

WHY SHOULD I USE PEER SERVICES?

A recent multi-year, multi-site study found that Consumer-operated Peer Support services are effective and increase well-being.

Peer Support services can reduce symptoms, enlarge social networks and enhance quality of life, especially when offered along with traditional mental health services.

Peer Support services do not replace traditional services but instead, offer an alternative to individuals who may feel alienated and disconnected from the mental health system.

Peer Support Workers can function as positive role models to other mental health Consumers and may more readily recognize and address the psychosocial needs of their Peers.

Additionally, people who are offered consumer-operated peer-support show greater improvement in well-being over time than those offered only traditional mental health services.

FUNDING

Funding for the Peer Support Services program is being provided by:

- Washington County MH/MR Program Office
- and
- The Washington County Community Foundation

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Admissions, the provisions of services and referrals shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin, age or sex.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disability through the most practical and economically feasible methods available.

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PEER SUPPORT SERVICES

People,
Enlightened
Empowered and in
Recovery



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WHAT ARE PEER SUPPORT SERVICES?

Peer Support Services are services offered to adults with mental illness which are provided by a self-identified current or former consumer of behavioral health services who has been trained to offer support and assistance in helping others in their recovery process. Peer Support services are designed to;

- Help promote hope that recovery from Mental Illness is possible
- Assist in areas such as housing, money management, life skills, and relapse prevention
- Assist and guide in the development of personal Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)
- Encouraging self-advocacy, consumer choice and personal responsibility
- Crisis support and relapse prevention

“Recovery in Peer Support comes through seeing ourselves as human beings, the same as anyone else, rather than as mental patients. We begin to do this by practicing relationships in Peer Support in a different way. Instead of taking care of each other and thinking of each other as “sick,”

In Peer Support we build a sense of family and community that is mutually responsible and focused on recovery and social action.

Sherry Mead, 2004

“Wellness Recovery Action Plan & Peer Support”, coauthored with Mary Ellen Copeland

HOW ARE PEER SERVICES DIFFERENT?

Peer services differ from traditional mental health services in some basic ways that include the following characteristics as established by OMHSAS:

- Reduced reliance on professionals
- Voluntary participation
- Equality among participants
- A non-judgmental atmosphere
- Informality and avoidance of artificial barriers such as those between “consumers” and “professionals”

BENEFITS

Peer Support services benefit the community as well as the Consumers. The “Consumer Involvement and Initiative Report” states that according to ‘best practices’ research into self-help and consumer initiatives, findings consistently show that participation in self-help services is associated with:

- Reduced hospitalizations
- Reduced use of other more costly Mental Health services
- Increased knowledge, information and coping skills
- Increased self-esteem, confidence, sense of well-being and of being in control
- Stronger social network and supports

The cost to taxpayers for community support services for people recovering from mental illness is far less than the cost of institutionalization or hospitalization.

Consumers who use peer support lead more fulfilling lives and often make valuable contributions to their communities.