Families Supporting Families: The Importance of Peer Support for System Navigation
Presenters

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Agenda

• History of Family Peer Support
• Defining a Family Peer
• Role of the Family Peer
• Culture and Stigma
• Key Concepts of Peer Support
• Family Peers in System Roles
• Interventions Facilitated by Family Peers
• Recruitment
• Benefit of Family Peers
What is Recovery?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines recovery for individuals with mental health and substance use challenges as, “A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”

### 4 Domains of Recovery
- Home
- Health
- Community
- Purpose

### 8 Dimensions of Wellness
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Environmental
- Financial
- Occupational
- Social
SYSTEM OF CARE (SOC) FOR CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH & RECOVERY ORIENTED SYSTEM OF CARE

WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?
A spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with or at risk for mental health or other challenges and their families, that is organized into a coordinated network, builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs, in order to help them to function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.

SOC Core Values

1. Family driven and youth guided, with the strengths and needs of the child and family determining the types and mix of services and supports provided

2. Community based, with the locus of services, as well as system management, resting within a supportive, adaptive infrastructure of structures, processes, and relationships at the community level

3. Culturally and linguistically competent, with agencies, programs, and services that reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences of the populations they serve to facilitate access to and utilization of appropriate services and supports

Recovery Oriented System of Care: Values and Guiding Principles

Person-centered
Anchored in the community
Holistic approaches
Family and other support involvement
Continuity of care
Strengths-based
Culturally responsive
Partnership-consultant relationships
Individualized and comprehensive
Commitment to peer recovery support services
Inclusion of those with lived experience and their families

Peer recovery support: a bridge to hope and healing (recoveryreview.blog)
History of Family Peer Support

- 1982-published Unclaimed Children: the Failure of Public Responsibility to Children and Adolescents in Need of Mental Health
- New roles for family members
- 1989 National Federation of Families incorporated

- Grassroots initiative developed in the 70’s, named in the 80’s, growing in the 2000’s
- Family Peer Support key feature
- Plan & organize services and supports
- Connect support, treatment/interventions, community resources and providers.

- Organizing treatment and supports
- Managing Systems
- SAMHSA’s Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services Program for Children and Families/Children’s Mental Health Initiative (CMHI)- 1993
Definition of Peer, Peer Support and Certified “Recovery” Peer Specialist

• **Peer** is defined as an individual who has lived experience of a mental health and/or substance use condition

• **Peer Support** is defined as, “a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful

• **Certified “Recovery” Peer Specialist** is defined as an individual who
  - self-identifies as a person who has direct personal experience living in recovery from mental health and/or substance use conditions
  - has a desire to use their experiences to help others with their recovery
  - is willing to publicly identify as a person living in recovery for the purpose of educating, role modeling, and providing hope to others about the reality of recovery and has had the required training and experience to work in a provider role
The Difference in Peers

- Family/Primary Caregiver Peer Support
- Youth Peer Support
  Supporting Transition Age Youth ages 16-25
- Adult Peer to Peer Support
- Adult Family Peer Support

Children's System
Children's/Adult System
Adult System
Adult System
Endorsements

Lived experience is a foundation of peer-to-peer support services. As such, CRPS applicants must attest to at least one of the lived-experience endorsements at the time of application. Available endorsements are:

- **Adult (A)**: Lived experience as an adult in recovery for a minimum of 2-years from a mental health and/or substance use condition.

- **Family (F)**: Lived experience as a family member or caregiver to another person who is living with a mental health and/or substance use condition.
Florida Certification Board
CRPS-Family

- **Veteran (V):** Lived experience as a veteran of any branch of the armed forces who is in recovery for a minimum of 2-years from a mental health and/or substance use condition.

- **Youth (Y):** Are between the ages of 18 and 29 at the time of application and have lived experience as a person who, between the ages of 14 and 25 experienced a significant life challenge and is now living a wellness and/or recovery-oriented lifestyle for at least two years.
Family Peer Support is the unrelenting focus on the parent/primary caregiver(s), while other team members focus on the identified child and family (Hoagwood, 2009).

**Familiar Titles/Positions**

Family Peer Specialist  
Family Partner  
Family Navigator  
Parent Support Partner
# What Level is Your Agency?

