Peer Recovery: Lessons Learned and How We Made it Work

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Learning Objectives

- Alternate Recovery Definitions
- Who Utilizes Peers
- Peer Preparation and Certification Process
- Peer Readiness Assessment and Hiring Peers
- Supervision of Peers
- What is a Peer/Value of Peer Support
- Role of Hope in Recovery
- The Peer Run Recovery Center
“Centerstone embraces the philosophy of peer empowerment. As an organization we are committed to involving peers throughout all service lines and levels of the organization.”
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMSHA) Service Definition

- Peer Recovery Specialists offer a set of non-clinical activities based on shared lived experience, that engage, educate and support an individual to successfully recover from a mental health or substance use disorder.

- Peer Recovery Specialists act as a recovery and empowerment catalyst: Guiding the recovery process and supporting the individuals recovery choices, goals, and decisions.
Definition of Recovery

• Recovery from alcohol, drug, and/or mental health issues is a process of change through which an individual achieves abstinence and improve health, wellness and quality of life.

• 2005 National Summit on Recovery
Organizational Settings Utilizing PRS

- Recovery Community Organizations
- Treatment Programs
- Engagement Centers
- Prisons, Parole, and Probation
- Family and Children Services
- Health Clinics
Organizational Settings Utilizing PRS Cont…

- Faith – Based Organizations
- Career and Employment Agencies
- Housing Organizations
Peer Preparation and the Certification Process
Trained Workforce

• Aspin
  • Minimum Eligibility
  • Trainee Selection Process
  • Application Review
  • Training Process
  • Testing/Certification Requirements
  • Continued Education Units (CEUs)
• ANSA/CANS Preparation
• How to work from the care plan
  • How to deal with consumers who approach you in the community
  • Authorizations – how to fill one out
• How to document PRS – Example Note
• Crisis Processes
  • What is a crisis?
  • What to do in a crisis?

• Company/program acronyms
• Person-Centered Planning
• How to work from the care plan
• Processes – when to call crisis, med line, etc.
• Client Rights – how to translate, help clients understand
• How to properly advocate
• Incident Reports
• What is a risk? How do you document it? And what do you do with that information?
• How to be part of staffing
Peer Support Readiness Assessment and Hiring Peers
What Is It and Why Do We Need It?

• What is it?
  • An interview tool to help gauge a person’s recovery when applying for a peer role
  • Often paired to serve in addition to a standard interview template, but strictly designed for those whom are in recovery to give them a better chance to explain their recovery

• Why do we need it?
  • The role of the peer is one that differs from an interviewee that does not have a history of mental health and/or substance abuse diagnoses
  • Helps the employer to be in a better position to advocate for interviewee if they happen to have anything on their background
  • Allows the employer to be aware of any red flags prior to moving forward with a peer
What Does It Measure?

- Total of 14 questions
  - (If applicant answers yes to less than 6 questions, they may not yet be ready for this position)
- Hope
- Resiliency
- Continued support in peer’s life (12 step programs, church, therapy, etc.)
- Self-Care
- Experience with NAMI, AA/NA
- Beliefs
- Values
- Strengths
Benefits of the Peer Readiness Assessment

• Allows employer to find and hire the best possible peers
Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) Job Posting

• “Seeking a Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) to assist persons with mental health and substance use needs. Responsibilities include: articulating personal goals for recovery; assisting participants in determining reasonable and holistic steps in recovery; and identifying barriers to recovery goals. A PRS will assist participants in identifying personal strengths in daily living and recovery skills. In addition, a PRS will teach participants problem solving skills, how to identify and combat negative self talk, how to build social supports, and how to self advocate.

• Applicant must have a minimum of high school diploma or GED. Must self-identify as either a current or former consumer of mental health/substance use services, or a person recovering from a mental health, gambling, or substance use disorder. Must be maintaining a healthy recovery lifestyle. Need to have excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to meet written communication requirements. Need to be competent and efficient with current technology and Microsoft operating system. Must have or be eligible to obtain state approved certification Community Health Worker / Certified Recovery Specialist. Prefer prior experience of two years working with individuals struggling with a mental health, gambling, or substance use disorder. Requires two years of uninterrupted sobriety if recovering from a substance use disorder and/or relapse with mental health symptoms. Prefer to have working knowledge of community resources and assistance programs.”
Hiring Strategies

- Advertise for the best candidate- use ASPIN, ICCADA and IAIC as a resource
- Ask the Peer Lead to co-interview
- Use the interview guide
- Assess peer readiness (tool)
- Ask for a copy of the Certification
- Share as much as you can about the job and expectations
- If the candidate has received services from your agency anticipate possible impact on privacy, treatment location etc...
- Recognize the need for continued education
Hiring Strategies Cont...

