



Developing Peer Programming

Considerations for agency infrastructure and
staffing

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- Mission:
 - *End homelessness of Los Angeles' most vulnerable individuals — primarily adults living with mental illness — through a continuum of services and housing, enabling them to reach their highest level of self-sufficiency and community integration*
- Target:
 - *Over 2,000 unduplicated vulnerable & chronically homeless men and women served annually*
 - *90,000 free showers provided to the community*
- Agency facts and figures:
 - *Founded in 1985 and has 75 employees and 6 million dollar budget*



Community Based Services:

- *Skid Row homeless outreach team*
- *Frank Rice Access Center*
- *Emergency and transitional housing*
- *Permanent supportive housing*
- *Medi-cal certified Wellness Center*
- *Fine arts, peer and recovery programming*
- *Specialized services for persons with HIV/AIDS*
- *Benefits and money management programs*
- *Public showers & Laundromat*
- *Downtown Pathway Home Community Initiative*



*Painting done
by a member in
the Wellness
Center Fine Arts
Program*



Values

- Housing first-"no strings attached"
- Individualized member driven services
- "No wrong door" access to permanent housing and services
- Delivery of services to the highest barrier homeless in the community



Aligning priorities with federal, state, and local initiatives

- Funding climate changing
- Focus on outcomes and program performance
- Consolidating programs and streamlining service delivery



Important Considerations

- Primary mission of agency
- Agency culture needs support and nudging
- Team work helps bring diverse perspectives
- Need for an internal champion and management “buy in”
- Human Resources issue should be vetted in advance
- Look for opportunities to ease transition for peers
- Bring everyone to the table
- Process takes time



Peer Advocate Program (PAP)

- Commenced Fall 2011 as a pilot, called the Peer Advocate Pilot Program
- In Fall 2012, considered a successful program and renamed Peer Advocate Program (PAP)
- Completed 3rd training in Fall 2012





Peer Advocate Program (PAP)

Program Structure

- One Peer Advocate Coordinator: Supervises program, Peer Supporters, and Peer Advocates
- Peer Supporters: Graduates of PAP who serve a 90 day volunteer ship in various positions, agency wide
- Peer Advocates: Part-Time paid employees who have successfully completed the 90 day volunteer ship.
 - Peer Advocates undergo a formal application and interview process



Program Considerations

Why Peer Programming?

- Funding and Statement of Work expectations
 - Service shift to client driven/run services both in direct practice and program infrastructure
 - Increase in requirements of client paraprofessionals in clinics and as peer providers
 - MHSA funds Wellness and Client Run Outpatient MH Centers
 - Lamp has a Wellness Center – natural fit
 - Requires peers to serve on staff
 - Commitment to client driven services and client choice
- Benefit to consumer community integration
 - Provides safe and supportive environments for clients to develop skills, take risks, and learn to manage symptoms in semi-professional roles.



Program Considerations

- Impact on mental health symptoms, self esteem, and personal value
 - Motivates them to move beyond limiting diagnoses and stigma, and to see themselves as meaningful individuals and as part of a team
 - Graduates demonstrate a significant reduction in sx's and increase in functioning when serving in meaningful roles
- Benefit to agency
 - Direct client feedback regarding what services to provide and how to provide them, to meet clients needs
 - Increased human resources
 - Builds community among clients and staff
 - Supports Lamp's mission



Infrastructure Required

- A strong Peer Program Coordinator fully committed to peer success
- A Peer Program Coordinator with several years active recovery and who understands the process of mental illness
 - Their level of empathy, understanding, and tolerance is superior and essential to changing the agency mindset such that peers are welcomed and integrated
 - Provides education to staff agency wide about how to integrate peers with tolerance and acceptance



Infrastructure Required

- Strong clinical leadership and administrative oversight of peer programming
 - Ensures intra-agency coordination, clinical appropriateness of training, and ensures the multitude of issues surrounding agency culture change are appropriately addressed
 - Mediates conflicts between peer and traditional programming
 - Assists in educating supervisors about developing tolerance, flexibility, and culturally sensitive problem solving



Infrastructure Required

- Agency wide support
 - Supervisors must be genuinely willing to accept peers as volunteers and staff in their programs
 - Supervisors and staff must be flexible and willing to provide support and training to peers
- Agency culture – mindset
 - Flexible with peers' experience of mental illness while serving in positions and responsive to their training and support needs
 - Genuine commitment to and belief in peer success, integration and equality, growth, tolerance, wellness and recovery, and POSSIBILITY!!!



Infrastructure Required

Remember!!

- Staff have to genuinely believe in this model and genuinely invest in it. It doesn't work when it's forced
- Flexibility, responsiveness, and failure tolerance
- Support, support, support, and more support!!!



Inside PAP

Peer Advocate Program

- Objective of PAP: To educate, rehabilitate, and empower members of Lamp, and to give back to the Skid Row community
- Commenced fall 2011 and just completed its 3rd training
- 95% success rate of completing 90-day volunteer ship after graduation





Inside PAP

PAP is a training and development program!!

- Training prepares individuals for entry–level employment in mental health and housing support fields
- Training environment is a combination of classroom and field
- Training takes place 2 hours per day Monday through Friday



Inside PAP

Training topics include (not all inclusive):

- Overcoming stigma
- Co-occurring Disorder
- Harm Reduction
- Appropriate workplace conduct
- Peer integration techniques
- Documentation
- TSS: Tangible Social Support





How PAP Works

PAP Eligibility

Participants must be practicing mental health recovery, harm reduction, and/or substance abuse recovery. They must have a willingness to learn, and eagerness to grow, and bring a commitment to team building.





How PAP Works

Referral Process: Internal referrals accepted from Lamp programs

- Lamp staff refer members
- A team of Lamp staff collaborate to select interviewees
- Members undergo a formal application process including formal interviews
- Selections are made for participation in the program



How PAP Works

- Once selected, participants start the training process
- Participants undergo 40 hours of training
- Participants graduate and complete a 90-day internship as a Peer Supporter
- Internships provide opportunities to work in Lamp programs agency wide
- Successful Peer Supporters are eligible to apply for Peer Advocate positions
- Peer Advocate positions are part-time paid employee positions



How PAP Works

- Peer Advocates must follow the Lamp Employee Handbook however are afforded **flexibility** in order to grow professionally
- Peer Supporters and Peer Advocates attend weekly group and individual supervision with the Peer Advocate Coordinator





A Peer Advocate's Perspective: Challenges and Opportunities



Q & A