After receiving the tools and training needed to work virtually, we prepared for roadblocks that might await us with the individuals on our list to interview. Many of us were experiencing similar challenges: children learning at home, adults working from home, less access to community supports, health and wellness concerns—all while continuing to support an individual in our families who lives with disability. This peer understanding at Voice and Vision held greater value than usual at this uncertain time.

What turned out to be very reliable was the resilience of our team. Not only did we conquer the technological learning curve, we adapted to a much longer survey as many questions were added about “COVID life” and how it was impacting individuals and families. The seasoned team used our fundamental and essential tools: we listened, we used a supportive tone and technique, and we were patient and kind. The individuals and family members allowed us “virtually” into their life at a time when people were feeling more isolated than ever. We were present with them to hear their challenges and document their needs, and we also learned of some clever ways they discovered to experience what we all long for—connection with others. The outreach to the individuals was successful, and we fulfilled our quota of interviews for the year—early!

~ Maria Miller, IM4Q Team Leader

Voice and Vision, Inc. FY 2020/21 Annual Report
2020/21 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

REVENUE ~ $1,169,800

Funding Sources

- $1,108,099 County/MCO* Funds
- $54,032 Donations/Grants
- $7,669 Other

EXPENSES ~ $1,178,870

Total Expenses

- $834,480 Watchdog Services
- $194,545 Education
- $136,962 Peer Support Services
- $12,883 Other

85.6% SPENT ON PROGRAMMING

Administrative costs are built into the above services and are 14.4% of our total expenses.
Voice and Vision Leadership

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Valerie J. Melroy  
Co-founder and CEO

Karen Plummer  
Associate Director/IM4Q and College Plus Coordinator

Susan Benzie  
Director of Data, Research, and Design

Michael Harper, Esquire  
Director of Advocacy

Akua Ajarko  
Division Director of Satisfaction Services  
Delaware and Chester Counties

Olga Antonyuk  
Program Director of Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia/CompeerCORPS

Sheri Shifman  
Business Office and Human Resources Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Chair  
Daniel Moyer

Board Vice-Chair  
Joyce B. Harding

Board Treasurer  
Sir Guy Epps

Board Secretary  
Lauren Allegrezza

Board Members  
David Gordon  
William A. Holt  
Martha Post

Share your voice, Live your vision...thanks to our amazing staff!

Voice and Vision employees are smart, innovative, kind, resilient, respectful, and welcoming people who also happen to have personal experience with mental illness, disabilities, and addictions. Through our strengths, creativity, and unique experiences, we lead the way in designing services that promote hope, incredible resiliency, and dreams of a bright future.

Main Office in Bucks County

1243 Easton Road, Suite 201  
Warrington, PA 18976  
215-442-1599

Delaware County Office for Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia and CompeerCORPS

411 Dartmouth Ave.  
Swarthmore, PA 19081  
610-541-0790

Chester and Delaware County Office  
(Consumer/Member/Family Satisfaction Teams/Family Advocates)

450 Parkway Drive, Suite 300  
Broomall, PA 19008  
Chester C/FST: 610-359-1350  
Delaware M/FST: 610-359-8800  
Family Advocates: 610-359-8800
We bring help, hope, and healing to individuals, families and communities affected by mental illness, addictions, and disabilities in Southeastern PA.

For more information about our services and programs please call us toll-free at 1-800-734-5665 or email us at mailbox@voiceandvisioninc.org

www.voiceandvisioninc.org