

# ANNE MARIE MONTIJO

*Association for  
Mental Health  
and Wellness*



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### WHO's WHO *in Health Care*

Anne Marie Montijo is deputy director for strategic initiatives at the Association for Mental Health and Wellness (MHAW) in Ronkonkoma. Montijo has more than 25 years of experience in social work and has extensive experience in child and adolescent mental health as both a practitioner and administrator.

Joining MHAW in 2015, Montijo provides executive leadership in managing the organization's community outreach and education department; Incident Review Committee; staff development and training; organizational diversity and cultural competency initiatives; student Internship programs; and children's services.

A 1992 graduate of Stony Brook School of Social Welfare, Montijo went on to lead North Suffolk Mental Health Center's adolescent boys community residence. She then joined South Oaks Hospital as director of child and adolescent community services. There she led an extensive outreach effort working with children's mental health agencies across Long Island and the five boroughs. Offering numerous educational workshops to schools, advocacy organizations, hospitals, higher education, and other venues, Montijo established a reputation as a tireless advocate for children's mental health with a strong focus on reducing the stigma of mental illness.

More than two-thirds of the United State's population owns a smartphone and are connected socially to friends, family, and colleagues, Montijo said.

"The mental health community sees this mobile technology as a powerful tool that can give providers the ability to engage patients outside of their regular in-person sessions, with the potential to improve compliance behaviorally and with medication management," she said.

"In recent years, many patients and providers have been able to communicate directly and effectively via secure email and patient portals," Montijo noted. "Utilizing this same technology on mobile devices allows mental health providers to reach people who are either physically isolated because of geography, or emotionally isolated because of the state of their mental health."

The Association for Mental Health and Wellness is partnering with Peer Support Solutions to provide real-time interactions with trained peer specialists via smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices, she explained. "It's expanding the boundaries of when and where people can access urgent emotional help, as well as routine text reminders regarding appointments, medication scheduling, and follow-up tests," she said.

"As a founding member of the Long Island Health Collaborative, MHAW plays a prominent role in promoting

the Population Health Improvement Program by encouraging physical activity as an important pathway to recovery," Montijo stated. "A 'walking portal' enables people to track and monitor their progress from any mobile device or a desktop computer."

"These new 'connections' can assist with fostering a trusting relationship between provider and patient, which in turn has the potential to greatly improve health outcomes," Montijo said.

Montijo has presented both nationally and internationally on topics such as culture and self-harm, and resiliency.

She has extensive volunteer experience in cancer services having worked with The Eye Cancer Foundation in New York City for 10 years leading patient support services and organizing patient and family luncheons on Long Island and New York City. Since 2011, she has also volunteered for the Melanoma Research Foundation's CURE Ocular Melanoma (CURE OM) initiative. As a Steering Committee member for CURE OM, she has helped to spearhead five patient and caregiver symposiums across the country and often leads groups at these events for newly diagnosed patients including workshop on resiliency. Montijo is also part of the Host Committee for the Wings of Hope Gala in New York City, a fundraising event for the Melanoma Research Foundation.

The Association for Mental Health and Wellness is the result of the 2014 merger of three organizations: Clubhouse of Suffolk, Suffolk County United Veterans and the Mental Health Association in Suffolk County, founded in 1955.

MHAW programs help individuals overcome the impact of mental health illnesses, disabilities, and trauma to achieve goals of education, employment, social connection, housing, community involvement, and overall wellness. The agency also provides community and professional education for mental health providers through ongoing workshops and seminars.

A range of peer-led support services include the highly-successful Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project. Through SCUUV, the agency offers a broad range of services delivered by trained veterans and family members to assist with outreach, crisis prevention and diversion, social and employment supports, housing and homeless assistance, and PTSD peer support.

MHAW is committed to the core practice values of empowerment, hope, opportunity, and cultural competence. The agency takes a "whole person" perspective with an enriched understanding of the social and economic conditions that contribute to physical mental health and substance abuse. ♦