Changing the Power Structure: Peer Professionals in the Crisis System

AARON FOSTER, MA LAC CRC CRSS
RSA II, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
THE RECOVERY EDUCATION CENTER @ THE RI CAREER CENTER
Who am I?

- Student of Life (chef, restaurant consultant, data processor, personal assistant, legal secretary, production manager, ...) & frequent crisis center guest
- Counselor, Cactus Counseling (Domestic Violence, DUI Diversion, Mental Health & Drug Court – co-occurring)
- INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALIST & AUTHOR, The Recovery Support Specialist Institute Workforce Development Program & UofA RISE, University of Arizona
- RSA II, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, The Recovery Education Center @ The RI Career Center, RI International
The Value of Peers in the Crisis Setting

Immediate engagement
Mutuality
Focused Support
Lived Experience
Deeper Connection
Translate for the guest in interdisciplinary meetings
WHY IS POWER STRUCTURE SO IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTANDING THE PEER ROLE IN A CRISIS SETTING?
The Three Powers of Engagement in Relationships

Power Over
- Professional staff are experts
- Medication compliance and symptom reduction
- What is wrong with this person that got them here
- Disease-focused - fix the symptom
- Compliance is foremost

Power With (Fusion)
- Staff & guest share expertise
- Relationship is the key; maintaining safe environment for guest & staff
- Trauma Informed environment: socially & physically
- Future-focused - short term goals and meaning & purpose

Power Within
- Guest leaves with resources to re-integrate into the community
- Guest maintains relationship with peer specialists and recovery coaches until reconnection with healthy support system
- Guest becomes student of their recovery and explore their unique path
- Life-long learning and self-efficacy reign

Destroys  |  Creates  |  Transforms
The Fusion Model in Action

The Fusion Model:
Retreat/Living Room
+ Community Impact

Your job is to identify as many peer roles as you can from this video.

Think outside the box.

https://youtu.be/StM9F57fwAc?list=PLidjbeaMxncp1dPDMG1niWOzhb1ympUA
What roles did you see?

- Greeter
- Registration
- Individual Service Planning
- Support during Psych nurse meeting – Translator
- Navigator – services during and after crisis stay
- Painter
- Nurse
- Doctor
- Care-Coordinator – Liaison
- Counselor
  - FUSION
- Incorporation at all levels
- Over ½ of ALL staff are people of lived experience
That is a lot of diversity to supervise
Keys to Supervision of Peers

- Peers are employees just as any other employee: **Peers are not given special accommodations because of their lived experiences**
- Organizations must be aligned with recovery-oriented values: **Staff must be educated on the peer role; supervisors on the competencies**
- The nature of the peer relationship is unique: **Boundary issues and accountability are paramount during the supervision**
- Opportunity for professional growth, continuing education and research
Questions?

Thank you!

AARON FOSTER, MA LAC CRC CRSS
RSA II, Director of Education
Aaron.Foster@riinternational.com
602-650-1212