

Gina Shelley has been employed in the human services field since 1986. She currently Works for ResCare, Inc. as a service coordinator of a recovery center in Des Moines for persons with serious mental illness. Ms. Shelley is a graduate of the Peer Support Training Academy and serves on the legislative and advisory committee of that project. She received her degree in Bachelors of Liberal Arts from the University of Iowa. Ms. Shelley lives in Adair County with her husband and three year old daughter. Ms. Shelley is committed to educating others about the impact of mental illness and the value to society of fully integrating individuals with mental health disabilities. This includes having equal access to healthcare and opportunities to have a valued role. Ms. Shelley is willing to share some of her own story as a means to help others become conscious of the needs and strengths of persons who have mental illness and the importance of having insurance coverage to treat those particular illnesses.

When I was 19 years old I entered the mental health system. I needed intensive in-patient treatment for an eating disorder. During the past 20 years I have experienced treatment for an eating disorder and post-partum depression. If it had not been for my single mother having been financially able to purchase an individual insurance policy that atleast covered part of my treatment cost for my eating disorder. My eating disorder was severe enough I would likely not have survived. If my mother would have had health insurance through her employer the remainder of our life we would have had a better standard of living. We were fortunate to be able to live with my grandparents, although this made it more difficult for my grandparents who were farmers, at retirement age.

Years later, I experienced a very debilitating post- partum depression with the birth of my youngest child. I required an in-patient treatment for my post partum depression. If I had not had full-time employment at ResCare, Inc., a mental health provider whose employee health insurance plan provided coverage for post-partum depression. My husband and our family would have been financially devastated by the cost of mental health treatment. I am so fortunate to have had mental health insurance and a company that was supportive of my situation at that time.