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<tr>
<th>Level 1 Individual</th>
<th>Family Involvement</th>
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<tr>
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<td>• Family input into the initial and ongoing evaluation and treatment process</td>
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<td>• Participating in family therapy</td>
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<td>• Parent support groups run by staff or clinicians</td>
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<td>• Families have opportunity for input through surveys</td>
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<th>Level 2 Programmatic</th>
<th>Family Engagement</th>
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<tr>
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<td>• Family input into type frequency and modality of services offered</td>
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<td>• Families evaluate program and its policies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Families provide recommendations</td>
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<td>• Parent support groups run by another parent</td>
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<th>Level 3 Organizational</th>
<th>Family-Driven/Partnership</th>
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<td>• Parent peer support as part of treatment team and decision-making groups</td>
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<td>• Families part of hiring, training, policy development, and evaluation across entire organization</td>
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<td>• Families have leadership roles within the organization and on board of directors</td>
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<td>• Families initiate programs</td>
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[www.fredla.org](http://www.fredla.org)
“Certified Family Peer Specialists™ (CFPS) can articulate lessons learned from their own lived experience parenting a child (youth or emerging adult) and have specialized training to assist and empower families raising children (youth and emerging adults) who experience emotional, developmental, behavioral, substance use, or mental health concerns. They partner with child and family serving systems to improve family outcomes and strive to eliminate prejudice and discrimination.

Additionally, CFPSs™ assist families and youth to bring their voice to the service delivery, planning and evaluation process of public and private supports and services for children, youth and young adults.”
Defining the Role of a Family Peer Specialist

**Focus:** Empower families to advocate for their children

**Scope of Service:** Supporting and assisting families to navigate multiple agencies and systems

Strength-based and established on mutual learning from common lived experience and coaching that:

- promotes wellness, trust, and hope
- ↑ communication, informed decision making, and self-determination
- identifies and develops advocacy skills
- coaches parenting, self-care, and wellness/recovery skills
- increases access to community resources and the use of formal and natural supports
- reduces isolation families experience when facing behavioral health challenges

[https://www.ffcmh.org/certification](https://www.ffcmh.org/certification)
SAMHSA’s Four Types of Support:
1. Emotional
2. Informational
3. Affiliation
4. Instrumental
https://youtu.be/sAQfzHBpRsc
Family Culture and Stigma
Family Culture and Stigma
Culture—Why is it Important?

- Influences decisions
- Communication
- Role of professionals
- Traditions
- Learning
Key Concepts of Peer Support

- **Trauma-informed** - CRPS recognizes that individuals may have experienced trauma in their past and that our words should not traumatize those we are supporting.

- **Resiliency** - CRPS models strength and resiliency and recognizes that our language helps to support a positive mindset.

- **Hope** - CRPS can help instill hope in others through sharing their lived experience in recovery and through their words can support individuals as they embark on their own journeys of recovery.

- **Person-driven** - CRPS supports an individual’s pathway to recovery by decreasing stigma by utilizing strengths-based, person-centered language.

SAMHSA, 2021
Systemic Opportunities for the Delivery of Family Peer-based Services

- Department of Education
  - IEP/504 plan advocacy
  - Bridge communication
- Child Welfare
  - Advocacy around parent/child rights
  - Bridge communication between community partners
  - Foster Care
  - Adoption
- Behavioral Health
  - Education and support around behavioral health conditions
  - Advocacy around appropriate, family driven, youth guided treatment
- Judicial System
What Do Peer Support Providers Do?

Peer Support Providers Offer:

• Emotional connection of people who have “been there”
• Informational and educational support on systems and strategies
• Support for parents as they develop positive approaches and methods for addressing their family’s day-to-day needs, including their own needs for self-care
• Concrete support, such as modeling arranging childcare or transportation
• Living proof of resilience and recovery

SAMHSA, BRSS TACS
Common Services of Peer Support Providers:

- Information and referral
- Individualized supports to help parents understand their children’s needs and access natural supports
- Support groups
- Parent education to increase knowledge and skills
- System navigation to assist a family in finding or accessing resources
- Intensive family support during periods of crisis
- Specialized supports for families experiencing challenges with systems such as child welfare, juvenile courts, or schools
- Social activities and events to bring families together, raise awareness, or offer educational opportunities
Parent Peer Support Provider Roles

Parent peer support (PPS) is a caregiver to caregiver approach to supporting families caring for children, youth and young adults with mental health or substance use challenges. PPS is provided by a parent or caregiver with lived experience who is trained to assist other families by providing support, identifying resources, and facilitating access to services for the child and family. PPS can be offered individually or as part of a team.

Parent peer support is a critical component of a system of care for children and youth, builds effective engagement and can facilitate more positive outcomes for a family. This unique workforce can be found in a variety of settings including: family-run organizations, mental health centers, foster care programs, juvenile courts, emergency rooms, schools, state and local government entities, and residential treatment programs. PPS positions are typically funded through federal and state funds, contracts, grants and Medicaid.

PPS Providers have roles at all levels of service intensity, from community outreach to inpatient hospitalization, infusing family voice and family support at all levels.

