

# HIRING People in Recovery



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**NACM**  
National Association of Case Management

# Why hire consumers?

- Is it a mandate?
- Is it a conscious choice in the organization?
- Is there perceived value to hiring people with the lived experience?
- Is it just a cool idea or trendy?

# Benefits of Hiring Peers

- Serve as role models and mentors to people served
- Voice and broker the needs of people served
- Important sources of information
- Powerful source of motivation and hope
- Develop a more trusting relationship through mutuality and empathy
- Deliver a good understanding of the challenges and successes of recovery and wellness

# Benefits of Hiring Peers

- Assist others in navigating service systems
- Challenge unacknowledged stigma and bias toward people served
- Augment/compliment services of overburdened mental health systems, thereby increasing access to services

What are some  
fears/concerns behind hiring  
or working with Peers?



# Concerns of Traditional Providers

- *Peers cannot work full time, either because of disability insurance or other entitlements*
- *Peers cannot fulfill the same roles as providers who are not consumers*
- *Peers will relapse or are too fragile to handle the distress of the job*
- *Peers are now professionals and they will invariably cause harm to people served that staff members will have to undo*

# Concerns of Traditional Providers

- *Dual relationships – Situation in which a professional relates to a peer in more than one relationship (i.e., professional, social, personal, business, financial)*
- *Possible solution: Adopt policies for employees addressing potential conflicts that are no different than traditional policies*
- *Role Conflict and confusion – Power struggles and boundaries can become blurred as discomfort tends to arise. The delineation between “sick” and well become blurred.*
- *Possible solution: Clarify and delineate roles and responsibilities of all staff. Seek to develop a culture of wellness and practice the values that the team can create that exhibits respect at every level of the organization.*

# Concerns of Traditional Providers

- *Confidentiality – Concern over what information is shared, and with whom. Worries about breaching confidentiality due to peer networks and lack of knowledge about mandates for professional confidentiality.*
- *Policies, policies, policies and guidelines that are clear and combined with discussions of boundaries with the entire team/organization. Confidentiality training is helpful with the understanding that the mutual relationship may lend to peer to peer confidentiality between peer staff and person served. The organization must discuss and decide what is acceptable or unacceptable. Again, Clarity and void of ambiguity.*



# Prepare to hire

- Identify concerns and issues that existing staff may have
- Clarify roles for all staff
- Dual relationship issues
- Develop Global training

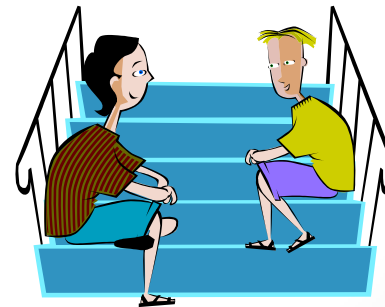
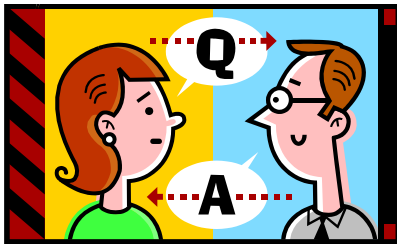


# Competencies

- Knowledge of person-first and Recovery-oriented language
- Ability to communicate with everyone using respectful, non-judgmental language
- Self-awareness of one's biases and ability to serve others in a non-judgmental fashion.
- Awareness of the potential for co-optation

# Competencies

- Awareness of the potential power differentials—real or perceived
- Ability to feel empathy and communicate in an empathetic manner
- Ability to engage those they serve on the basis of individual recovery definitions and goals.



# Competencies

- Time-management skills that enable peers to fulfill commitments
- Ability to communicate recovery components.
- Current recovery knowledge.



# Competencies

- Ability to communicate one's lived experience in an organized, honest, thoughtful manner.
- Ability to recognize appropriate ways, times and opportunities to self-disclose
- Knowledge of what trauma is.
- Knowledge of the actual and potential effects of trauma on mental and physical health.
- Ability to practice in trauma-informed ways.
- Knowledge of how to obtain and ability to share trauma-informed practiced information

# Training

- Orientation to the organization, policies and culture
- Stages in recovery
- Self-help mutual support
- Boundaries training
- Confidentiality
- Cultural congruence
- WRAP training
- Ethics



# Training

- The role of peer support in the recovery process
- Advocacy for recovery environments
- Beliefs and values that promote and support recovery and wellness
- Effective listening and engagement strategies
- Diversion procedures (crisis response)
- Trauma Informed Practice



# Policies and Procedures

- Policies should be written for all staff and not targeted to peer staff
- Do policies prevent hiring of people who are service recipients? (Dual relationship) WHY?
- Policies should provide clear guidance to staff who have pre-existing personal, therapeutic, family or business relationships
- Procedures should have safeguards to staff who have dual relationships
- Provide protection to all staff from exploitation/marginalization



# Workplace supports

- Access to other peers in the organization
- Access to state and national organizations that support peer employees
- Wellness/ Recovery plans (WRAP) for all staff
- Inclusion of all staff in creating a positive workplace environment

# How employers can help peer staff succeed

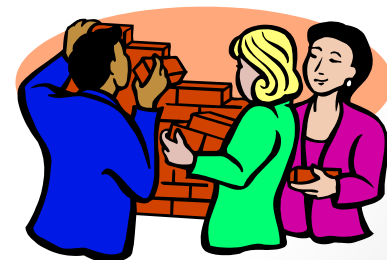
- Value the lived experience and allow it to contribute to the workforce
- Encourage and appreciate the efforts of individual staff and teams
- On-going training for all staff about mental wellness
- Understand that new peer staff resources may be limited at first (i.e. work or dress clothes)
- Strike a balance between productivity, contributing employees and too much stress on the job (WRAP team)
- Pay all staff a living wage

# Build a better workplace

- Use a strength based approach towards all employees
- Recognize how staff strengths can advance the recovery values and outcomes
- Use knowledge and experiences to evolve into a more recovery focused and outcome driven organization (talk about it, adapt to it and celebrate it)

# Team Building for Success

- Develop a team culture and motto
- Develop a team agreement (White Flag)
- Develop an open door policy at all levels
- Develop a team wellness plan (WRAP)
- Transparency in all decision making that affects the team
- Practice core values by creating behaviors that support them



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# Thank you

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