



December 18, 2015

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RE: Vocational Peer Support Training Project

Dear Marianne,

I'm writing to update you regarding the implementation and use of Vocational Peer Support (VPS) at Promise Resource Network (PRN).

It's been about three months since Debbie Nicolellis' follow-up Implementation meetings, and four since the last day of on-site VPS training. As you know, PRN is a peer run and operated organization and though we did not require follow-up supervision regarding foundational recovery values or attitudes of optimism, we participated in supervision and follow-up supported by project staff that enhanced the use of VPS practice in trained staff.

Below you will find examples of how trained staff are using the skills, tools, and information gained from the Vocational Peer Support Training Program in their everyday work with just under 200 program participants.

Trained Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) staff use VPS skills as part of a Shelter Plus Care program. As this program works with people who have been homeless, and who are now living in shelters or who have just recently received stable housing, a big focus of the work done by these CPSS' surrounds inspiring people about work, supporting people to begin to imagine the types of work they may want to pursue, as well as to assist them to get connected to our IPS team if they need more in-depth support. We are currently serving 33 people in the Shelter Plus Care program.

Another CPSS who was trained in VPS skills works as an Employment Peer Mentor on our IPS team. She serves the 37 participants of IPS, if they want additional peer support, and scaffolds the work of the team as a whole. She supports people all along the continuum, from exploring motivational foundations, through choosing, getting and keeping work. She also supports people

who may be getting an immediate job for survival's sake while also exploring hopes and dreams to choose a future path to a more meaningful career.

Several of the trained peers offer general peer support within our "Recovery Hub," which serves 50 people. In this venue, they support people to consider work by sharing their own Vocational Recovery Stories, and may help people anywhere along the range of considering, choosing, getting and/or keeping work. In some cases, they may work collaboratively with the IPS team (sharing job leads, etc.) while, at other times, work totally independent from them.

Finally, VPS trained peers work as part of our partnership with the drug courts. Here, their VPS skills are utilized as people try to put together lives consistent with their choices as well as the mandates of the treatment court. This may include getting a job, adding treatment requirements despite having a job (which then changes the stress levels of the work), etc. Oftentimes, lived experience is vital in these situations where VPS-trained CPSS' use their Vocational Recovery Story to offer hope about working without the aid of substances, etc.

I think the greatest impact we have seen from having our CPSS' become knowledgeable and skilled in supporting vocational recovery is the overall employment-aware culture that has developed here at PRN. For example, our initial assessment includes inquiries around each of the domains of wellness, including employment. Prior to receiving the VPS training and ongoing support in its use, the exploration was often cursory; since the training, people have many more tools to engage people in meaningful conversations, even if only to plant seeds of hope for the future. This is just one of many examples that demonstrate how employment is no longer seen as an add-on by only a few people on an IPS team but, instead, a core component of wellness and recovery that is part of the fiber of the organizational culture that we promote and stand for.

Please feel free to call me should you have any questions, and thank you for the opportunity to bring this practice to PRN.

Sincerely,



Cherene Allen-Caraco
Executive Director
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