Introduction

Peer support has played an important role in promoting quality of life/wellness for people with mental illness. We believe peer supports may be valuable to a broad range of cross-disability and cross-system stakeholders and have developed a training curriculum to prepare a range of peer specialists.

We will explore the activities of this 3-year project by outlining our work in developing a curriculum in the first 2 years of the grant. Then we will present goals and challenges expected in the third year.

Methods

- 8 stakeholder meetings held across Pennsylvania to determine the topics for curriculum.
- 2-day curriculum developed
- » Feld-tested in 12 locations for 68 participants with disabilities, including 21 transition age youth with autism
- » Two additional curriculum trainings created for adults and teenagers
- » Reflection, exercises, and reviewing videos are part of the training process.
- 2 hour follow-up with training participant
- » It will include questions about case scenarios.
- »All participants receive a stipend for attending the focus groups, training, and follow-up. We plan to have some of the trained participants become peer supporters.

Results

It was determined what topics should be in a curriculum:

- » History of Peer Support
- » Active Listening » Relationship Building
- » Cultural Competence
- » Motivational Interviewing
- » Everyday Lives
- » Problem Solving.
- » Self-Care

Participants reported enjoying the training and the curriculum was revised after the various groups participated.

Discussion

After the follow-up sessions

- curriculum will be finalized
- peer support program will start



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PEER SUPPORT Mutual Learning

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Peer support is valuable to a broad range of cross-disability and cross-system stakeholders.

We have developed a training curriculum to prepare a range of peer specialists.







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Going Forward

This project has confirmed that there is a community desire to advance peer services. Stakeholder meetings and interviews were extremely positive and provided a great deal of information. In the third year of this grant, we plan to advance the skills of people who participated in the peer support training, as well as support others who may benefit from peer support by:

- 1. Following up with all people who participated in the training and link them with people to provide peer support.
- 2. Conducting individual surveys with peer supporters and recipients of that peer support. Recommendations will be developed and provided for the peer supporters. Findings will be included in reports/presentations to advance attention to peer support in Pennsylvania.
- 3. Continuing to explore how to advance peer support for a broad range of people and to look at the possibility of peer specialists for this effort, receiving support through system programs (e.g., alternative funding, new programs being developed).

Challenges

- Identifying individuals who will receive peer support from trained participants
- Exploring how to formalize this approach of providing peer support
- »Should this peer support be generic or focus on a specific group of people?
- » How will this peer support be funded over time?

Expanding the Scope

Our goals have been directed at developing a model of peer support that will enhance efforts and meet many people's needs across Pennsylvania.

Although so far we have focused on meeting the needs of an identified disparate group (i.e., 14-26 year olds) and other adults with disabilities, we continue to be motivated by generic social change and have included people from the general community in stakeholder meetings to identify common themes and issues.

In the long term, this project aims at addressing systems change, specifically meeting individual needs through peer support.

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