

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

DATE: December 18, 2001

TO: State Organizers in AZ, CO, NY, OK, RI, SC, TX, UT, WA

FROM: Steve Onken, *on behalf of* Jeanne Dumont, Priscilla Ridgway, Doug Dornan and Ruth Ralph

RE: Mental Health Recovery: What Helps and What Hinders Member Check Request

Greetings!

First I want to briefly update you on the three day work session of the Technical Support Team for the Mental Health Recovery Systems Performance Indicator Development Project. We met December 2nd through the 4th and were able to develop a solid draft of the master codebook for the project. We got through six of the seven question sets. We are completing the master coding scheme for question set seven, and are refining codebook this month. In January we will be recoding all the transcripts using the master codebook. We plan to have the first draft of the Phase One Report completed by the end of February.

As indicated in our November 28th email, we are now requesting your assistance in conducting a member check for your state's focus group transcript. To refresh your memory, we proposed as part of this project a member check with the original focus group participants after coding the focus group transcripts. We will briefly outline what this entails.

During transcript coding we identified unique concepts and themes for each question set of the focus group protocol (what helps and what hinders recovery). The Technical Work Group coded carefully to include every unique statement in a theme. We have summarized these concepts and themes into individual transcript reports.

The purpose of the member check is to check with focus group participants that the themes make sense to them, that they accurately reflect what was discussed in the focus group. We are requesting that you mail out to all your focus group participants the **transcript report** for your state (copy enclosed). We have written a **cover letter** for the focus group participants that will accompany the transcript report (15 copies enclosed).

We request that you then follow up this mailing with a phone call to confirm whether participants feel the themes fit the discussion. We have developed a **checklist** for you to complete **for each focus group participant** (two enclosed). Basically, you will ask the following two things about each question set on the report. (1) "As you recall, do the themes reflect what was said?" (2) "Looking the report over, do the themes make sense to you?" If a participant responses "no" to either question (or both), then you will ask for an explanation and record this information.

As stated in the cover letter to the focus group participants, it is important for them to keep in mind that the purpose of the call is to verify the accuracy of the data we have already collected. It is not possible at this time to collect and analyze new data. Please use this caveat to keep the participant focused on the task at hand.

Although we are not looking to collect more data about what helps and hinders recovery during the member check, we are requesting one additional piece of information. The member check provides an opportunity to gain a better idea as to which themes are most important to measure regarding the mental health system's performance. During the phone call, you will also ask each participant to identify the **three most important themes for each question set**, the themes that he or she thinks should be given the greatest attention in seeking to strengthen **or** change the mental health system.

Please keep in mind that the focus group participants are free to choose whether or not they want to participate in the phone call. We have attempted to make this member check short, direct and easy to administer.

We think it would be helpful for you to write a brief cover letter as well. You may want to let them know when you will be making the phone calls. You will want to include information as to how they can contact you directly. If you have funds available, we encourage you to pay a **stipend** to each participant for his or her participation in the member check.

We realize that quite a bit of time has past since the focus group and that you may have to track down some of the participants. We hope, however, that you remain committed to the grounded theory process of checking back with participants (and by doing so, letting them know that verification with them matters). **We are requesting that the member check be conducted and the results be sent to me (Steven Onken) by January 31st.**

Please feel free to contact any of the Technical Work Group members as to questions you may have. My phone number is 212-854-7279 and my email address is <so280@columbia.edu>.

Have a safe and warm holiday season!

Sincerely,

Steven J. Onken, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

Signing on behalf of:

Doug Dornan, M.S. Co-Investigator

Jeanne Dumont, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator

Ruth Ralph, Ph.D., Co-Investigator

Priscilla Ridgway, M.S.W., Co-Investigator

Enclosure (3 different documents, multiple copies)

MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY: WHAT HELPS AND WHAT HINDERS?

A NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECOVERY AND CONSUMER-BASED SYSTEM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Greetings from the National Research Team!

Several months ago you participated in a focus group with other consumers in your state to discuss what helps and what hinders mental health recovery. You agreed to be contacted once the transcript of that focus group was coded. We have now completed that coding for all nine states. We would now like to check in with you to make sure that the themes from your focus group make sense to you.

The National Research Team coded the focus group transcript carefully, identifying themes summarizing each unique thought and feeling of the focus group participants. Enclosed you will find a report that lists the themes for each of the questions that were asked. All the names of the focus group participants were removed.

We would like you to read over this report and consider whether it accurately reflects your focus group discussion. It is important to remember that since the focus group involved many participants there will be themes you may or may not agree with. You do not have to agree with every theme. We also realize that it has been several months since the focus group took place. We are hopeful that this report will re-create this important day and refresh your memory. Hopefully you will be able to let us know whether the themes ring true to your participation and experience in the focus group.

A representative from your state mental health office will be calling you to check in with you about the accuracy of the themes. The state representative will be using a checklist to ask you the following two things about each question set on the report. (1) As you recall, do the themes reflect what was said? (2) Looking the report over, do the themes make sense to you? If you answer no to either of these questions, the state representative will ask you to please explain your answer.

You are of course free to choose whether or not you want to participate in the phone call. Should you choose to participate, it could be tempting to add additional information about what helps and hinders recovery. We ask that you please refrain from doing this. The purpose of this call is to check in with you about insights we have already collected.

This work, and your contribution, is very important. We will be writing up a combined report on all of the state transcripts. We will also be using some of this work to develop a set of survey items for consumers to use to evaluate how well their local mental health services encourage recovery.