**Least Intensity Level Services**
- Education, information and referral
- Peer supervision and program management
- Policy-making and advocacy
- Data collection and evaluation

**Low Intensity Level Services**
- Training
- Support groups
- Information and referral
- Intake
- Peer supervision and program management
- Data collection and evaluation
- Policy-making and advocacy

**Medium Intensity Level Services**
- Individual advocacy, information and system navigation, intake and assessment
- Parent peer support (individual and/or team)
- Care coordination
- Training
- Support groups
- Respite and crisis planning
- Peer supervision and program management
- Policy-making and advocacy
- Data collection and evaluation

**High Intensity Level Services**
- Partner in intensive in home services (such as High Fidelity Wraparound, HomeBuilders, etc.)
- Parent peer support (part of a treatment team or additional service) in hospitals, residential treatment programs and emergency rooms
- Respite and crisis planning
- Training
- Support groups
- Peer supervision and program management
- Policy-making and advocacy
- Data collection and evaluation
Peer Support Interventions

- Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP)
- Whole Health and Wellness (WHAM)
- Recovery Capital Scale (RC)
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale (ACES)
- Protective Factors Groups
- Invitation to Change
- Family Assessment of Needs and Strengths (FANS)
- Motivational Interviewing
- Goal Setting
Strategies to Maximize the Value of the Peer Role

- Organizational readiness
- Reflective supervision
- Strengths-based feedback
- Modeling boundaries
- Understanding vicarious/secondary trauma
- Support plans in place with Human Resources
- Teamwork makes the dreamwork (keep your peer included)
- Workforce development opportunities
Recruitment

• Families receiving services
• Families that have transitioned out of services
• Strategic interviewing
• Recovery community organizations
• Through NAMI and other mental health affiliates
• Peer Support Coalition of Florida
• Local family support organizations
Recruitment

- Advertising may be nontraditional and creative
- Family friendly recruitment materials
- Program information sheets
- Use social media
- Be clear about funding, if position is grant funded or billed to Medicaid - explain what that means
- Be clear about how to support the role
- Be clear about supervision and a career ladder
- Be flexible
- Family peer specialists will need training and coaching. Do not assume intuitional skills are enough
- Be sure the role is clearly defined
- Be clear about qualifications
Be Clear About Qualifications

Sample Job Posting:

I'm the parent of a child with emotional or behavioral challenges and have learned to navigate the system with my own child. I am able to use my own lived experience to support another parent and provide hope and guidance to other families through similar challenging circumstances. I stand committed to ensuring that other parents have a voice in their child’s care and are active participants in the healing process. Having experienced the stigma and isolation that raising a child with mental health challenges brings, I am able to connect other parents to resources and supports that build on their strengths and interests.

Make sure all qualifications are met. The candidate will need skill sets to maintain files, develop documentation, and other general office duties that are necessary. Do not assume a person has the ability to perform any task.
Mistakes to Avoid

- Making family support a specialty service
- Creating an assistant class
- Failing to hire family members in this role
- Confusing agreement and understanding
- Family peer support specialists as parent correctors
- Family peer support specialist as ultimate role model

- Turning family peer support specialists into youth workers
- Family peer support specialist as decoration
- Confusing personalities and skills
- Stopping at one
- Family peer support specialists as the values police
Research Findings

- **Increased sense of collaboration:** Receiving skills training and support from parent support providers helps family members collaborate effectively with treatment professionals. (Hoagwood, et al., 2010)

- **Increased empowerment to take action:** Receiving education about service systems, navigation skills, advocacy skills, and rights helps empower families to become active participants in their child’s services. (Kutash, Duchnowski, Green, & Ferron, 2011)

- **Increased sense of self-efficacy:** Family support services increase family members’ confidence in their abilities to care for their child. (Hoagwood et al., 2010; Obrochta et al., 2011)

- **Decreased family isolation:** Parent support providers assist family members with identifying and accessing community supports that help them feel less alone. (Obrochta et al., 2011)
Individual Outcomes

- Reduced caregiver stress.
- Progress made on family member goals satisfaction.
- Academic attendance and performance increased.
- Increased engagement.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of MH, systems, services, medications.
- Improved communication, quality of relationships.
- Less hours missed at work due to child’s needs.

National Federation of Families, 2008
System Outcomes

- Reduced silo thinking
- Reduced duplication of services
- Increased cross system communication
- Increased children in home-least restrictive care
- Increased family involvement

National Federation of Families, 2008
Resources


- Family Run Executive Director Leadership Association (FREDLA), https://www.fredla.org/

Resources


- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Home | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness


Resources

- Peer Recovery Support: A Bridge to Hope and Healing. Recoverreview.blog
- William White Papers | Chestnut Health Systems
Q & A