From Recuperation to Life-Long Leadership: Consumer Governance in Medical Respite

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Disclaimer

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Presenters

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• Joseph Funn, Consumer Leader
Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to...

• Identify barriers to consumer engagement in Medical Respite programs
• Discuss the organizational structures and supports that are needed for consumer engagement in organizational governance
• Name 3 strategies for developing consumer engagement in governance at my Medical Respite program
What is Consumer Engagement in Governance?

• Inviting consumers to participate in the governance structures of the organization to help shape policies, procedures, and service delivery.

• Moving beyond passive feedback mechanisms towards developing proactive partnerships that bring consumers to the decision-making table.
# Consumer Advisory Boards

A group of homeless and/or formerly homeless individuals, advocates, providers, and community members brought together to improve services and delivery of care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>HCH Services</td>
<td>•Reviews and recommends program services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer Feedback</td>
<td>•Solicits and communicates suggestions and grievances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education and Awareness</td>
<td>•Organizes or speaks at community events or forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>•Advocates throughout community for rights of consumers</td>
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Why Engage Consumers in Governance?

• Helps decision-makers understand the needs and experiences of consumers from the consumer point of view.

• Keeps governing boards focused on the needs of the special population

• Supports our values of client self-determination and inclusion

• Combines feedback mechanisms with critical leadership development
Organizational Considerations

- Building consumer leadership and a supportive organizational structure takes time, resources, and energy.
  - Make sure to consider the direct and indirect costs (staff time and resources for recruitment, training, and management).
  - Needs both administrative and leadership development support.
- Feedback cannot go into a black hole
  - The organization needs to develop a feedback loop for the consumer engagement mechanism so consumer’s know what is done with their contributions.
# Developing Consumer Engagement

## Planning
- Engage community
- Define mission
- Assess organization
- Define volunteer positions
- Develop implementation plan

## Recruiting
- Assess image
- Consider volunteer motivations
- Develop recruitment plan
- Develop message
- Find and select volunteers

## Training
- Determine necessary knowledge or skills for position
- Develop orientation program and materials
- Schedule and conduct orientation

## Managing
- Assign a staff liaison
- Communicate regularly with volunteers
- Provide ongoing training
- Avoid volunteer burnout
- Recognize volunteer efforts

## Evaluating
- Design the evaluation
- Collect data
- Analyze results
- Report results
Consumer Considerations

• Environments, meetings, and interactions must ensure dignity, create safety, and foster empathy through a trauma-informed lens.
  • Nurture a non-judgmental and open-minded approach
  • Attend to emotions and the emotional climate of meetings
  • Cultivate relationships within the group
• Find ways to share power with consumer leaders.
  • Develop opportunities for consumer leaders to guide the work and enhance their skills.
Recruitment

• Relationships are critical for successful recruitment
  • Find out about people’s interests, passions, goals, and skills. Connect those to the opportunities to engage.

• Volunteers give their time to organizations they consider valuable and where they can make a difference.
  • When developing a plan and message, consider why volunteers should give their time to the organization.

• Advertise and promote these opportunities often and in a variety of ways.
Recruitment Ideas

- Get recommendations from providers, community partners, current consumer leaders, or leaders in the community with the lived experience.
  - Behavioral health or case management providers who spend the most time with clients may be able to gauge consumers' core values or potential for key skills.
- Promote opportunities at other client groups and all site locations.
- Post flyers
- Have current consumer leaders engage do ‘in-reach' by talking to consumers to build relationships and invite them to future meetings.
- Use feedback mechanisms to recruit participants from focus groups and listening sessions.
  - Consider topic-based focus groups so people can plug into discussions they are interested in.
  - Use current consumer leaders to facilitate these sessions to develop spaces for new attendees to feel comfortable in, and build leadership development for current members.
Overcoming Challenges

• Limited funding means that priority goes to client care.
  • Creating time and space now for improvement or consumer engagement can help to improve clinic flow or develop spokespeople to help with funders.

• Programs may have consumers in different locations, making it difficult to build community or find a common meeting space that current and former clients are comfortable accessing.
  • Developing community space for staff and consumers to connect helps to fulfill our emotional needs and can help consumers heal from trauma.
Success Strategies

• Short-term services and acute care focus on immediate well-being and can make it difficult to form long-term relationships
  • Build relationships when people start at the program, and maintain relationships with alumni. Let alumni know about the engagement options when they leave.

• Having limited staff makes it difficult to provide the necessary support
  • Encourage all staff to have conversations with their clients about the structural causes of housing and health injustice.
Respites within larger organizations

Challenges:

• We have a staff person who is dedicated to client engagement, but their time is split over four sites.

• Respite is different than all of our other services. The rest of our services are based on an outpatient model.
  • For instance, our client survey is based on questions about outpatient care.

• Respite clients may not stay connected to our services after discharge.
Respites within larger organizations (cont’d)

Solutions:
• Make client engagement a project for interns
• Weekly residents’ meeting.
  • Invite client engagement staff and agency client representatives to a residents meeting once a month.
• Integrate respite clients into ongoing consumer programing
  • Lobby day
  • Agency wide weekly client advocacy meetings
• Recruit agency wide board members from respite
Consumer Experience
Resources

• If You Build it, Will They Come? Recruiting and Retaining Consumers Experiencing Homelessness in Health Center Governance

• Quick Guide on Consumer Governance in HCH Programs

• Guidance for CAB Support Staff
  • Available at: https://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/cab-support-staff-guidance.pdf

• Consumer Advisory Board Manual