During the phone call the state representative will also ask that you **let us know your top three themes for each question set**, the issues that you think should be given the greatest importance in seeking to strengthen or change the mental health system. You could “star” the three themes for each question set in your document before the phone call. Your selection of the most important themes will help us in the development of this recovery and consumer-based survey.

We want to thank you for participating in this project. If you have questions, you can contact your state representative or you may reach me directly at (212) 854-7279 or email me at <so280@columbia.edu>.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Onken, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

Signing on behalf of:

Doug Dornan, M.S. Co-Investigator

Jeanne Dumont, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator

Ruth Ralph, Ph.D., Co-Investigator

Priscilla Ridgway, M.S.W., Co-Investigator

Enclosure

MEMBER CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING THE TRANSCRIPT REPORT

State: _____

Participant's Sex: Female Male

Participant's Age: _____

Person Completing This Form: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

Question Set 1: What resources are important to you to have control in your life? What helps you get these resources? What gets in the way of getting these resources?

[Ask participant] As you recall, do the themes in Question Set 1 reflect what was said?

Yes_____ No_____

[Ask participant] Looking the report over, do the themes in Question Set 1 make sense to you?

Yes_____ No_____

If the person answered no to either of these questions, please ask them to explain their answer:

[Ask participant] Looking over the themes regarding what helps and what hinders for Question Set 1, what top three themes should the mental health system strengthen *or change* to most support your recovery. Consider themes from both the helps and hinders section, what you would like to see the system continue to do *or* what it should do less or do differently.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Question Set 2: What choices are important to you to have control in your life? What helps expands your choices? What stands in the way of having choices?

[Ask participant] As you recall, do the themes in Question Set 2 reflect what was said?

Yes_____ No_____

[Ask participant] Looking the report over, do the themes in Question Set 2 make sense to you?

Yes_____ No_____

If the person answered no to either of these questions, please ask them to explain their answer:

[Ask participant] Looking over the themes regarding what helps and what hinders for Question Set 2, please list the three themes that the mental health system can strengthen *or change* to most support your recovery. Consider themes from both the helps and hinders section, what you would like to see the system continue to do *or* what it should do less or do differently.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Question Set 3: How do you or what helps you gain independence in your life? What gets in the way of gaining independence in your life?

[Ask participant] As you recall, do the themes in Question Set 3 reflect what was said?

Yes_____ No_____

[Ask participant] Looking the report over, do the themes in Question Set 3 make sense to you?

Yes_____ No_____

If the person answered no to either of these questions, please ask them to explain their answer:

[Ask participant] Looking over the themes regarding what helps and what hinders for Question Set 3, please list the three themes that the mental health system can strengthen *or change* to most support your recovery. Consider themes from both the helps and hinders section, what you would like to see the system continue to do *or* what it should do less or do differently.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Question Set 4: How do you or what helps you get connected and stay connected to other people? What gets in the way of getting and staying connected to others?

[Ask participant] As you recall, do the themes in Question Set 4 reflect what was said?

Yes_____ No_____

[Ask participant] Looking the report over, do the themes in Question Set 4 make sense to you?

Yes_____ No_____

If the person answered no to either of these questions, please ask them to explain their answer:

[Ask participant] Looking over the themes regarding what helps and what hinders for Question Set 4, please list the three themes that the mental health system can strengthen *or change* to most support your recovery. Consider themes from both the helps and hinders section, what you would like to see the system continue to do *or* what it should do less or do differently.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Question Set 5: How do you or what helps you gain hope in your life? What gets in the way of gaining hope?

[Ask participant] As you recall, do the themes in Question Set 5 reflect what was said?

Yes _____ No _____

[Ask participant] Looking the report over, do the themes in Question Set 5 make sense to you?

Yes _____ No _____

If the person answered no to either of these questions, please ask them to explain their answer:

[Ask participant] Looking over the themes regarding what helps and what hinders for Question Set 5, please list the three themes that the mental health system can strengthen *or change* to most support your recovery. Consider themes from both the helps and hinders section, what you would like to see the system continue to do *or* what it should do less or do differently.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Question Set 6: How have mental health staff and mental health services helped or hindered you in your life with gaining resources, choices, independence, connections with others, and hope?

[Ask participant] As you recall, do the themes in Question Set 6 reflect what was said?

Yes _____ No _____

[Ask participant] Looking the report over, do the themes in Question Set 6 make sense to you?

Yes _____ No _____

If the person answered no to either of these questions, please ask them to explain their answer:

[Ask participant] Looking over the themes regarding what helps and what hinders for Question Set 6, please list the three themes that the mental health system can strengthen *or change* to most support your recovery. Consider themes from both the helps and hinders section, what you would like to see the system continue to do *or* what it should do less or do differently.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Question set 7: If you were giving advice to the mental health decision-makers in your state, what things would you tell them that they *or staff* could do to make your life better?

[Ask participant] As you recall, do the themes in Question Set 7 reflect what was said?

Yes _____ No _____

[Ask participant] Looking the report over, do the themes in Question Set 7 make sense to you?

Yes _____ No _____

If the person answered no to either of these questions, please ask them to explain their answer:

[Ask participant] Looking over the themes regarding what helps and what hinders for Question Set 7, please list the three themes that the mental health system can strengthen *or change* to most support your recovery. Consider themes from both the helps and hinders section, what you would like to see the system continue to do *or* what it should do less or do differently.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____