• Job description should be clear
• Hire the best candidate!
• It is important to:
  • Use “people first” language
  • Have a belief that recovery is possible
  • Recognition of the unique value of peers
  • Have clear role expectations
  • Have a plan for peer integration
  • Have a trained supervisor available
Pros and Cons of Hiring a Consumer of Your Agency

Pros

• Already familiar with layout, some personnel, some policies
• Transportation experience to the site
• Individual can see personal growth and transition from being a consumer to being a paid staff
• Can provide HOPE for staff that the work we do has value.

Cons

• Staff may be slow to accept the individuals new role
• Sustained role confusion
• Greater potential for boundary issues with other consumers who they have known in treatment
• Bias on both sides
Supervision
Who Supervises Peers?

• Medicaid Rehab Option standard: A licensed professional or Qualified Behavioral Health Professional (QBHP)

• However,
  • The relationship is important
  • The peer must have adequate on the job training
  • Everyone on the team must be clear about the peer role
Roles of a Supervisor Coach, Mentor & Advocate

• Coach
  • Interactions are based on the varied life experience, background, wisdom, and knowledge of the employee
  • Support is provided in order to bring the person authentic self and experiences into the peer role.
  • Provide peers with frequent and consistent opportunities to receive encouragement, individualized support and coaching on the helping role and how to deal with personal and professional challenges as they arise.
Roles of a Supervisor Coach, Mentor & Advocate Cont...

• Mentor
  • Provide ongoing advice about developing a career path.
  • Be a role model that the employee can look up to.
  • Provide direction and development through actions
Roles of a Supervisor Coach, Mentor & Advocate Cont...

• Advocate for the Organization and the Employee
  • Provide information on new policies and procedures, wade through frustration and confusion about policy changes and clarify the organizations position.
  • Liaison between the employee and upper management. Unique position to request a recognition of work well done, promotion, personal situation that warrants special accommodations.
Supervision Must Haves

• Supervision as a collaborative process - guidance, support, brainstorming

• Establish rules and maintain boundaries - personal, financial, ethical (training is essential)

• Feedback on performance is necessary

• Empowerment on effectively telling their story
Key Supervisory Skills Needed

• Basic communication including listening/observing
• Teaching skills (coaching, and developing professional skills)
• Assessment skills; recognizing strengths as well as areas for improvement
Key Supervisory Skills Cont…

• Facilitate team building with other staff
• Conflict prevention and resolution
• Supportive/ nurturing skills: dealing with personal problems, stress, burnout
• Advocacy Skills- be the champion
Supervision Guidelines

• All of the same policies apply
• Blocking client files
• Consider increased job shadowing/ mentoring (40 hours is recommended)
• 1 hr a week is recommended for individual supervision in addition to group supervision.
• Emphasize/ be proactive regarding: dual relationships, confidentiality and role
• Supervisor should not have had a prior therapeutic relationship
Supervision Guidelines Cont…

• You are not their therapist
• Balance consumer and provider identities
• Specific job description should be in place
• Advocating for consumers can conflict with agency and non-consumer staff - be prepared
• Be sure to include peers in team and staff meeting.
Supervision Challenges

• Organizational maturity is required, peers do not fit conventional job categories
• Recruitment and selection; finding the right people is key
• Distinctive demands on supervisors
• Former consumers
As With All Employees

• Maintain own health and wellbeing
• Use their strengths to be viewed positively in their role
• Receive your supportive supervision that assists in your management of challenges that arise from supervising.
The Value of Peer Support
What is a Peer Recovery Specialist?

• The PRS is a person in recovery from a mental health or addiction related disorder. The PRS provides peer support services, serves as a consumer advocate, provides consumer information and peer support for consumers in emergency, outpatient, or inpatient settings. (ASPIN)
What the Evidence Shows

- Reduced Inpatient Service Use
- Involved Relationship with Providers
- Better Engagement with Care
- Higher Levels of Empowerment
- Higher Levels of Patient Activation
- Higher Levels of Hopefulness for Recovery
Why Hire Peers?

• Peers can reduce isolation among consumers
• Connect individuals with other supports in the community
• Peers can normalize the experiences of substance use and mental health treatment and recovery
• Reduce stigma associated with substance use and mental health
• Provide hope
What Makes a Peer Different from Other Staff?

