Reviewer’s report

Title: Test - retest reliability of two instruments for measuring public attitudes towards persons with mental illness

Version: 1 Date: 18 March 2010

Reviewer: Sandra Wilkniss

Reviewer’s report:

The authors are correct that much needs to be done to determine psychometric properties of increasingly large number of assessment tools found in the stigma literature (similar to the recovery literature). In this vein, this study is a meaningful contribution to the literature. Some modifications are recommended below.

Major Revisions:

1) in the introduction: Other negative effects of stigma include difficulty finding jobs (e.g., Drake and Bond), housing, more problematic interactions with police (e.g., Morrissey and Fisher), and the like. Citing this literature on the impact of stigma on basic life needs would make the point stronger. In addition, a brief mention of the self-stigma literature is warranted. Self-stigma is an important, sometimes unrecognized, variable in addressing anti-stigma efforts. See work by Pat Corrigan and colleagues (e.g. Self-stigma of Mental Illness Scale (CSSMIS)). I realize this isn’t the main aim of the study, but if the literature is reviewed, it makes sense to do so comprehensively if briefly.

2) The description of the questionnaires is appreciated but it would be helpful to see the full “Changing Minds” questionnaire – perhaps in an Appendix

3) It is true that the sample size and homogeneity are a limitation of the present study, which the authors acknowledge, but could say more about. For example, how do we understand this sample relative to the larger literature on attitudes, discrimination/stigmatization. Is it also possible that since they were trainees in a helping/human services profession, they were more inclined to discuss or educate themselves about the issues presented by the questionnaires resulting in a shift in attitude?

4) in the discussion, it may be useful to put these findings in the context of developing instruments to study change in other “softer” targets. For example, instruments measuring recovery (self-assessment, provider, organizational assessment) have been developed of late with increasingly more attention paid to psychometric properties. Alternatively, what can be learned from social psychology literature on measure development. It seems the discussion presents an opportunity to say a few words about recommended future directions.

Minor Revisions:

1) in the first paragraph of the paper, please clarify that the definition of stigma
provided is specific to stigmatization of people with mental illness

2) on page 1, “massive body of findings” seems like an overestimate relative to the literature cited

3) the following sentence from page 3 is unclear: “In an extensive review [16] of 123 empirical articles, from 1995 until 2003, dealing with assessment of mental illness stigma reports on psychometric properties are limited.”

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests