Policy: Dauphin County MH/MR Program will facilitate consumer and family involvement as active participants in all work groups, committees, and boards under the direction of the Administrative Office.

Definitions:  

**Consumer** A person who is active or had been active at some time in the public mental health or mental retardation system as evidenced by registration at a case management unit.

**Family** A person or persons who a consumer identifies as being significant and wish to include them in their life (husband/wife, biological family, adopted family, foster family, friend, paramour, etc.)

**Representative Organization** An organization which has a governing or advisory board and whose function is to advocate for, educate, and support consumers and families specifically for, but not limited to, residents of Dauphin County.

Procedure: Dauphin County MH/MR Program holds true to its core values the importance of consumer and family empowerment. One manner in which empowerment can be realized is through the inclusion of consumers and family members in the development, oversight and monitoring of the public mental health, mental retardation, and early intervention service systems. To this end, all MH/MR Administrative staff and Crisis Intervention supervisors, in the course of performing their management responsibilities, shall implement the following procedure.

1. The membership of all steering committees, selection committees, boards, and work groups shall include consumers and family
members unless waived by the Administrator or Deputy Administrator.

2. Every effort shall be made to have at least two (2) consumers and two (2) family members represented on the committee.

3. Selection of the consumer and family representation is preferably solicited from representative organizations, which are recognized by the Dauphin County MH/MR Program. If this is not viable, individual requests may be solicited from the case management unit, providers or administrative staff.

4. When seeking participation from representative organizations, the appointment of the members should be recommended by the organization.

5. Every effort should be made to hold meetings in locations and times that are accommodating for the consumer and family members to assure participation.

6. When transportation is preventing a consumer or family member from attending scheduled meetings, every effort must be made to assist the person getting to the meeting and/or returning home. This may include staff providing the transportation, seeking another member of the group to assist with the transportation, or securing Taxi service at the expense of MH/MR. When taxi service is the only option, approval for payment must be secured from the Administrator or the Deputy Administrator.

7. Consideration can be given to provide a stipend or honorarium to each consumer and family member for his or her participation in the group. This must receive prior approval from the Administrator or Deputy Administrator.
8. Every effort shall be taken to educate the consumer and family member prior to the first meeting on the subject that is bringing together the group. This may include sending written material and/or discussing the issues directly with the participants.

9. It should be customary to send a letter of thanks at the completion of the group’s task to each participant and when appropriate, to the representative organization.