The Power of Peer Specialists in Wisconsin
Presented by...

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Learning Objectives

• Increase knowledge of what a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is in Wisconsin.
• Learn about the current state of the WI CPS Initiative is in terms of numbers certified, employment settings and target populations.
• Understand how a CPS can impact recovery outcomes for citizens in WI.
• Learn how becoming a CPS has impacted a life.
What is a Peer Specialist?

A Peer Specialist is a person who has not only lived the experience of mental illness but also has had formal training in the peer specialist model of mental health supports. They use their unique set of recovery experiences in combination with solid skills training to support peers who have mental illness. Peer Specialists actively incorporate peer support into their work while working within an agencies team support structure as a defined part of the recovery team.
Where Peer Specialists are Employed...

- Emergency Rooms
- Crisis Services
- In and Outpatient Care
- Veteran’s Hospitals
- Supported Living Arrangements
- Prisons and Forensic Areas
- Community Resource Centers
- Drop In Centers and Clubhouses
- CSP-Community Support Program
- CCS-Comprehensive Community Services
- ADRC’s-Aging and Disability Resource Center
- Family Care

_January 2010 was Wisconsin’s first group of **Certified** Peer Specialists who passed the WI Competency Based Exam._
The Current State...

- As of March 2013 there are 259 Certified Peer Specialists in Wisconsin.
- They deliver peer support in many settings.
- They are able to support their peers in a person-centered and recovery oriented manner.
- There have been 11 exam rounds so far.
Process for becoming a CPS

• There are currently four approved training curricula.

• Upon successful completion of training, the person becomes eligible to sit for the exam.
  o The exam is hosted by UWM and proctored by the WI Centers for Independent Living.
  o Access to Independence, Inc. is the contracted agency that coordinates the CPS initiative.
Continuing certification...

- Certification is valid for two years from the month the person took the exam.
- 20 hours of on-going education is required to maintain certification
  - Cultural Competency
  - Ethics & Boundaries
  - Trauma
  - Peer Specialist Specific topics
  - Substance Use Disorders
Peer Specialists Improve Outcomes...

The positive consumer outcomes of Peer Specialists are well documented throughout the United States.

- **Traditional Care**
  - Hospital Stay
  - Avg. 8-10 days

- **When Peer Specialists are Team Members**
  - Avg. 4-5 days

- **A more successful Recovery process & Improved outcomes**
  - For the entire team!
A longitudinal study of 104 consumers found that clients who received services from teams with Peer Specialists, “posted the largest gains on 20 of 31 measures.” These effects were greatest in the areas of self image, outlook and social support.

Improved Outcomes...

Resnick and Rosenheck's study of 296 Veteran consumers found that those who worked with Peer Specialists showed superior outcomes on the Global Assessment of Functioning, Mental Health Confidence Scale and Activities of Daily Living Scale.

In a recovery-oriented system, mental health consumers rebuild meaningful lives while decreasing their dependence on the system. They participate in services that enable them to recover rather than become long-term users of the mental health system. From a therapeutic as well as an economic standpoint, this approach has great appeal.”

- Wisconsin’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Mental Health
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