



# PALAU

**“A good takeaway for our local peers was hearing from other peers that are already doing services, which distilled their confidence; and I want to have more peer sharing so they have more confidence in the services they provide and being a key part of a team.”**

## PROVIDING BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE REHABILITATION & RECOVERY TRAINING TO JUSTICE & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STAFF

### Project Background, Vision, and Outcomes

Palau wanted to expand behavioral health services for individual with a serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder in jail. Traditionally, jail-based health services in Palau have been medical-based and could benefit from expanding its recovery support and psychiatric services. In recognition of this, Palau used Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) funds to train peer support specialists, providers and law enforcement officers in behavioral health care, rehabilitation and recovery. TTI partners included Behavioral Health Council members, persons with lived experiences and family members, the Ministries of Justice (i.e., public safety, LEO, and jails/prisons), Health and Human Services and Courts (i.e., probation, parole board, and transition programs) to help develop and implement behavioral health services in jails.

The vision was to provide more training and technical assistance for peer development. Several trainings

were delivered throughout the funding period including a trauma-informed training series on sex offenders and those with sexualized behavior problems; Family Protection Act training for Ministry of Justice staff for working with target population in jails, deviance and violence (dual program); Trauma-Informed Peer Support (TIPS) training focused on using storytelling for healing, emotional quotient/intelligence, and crisis support coordinated services hotline for de-escalation rather than hospitalization.

The established outcomes were measurement of jail diversion and the number and type of trainings provided (i.e., gender-based violence for peers), to include information on appropriate training space and training quality. In the near future, pre- and post-test training data will be collected to evaluate training and change of knowledge outcomes. Program successes include more awareness among project staff and partners about the quality of life among people in jail and a deeper

(continued) ►

understanding and support for recovery and trauma. Due to engagement in the TTI project, Palau got the opportunity to learn about the “richness of resources out there” regarding behavioral health care in jail settings. Also, peer specialists reported that they appreciated being a key part of a team and felt good about the services they were providing.

## Project Implementation: Challenges and Lessons Learned

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic was the major challenge throughout the funding period. The borders to Palau were closed for the majority of the funding period. Additionally, staff were not allowed access to jails due to Covid-19 lockdowns. Due to this, Palau shifted to providing trainings outside of jail settings until staff can gain access to jails (jails remained closed as of this report). Other project challenges included significant staffing limitations in jails and some criticism and push back from jail-based medical staff about the use of peer support specialists. These challenges are still being addressed and mitigated, although progress has been made.

## Sustainability and Project Legacy

This project was designed to provide behavioral health training to peer support specialists, behavioral health staff, and justice staff including law enforcement officers. When funding ends, they plan to continue improving the recovery service(s) offered in prisons. Outside of jail settings, leadership would like to recruit more peer support specialists and create a social marketing plan to establish a community for those in recovery. At this time, Palau is planning for future behavioral health endeavors and programming in jails.

## Health Equity

Improving behavioral health equity was part of the project, mainly by providing trainings that educate

individuals on the rehabilitation and recovery process for individuals living with a mental illness and/or substance use disorder. Mental health block award demographic data is used to inform decision making. Outside of the TTI award, Palau works with organizations that strive for health equity for various groups including veterans (Palau Veteran Association), a LGBTQ+ visibility group, mothers and families, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other ethnic groups (i.e., (people from Taiwan, Bangladesh and the Philippines).

## Peer Services Utilization

TTI project leadership have embraced the use of peers. Palau is looking into creative recruitment mechanisms to attract and hire new peers, because hiring peers has been a problem. Additionally, there is an ongoing struggle with gaining support for the use of peer support services in a predominantly medical model spaces, although there has been movement in shifting perspectives. Support from leadership seems to help in gaining buy-in from interagency partners.

## Trauma Informed Care

Trauma-informed care is the core component of the TIPS training, and trauma-informed care has been incorporated into other trainings (i.e., strengthening family support, youth suicide prevention for those with serious emotional disturbance, and mental illness and/or substance use).

**For further information about this project contact Everlynn Temengil at [Temengil.ej@gmail.com](mailto:Temengil.ej@gmail.com).**