• Rely on relationships and trust more than clinical knowledge
• Relate to and understand the community from a peer perspective
• Personally understand what the person is going through
• Living, breathing model of hope
• Personal experience navigating systems
Peer Contribution

• Creating supportive relationships within the community
• Validating strengths
• Knowing that the person in recovery is an expert of his/her own recovery
• Respecting boundaries
• Build hope and confidence
• Helping others to identify goals
• Navigation of different systems of support/care
• Assist with implementing recovery-based services
Peer Contribution Cont...

- Lived experience in recovery
- Trusted member of or understands the community he/she serves
- Liaison between health and social services in the community
- Outreach
- Advocacy
- Community Education
- Social Support
- Experience with navigation of services
Peers

Do's

• Education and promotion of recovery
• Support self care plans
• Mentoring services aimed at increasing participation in person centered planning and individual services
• Support for day to day problem solving related to normalization and reintegration into the community
• Transport to and from appointments
• Increase community supports

Don'ts

• Groups
• Recreational
• Skills training
• Case Management
• Therapy
• Care Plans
• CANS/ANSA
• Drug Screens
The Stages of the Recovery Process and the Peer Workforce

• Pre-contemplation (resist change)
  • Assist with decreasing emotional distress
  • Demonstrate the benefits of making a change

• Contemplation (sitting on the fence)
  • Empower the consumer to make a change
  • Instill Hope, positive self image

• Preparation (getting ready)
  • Recognizing that change is possible
  • Explore possibilities of change
The Stages of the Recovery Process and the Peer Workforce Cont...

• Action (time to move)
  • Provide Guidance and Direction, help set an action plan in place
  • Peer can assist with moving beyond the illness and moving toward active change

• Maintenance (keep strong)
  • Living breathing example that recovery works, provide inspiration/guidance on going self care.
Role of Hope in Recovery
It All Starts with Hope…

• Hope defined: “(n) a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen” or “(v) a feeling of trust”

• How does this apply to recovery?
  • Hope provides the individual that desire to want to make change happen; ultimately the driving force
  • By providing peer support, we can give that feeling of trust to keep the individual seeking recovery to hold on to that desire to change
  • Hope can also be found in resiliency. There will be times that in the process of trying to make change, there will be speed bumps. By providing resiliency into the component of hope, we can keep them from slipping back into hopelessness
Why is Hope Important in Recovery?

• Many people find themselves hopeless due to external stigma and stereotyping (addict, felon, etc.)
• By providing peer support, we can work instill hope to remove these stigmas by establishing goals and working with them to achieve these goals through treatment
• Hope gives people a look in at a second chance at life, but only by providing them with the necessary tools can they be granted that second chance
Feeling Stuck

• Many individuals who are faced with a substance abuse and/or mental health disorder find themselves stuck in their illness and do not believe recovery is possible.

• Peers provide something that no one else in the agency can; a living, breathing model that recovery is possible.

• Coercing someone into recovery won’t work as the consumer has to want to change, however, a peer can establish a quick trust and rapport through shared lived experience to help them identify the problem and work with them to get out of the pre-contemplative stage of the recovery process.
The Peer Run Recovery Center (PRRC)
What is the PRRC?

• Employed entirely by peer support specialists and a recovery coach (all are in recovery)
• Low barrier facility for anyone who is interested in recovery
• Aims to promote socialization
• Hours of operation are in the evening and weekend hours when structure is typically not existent and the opportunity for relapse is high
• Works to provide curricula based groups ranging from substance abuse, mental health, creative groups, and several others
PRRC 1st Year Statistics

• 1st Quarter:
  • During the 1st quarter of operation, the PRRC had 365 individual signatures with 140 of those being repeat consumers

• 2nd Quarter:
  • During the 2nd quarter of operation, the PRRC had 131 individual signatures with 30 of those being repeat consumers
• 3rd Quarter:
  • During the 3rd quarter of operation, the PRRC had 104 individual signatures with 63 of those being repeat consumers

• 4th Quarter:
  • During the 4th quarter of operation, the PRRC had evaluated signatures based upon general attendance sheets, special events attendance sheets, and group attendance sheets with 811 individual signatures, with 81 of those being repeat consumers
What Consumers Can Expect at the PRRC

• A more friendly, home-like atmosphere, rather than a typical institutional feel

• Staff that has shared lived experience similar to the participants they serve

• Free Services:
  • It does not cost a thing to be a participant at PRRC
  • PRRC offers a washer and dryer for those who need to do laundry but cannot afford it
  • PRRC offers a shower in house for participants to utilize if they need
Questions?
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