Utilizing Peer Support to Increase Access to Mental Health Services

Peer Support · https://bridges4mentalhealth.org/hub/peer-support/utilizing-peer-support-to-increase-access-to-mental-health-services-2-2/

This resource provides an introduction to peer support. Parent Peer Support (PPS) leverages the lived experiences of caregivers to provide emotional and practical assistance to families navigating child welfare and mental health systems. PPS reduces isolation, enhances family well-being, and increases the likelihood of reunification, while also improving outcomes for child welfare agencies and staff. Recognized by CMS as an evidence-based practice, PPS is available nationwide and can be funded through Medicaid, state dollars, or grants.

Learn About Peer Support

National Center for Adoption Competent Mental Health Services

Building Bridges to Improve Mental Health

UTILIZING PEER SUPPORT TO INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

What is Peer Support?

States are increasingly exploring pathways to expand the workforce by incorporating roles that require less formal education. This shift addresses workforce shortages, increases access to mental health services, and creates opportunities for individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences. You can read more about this workforce expansion on the National Center Knowledge Hub. This resource highlights one such pathway: peer support. As of 2023, 49 states have formal credentials for peer professionals.

Mental Health America describes peer support "peer support creates spaces for individuals to feel less alone and learn from others who have faced similar challenges." Peer support is empowering to the individual and family. SAMHSA outlines the core principles of peer support:

- **Recovery-oriented**
- **Person-centered**
- **Voluntary**
- **Relationship-focused**
- **Trauma-informed**

Peer specialist roles typically exist in two areas: substance use and mental health recovery. In mental health, peer support specialists work in hospitals, mental health clinics, primary care settings, and correctional facilities. The child welfare system also utilizes Parent Peer Support (PPS) Providers.

Parent Peer Support Providers are trained to use their lived experience as primary caregivers of children or youth with behavioral health needs to offer both emotional and practical support to other caregivers. They assist caregivers in navigating complex child-serving systems, accessing services that best fit their family, building parenting knowledge and skills, and fostering collaborative partnerships with professionals involved with their families.



Connect
Connect with the family through shared lived experience



Support
Reduce isolation, provide validation and foster resiliency



Navigate
Facilitate access to services and supports for the child and family



Train
Provide training for families, providers and communities



Engage
Engage in policy-making and advisory groups



Educate
Provide education, information, problem-solving and skill-building



Evaluate
Participate in evaluation, research and CQI activities



Advocate
Model effective advocacy and collaboration skills

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