

# Integrating Consumers as Staff and Experts in Jail Diversion Programs

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# Why Integrate Consumers as Staff and Experts in Jail Diversion Programs?

- Describe what is meant by ‘consumers’
- Consumers offer a critical perspective
  - ‘ People who have “been there” can offer the most relevant perspective on how systems fail and what meaningful alternative(s) should be in place.’  
(Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (2003))
- More...

# Recovery

- What is recovery? Importance of recovery framework
- Emphasis of President's New Freedom Commission Report on Mental Health (July 2003)

# Types of Consumer-Provided Services

- Program Models
  - Peer education
  - Peer support
  - Peer advocacy
- What does the literature say? Evidence for peer support.

# Benefits of Consumer-Provided Services

- To individuals receiving them
  - Improved social functioning
  - Improved self-esteem and social support
  - Improved quality of life
  - Reduced use of hospitalization and/or crisis services (Solomon, 2004)
  - Strengthening Self-Advocacy
  - Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)
  - Access to self help resources (Mead, et.al, 2001)

# Benefits of Consumer-Provided Services

- To service delivery system
  - Cost-savings due to decreased hospitalization/shorter hospital stays
  - Alteration of negative attitudes of service providers
  - Provide mechanism for offering services to people in need of services who are alienated from the traditional mental health system (e.g. people who are homeless)
  - Improve the effectiveness of the traditional mental health delivery system (Solomon, 2004)
  - Greater optimism among professional staff about clients' chances of recovery (Felton, et al, 1995)

# Roles for Consumers in Jail Diversion & Re-Entry Programs

- Peers hired as direct service staff
- Jail diversion program planning & oversight
  - Focus groups, planning committees, dialogue groups
  - Participation in Boards of Directors and Advisory/Steering Committees
- Research and evaluation
  - Hire peers as research assistants
  - Consumer satisfaction surveys
  - Hire as observers/monitors in court and jail setting to ensure clients' rights are protected
- Delivery of Peer Support programs in jail & community
- Provider Trainers
- Advocacy (e.g. Re-Entry And Beyond (RAB))

# Examples of Peer Involvement in Jail Diversion and Re-Entry

- Transitions Training: NY
- Broward County, FL:
  - Forensic Case Management: Competency
  - Peer Support Services in Jail
- St. Lawrence County, NY: Jail release planning
- Hands Across Long Island, NY:
  - “Reach In” services
  - Mobile Outreach Resource, Recovery and Education (police response)
- Bronx Co., NY: peer engagement in Mental Health Court
- MHFPC, NY: peer specialist delivering WRAP

# Criminal Justice Mental Health Programs Need

- Staff who are invested in the recovery model
- Services that instill hope
- Relationships that facilitate communication & trust
- Mechanisms to inform participants of their rights
- Consumers to educate professionals about jail and prison culture
- Staff who are capable of acting as boundary spanners between the criminal justice and mental health systems

# Howie the Harp Forensic Peer Specialist Training Curriculum

- Orientation
- Introduction to Human Services, Professional Ethics and Responsibilities
- Self-Help/Recovery Skills
- Case Management Skills
- Work Readiness Skills
- Supervised Internship with Mental Health Care Provider (3 months)

# Howie the Harp Forensic Peer Specialist Training Curriculum

- Phase 1: Professional ethics, self-help and recovery
- Phase 2: Working in the human services field
  - Case management skills
  - Harm reduction model
  - HIV and AIDS
  - Cultural competency
  - Conflict resolution
  - Many others
- Phase 3: Intensive job readiness
  - Resume writing
  - Interviewing skills

# Howie the Harp Forensic Peer Specialist Training Curriculum

- Other services provided
  - Support groups
  - Double Trouble groups
  - Men and women groups
  - Individual counseling sessions
    - Housing
    - Entitlements
    - Family issues
    - Navigating the parole system
    - Past legal problems
    - Other

# Howie the Harp Forensic Peer Specialist Training Curriculum

- **Internship assignments**
  - Staff develop sites for each class
  - Trainees are matched for internship sites
  - Trainees go on interviews
  - Howie the Harp works with providers
  - Supervisors are required to attend supervisor training at the Center
  - Staff conduct site visits to internship site
  - Supervisor prepares performance evaluation that is reviewed with trainee and staff

# Other Training for Consumer Employees

- Identify local organizations that may provide peer training, such as:
  - Local or statewide peer-run organizations
  - County or state mental health authority consumer affairs department
  - Local or state mental health association
- Identify available training and conferences
  - SAMHSA-funded Alternatives Conference
  - National consumer-run organizations
    - National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse
    - National Empowerment Center
    - CONTAC
  - Georgia Peer Specialist Program
  - Local and national peer consultants

# Finding Consumer Employees

- CASES Mental Health Programs developed relationship with the Howie T. Harp Advocacy Center to identify peer specialists—initially hired 2 part time peer specialists
- Hired consumer who had successfully completed the Nathaniel Project and Howie T. Harp's peer training program as a full time case manager for the Parole Restoration Program
- Today, approximately one-third of program staff (5) are peers

# Hiring Consumers Who Have Completed Agency Programs

- Be aware that there are issues (e.g., how do you assure confidentiality when the former participant's treatment records are in the agency's database and therefore accessible to staff) that may develop between staff and a potential consumer employee who formerly received services from an agency program
- Identify the particular issues and develop a mechanism for addressing them with the potential consumer employee and staff before hiring
- Develop mechanism to monitor consumer's transition/integration as employee

# Consumer Employees

Roles must be clearly defined as they are for any employee

- Job descriptions
- Peer specialist/educators can provide peer support services, case management services, and run groups
- Consumers are also advocates, lobbyists, and create and manage programs
- Create and review program policies and procedures

# Consumer Employees

- Educate participants about self-help techniques and processes
- Teach effective coping strategies based on personal experience and recovery goals
- Assist in the development of community support systems and networks
- Inform participants about their Rights (ADA, Advance Directives)

# Successful Consumer Involvement

- Create an organizational climate and culture that supports consumer employees
- Make reasonable accommodations; flexible work schedule, part-time hours, co-worker buddy
- External supports: e.g., Howie T. Harp has a mandatory weekly support group for one year after completion of the training program
- Ongoing, flexible, individualized support
- Increased supervisory time

# Challenges

- Not all consumers are prepared to serve in role of peer specialist/educator (consumers are a heterogeneous group)
- Give consumers time to establish proficiency in specific skills. Develop a supportive probationary period.
- Help consumers identify workplace supports, co-workers
- Allow time for increased tolerance for work demands
- Assist with personal disclosure strategies
- Respect boundaries: the consumer is an employee, not just a consumer representative. Think about career advancement and promotion.

# Tips

- Pay competitive salary
- Build in supports
- Be prepared for the change in your agency culture
- Develop relationship with your local peer, advocacy, self-help agency
- Listen to what your peer specialists have to say about their employment experience
- Remember peer support is essential

# Available Resources

- National Mental Health Consumers Self-Help Clearinghouse [www.mhselfhelp.org](http://www.mhselfhelp.org)
- National Empowerment Center [www.power2u.org](http://www.power2u.org)
- Consumer Organization and Networking Technical Assistance Center [www.contac.org](http://www.contac.org)
- Howie the Harp Transitions Training for Providers [www.howietheharp.org](http://www.howietheharp.org)
- Coordination, Aftercare, Recovery & Educational Services [www.caresllc.com](http://www.caresllc.com)
- Mary Ellen Copeland [www.mentalhealthrecovery.com](http://www.mentalhealthrecovery.com)
- Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law [www.bazelon.org](http://www.bazelon.org)

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