CONSUMER ADVISORY BOARDS: CREATING EFFECTIVE INTERNAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES
PRESENTERS

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This workshop focuses on how a consumer advisory board (CAB) and a governing board can enhance consumer engagement and leadership in governance on behalf of consumers of the HCH project and in the community.

Different models for CABs and governing boards will be discussed, including real-life challenges and achievements.

We will also discuss how organizations can provide support to ensure the effectiveness of consumer engagement.
IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMERS ON ADVISORY AND GOVERNING BOARDS

“The only way to affect change in policy is to be part of the conversation”

• Help decision-makers understand the needs of consumers from the consumer point of view.
• Monitor HCH project performance and challenge decision-makers to consider consumer-driven options for health care delivery.
• Increase consumer confidence in making a difference
• Keep governing boards focused on the needs of the special population that homeless and formerly homeless consumers represent.
Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act:

• The governing board is composed of a majority of individuals being served by the center

• If your health center is a 330(h), or HCH center, waivers to the “consumer” majority rule can be requested, but consumer participation in governance is still required.
WAYS TO FACILITATE CONSUMER REPRESENTATION

• Include consumers or former consumers on the project’s governing board
• Conduct consumer satisfaction surveys
• Create regularly constituted focus groups
• Create a separate Consumer Advisory Board
CONSUMER ADVISORY BOARDS
WHAT IS A CAB?

A group of homeless and/or formerly homeless individuals, advocates, providers, and community members brought together to improve services and delivery of care at their Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) project.
PURPOSE OF A CAB

• Monitor HCH project performance and challenge decision-makers to consider consumer-driven options for health care delivery.

• Help the Center recognize its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges in accomplishing its mission.

• Keep governing boards focused on the needs of the special population that homeless and formerly homeless consumers represent.

• Advocate for consumers with respect to services at the Health Center.
KEY ROLE OF CAB: Enabling feedback loop
**CAB ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCH Services</td>
<td>• Reviews and recommends program services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Feedback</td>
<td>• Solicits and communicates suggestions and grievances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Awareness</td>
<td>• Organize or speak at community events or forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>• Advocate throughout community for rights of consumers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CAB STRUCTURE AND BYLAWS

- Name and Purpose of Board
- Membership and Terms
- Officers and Responsibilities
- Meetings and committees
- Decision – Making Process
- Code of Ethics

National Healthcare for the Homeless Council
MEMBERSHIP

Important Questions
• Who is eligible for the CAB?
• How many members should be on the CAB?

Your CAB should reflect the diversity in your HCH community:
- People who are currently and formerly homeless
- People who currently or have used the clinic’s services
- Recommendations from project staff and inclusive of all the project’s services
CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

Consensus aims to find a proposal that all members can support and no member opposes. Consensus is not a majority vote. Consensus is based on compromise, and the ability to find common ground.

Consensus requires:

- time
- active participation of all members
- communication skills
  - listening, conflict resolution, discussion facilitation
- creative thinking and open-mindedness

NCAB Recommendation
ENGAGING THE CONSUMER VOICE AT CAB MEETINGS

• Be mindful of task and process/relationship goals
• Summarize key points and clarifying understanding
• Set ground rules and guidelines for conduct
• Ensure all voices are heard
• Be aware of personal and group dynamics
• Pay attention to non-verbal cues
• Listen to understand, not to respond
CONSUMERS ON GOVERNING BOARDS
GOVERNING BOARDS

- Approves the operating budget, and scope of service.
- Establishes and evaluates Health Center policies.
- Monitor and evaluate Health Center activities.
- Helps establish HCH project program priorities.
- Regularly evaluate the CEO/Executive Director
Governing Boards

Governing Board makes decisions

Includes professional experts, community stakeholders and sample of population served

Advisory Boards

An Advisory Board offers recommendations to decision-makers

Representative sample of population served
CONSUMERS IN GOVERNANCE
CONSUMER LEADER GUIDELINES

DO’S

• Know the HCH’s mission, goals, programs and services
• Get all the information before making a decision
• Pitch in Enthusiastically
• Come to meetings prepared to participate

DON’T’S

• Lose your sense of humor!
• Speak for anyone else
• Ask staff for special favors
• Hold grudges with other members based on voting
CAB’S NOT ONLY PROVIDE SPACE FOR CONSUMER INPUT BUT ALSO OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP SKILLS FOR ADVOCACY ON PERSONAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND SOCIETAL LEVELS
CABS Provide Valuable Experiential Learning
LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Interpersonal Skills
- Communication and Empathy
- Understanding and Cooperation

Creativity and Analytical Skills
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Project Management and Delegation

Functional Knowledge
- Mission, Goals, Resource Management
- Strengths and Needs Assessment
PERSONAL GROWTH

• Empowerment through engaging with the decision making process

• Can increase confidence in our abilities to make a difference and affect change
PEER SUPPORT

• CAB’s allow members to see the connection of their struggle with the struggles of others

• We can build on this empathy and understanding to better understand how we can support one another in the struggle
CHALLENGES TO CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

- Priorities of meeting basic needs
- Possible disengagement from systems
- Frustration with previous attempts to advocate
- Comfort telling your own story
- Overcoming stigma, fear and shame
- Education on policies, history and systems context
BENEFITS OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Authentic voices of those directly impacted
Facilitates direct conversation
Builds self-esteem, confidence, sense of worth
Instills sense of purpose and community
Demonstrates value of participation
Improves engagement with care and health
CREATING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS FOR CABS
ONE MORE TIME.. WHY CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT?

- Honors the dignity and rights of people experiencing homelessness, consistent with the missions of HCH
- Grounds decisions in the realities of people experiencing homelessness based on real perspectives and information to improve services and service delivery
- Breaks down social barriers
- Satisfies funders and legal requirements
INTENTION, PLANNING, STRUCTURE, STAFFING, AND BUDGET ARE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

• Conduct conversations with consumers and staff in developing the structure
• Create mechanisms for incorporating the CAB into the decision-making process
• Identify necessary organizational supports
• Gather feedback and ensure buy-in from all
• Implement and evaluate regularly
NECESSARY ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS

- **Resources for meetings**
  - Consider transportation, meals, meeting space

- **Staff support**
  - Staff can share their knowledge, model trauma-informed behaviors and communication skills, and provide feedback

- **Space and resources for training**
  - Invite consumers to participate in organizational trainings or provide opportunities for clinicians to train consumers and share their skills
CONSUMER ADVISORY BOARDS ARE MEANT TO BE CONSUMER LED. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR STAFF SUPPORT TO GIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND SPACE FOR CONSUMERS TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN SKILLS, FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS, AND ORGANIZE THE GROUP.
WAYS HCH PROJECTS CAN HELP CONSUMERS DEVELOP SKILLS

- Training
  - Communication, Conflict Resolution, Trauma Informed Care, Cultural Humility
- Mentoring/Peer Support
- Opportunities to practice skills
  - Organizing events, managing projects, leading groups
- Taking advantage of NHCHC resources and trainings
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS