

Gayle Bluebird, RN Peer Network Coordinator

Gayle Bluebird coordinates the newly formed Center for Peer Networking, which is a division of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) Office of Technical Assistance (OTA).

Gayle has been involved in consumer advocacy for almost 40 years and has worked in many different capacities. She is a core faculty member of the Center for the Prevention of Violence, Trauma and the Reduction of Seclusion and Restraint, and has participated in multiple onsite and offsite OTA projects in a variety of states and programs.

In 2006 she produced and edited a film/video titled, *Leaving the Door Open: Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint*, SAMHSA (TBR 2008), and she recently completed a technical report/guidebook entitled *Paving New Ground: Peers Working in Inpatient Settings*, and an accompanying DVD, *A Dialogue with Peers and Family Members* (available on the NASMHPD website).

AREAS OF EXPERTISE:

Conducting Dialogues and Role Plays:

A dialogue is a forum in which two or more groups of people are brought together as equals to explore their differing views--in this case about mental health topics and issues. This can be done in varied groups and for different purposes:

- Between clients and staff on issues, e.g. seclusion and restraint
- For Consumer Satisfaction – with clients – (Dialogues / Focus Groups)
- For discussion on special issues or controversial topics
- May combine dialogues with role plays to identify conflict areas and prevent crises from occurring

Expected outcomes include:

- Better communication and improved staff and patient relations
 - Provision of critical information to agency leadership on what staff believe, need, and/or want to do their jobs more effectively
 - Provision of a “snapshot” of staff morale
 - An understanding of how the agency is meeting the needs of persons in care
 - Greater participation and involvement of persons in care
 - Shared problem solving and reduction in use of coercive practices
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Peer Roles in Inpatient Settings:

Roles for peer providers in inpatient settings are increasingly common. Peers have the ability to act as transformation agents in hospital settings, and can provide individual help to other peers in their recovery processes, as well as work in partnership with clinical teams to provide a peer perspective in all decision making and policy development.

Common roles:

- Can serve in many different capacities as advocates, counselors, educators, and evaluators
- Can transform the environment to be more colorful and pleasing to the eye
- Peers can provide individual help to other peers in their recovery processes
- Can assist people in transitioning from the hospital to the community
- Are often very effective at diffusing conflicts and serving as mediators.

Comfort Rooms:

Comfort rooms provide sanctuary from stress, and/or are places for persons to experience feelings within acceptable boundaries. Creating these rooms is a participatory project in which persons receiving services play a prominent role in all stages of their development.

Creation of Comfort Rooms includes:

- Integrating the use of personal safety plans and general safety factors
- Developing the room in stages
- Designing them with color and furnishings that are relaxing
- Lending the room to a variety of uses including music, reading, etc.
- Peer Specialists are perfect to help develop and maintain rooms
- Use of “Comfort Carts” or kits
- Integrating creative strategies and the arts
- Paying attention to other areas of the environment

Other Training Topics from Bluebird include:

- Recovery definitions
- Importance of peoples’ stories and narratives
- Language issues
- Dialogues: both informal and formal
- Personal Safety Plans
- Trauma Informed Care
- “Appropriate Touching”
- Debriefing by Peers
- Creativity and the Arts