Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant

Missouri Certified Peer Specialist Program: Roles, Responsibilities, and Satisfaction

The Missouri Certified Peer Specialist Program is designed to formally train and certify persons with mental illness to provide services and supports to other consumers. Certified peer specialists (CPSs) work in mental health and substance abuse provider agencies and are trained to provide support to clients receiving services at an agency. As of April 2012, 144 CPSs have been trained and certified as a result of the Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant. This evaluation brief presents the roles and responsibilities CPSs have across the state.

Background

In 2011, on-line surveys were sent to 99 CPSs and their supervisors (62). The CPS survey explored employment, job duties/responsibilities, and work environment. The supervisor survey examined the perspective of the CPS program from the supervisor’s point of view.

The CPS Program places trained and credentialed individuals with lived experience in community mental health centers (CMHCs) and consumer operated service programs (COSPs) across the state. The purpose of the program is to advance the recovery of clients at these agencies by linking them with CPSs who provide support and guidance toward their individual recovery.

Key Findings

Overall, the Missouri CPS program was well received by peer specialists and agencies.

- CPSs found their work to be satisfying and enjoyed being able to help other consumers.

- The majority of supervisors found CPSs to be very helpful in their agencies.

- 100% of supervisors would like to continue to use CPSs.

- Although the CPS program is still relatively new in the state of Missouri, the positive trends are encouraging.

“Peer specialists greatly benefit our clients and staff. DMH needs to regard peer services as highly as they do ‘professional’ services”

– Peer Specialist Supervisor

“I have found that when I help others, I help myself.”

– Peer Specialist

“The greatest reward from my work is seeing someone find hope.”

– Peer Specialist
CPS Survey

- 53 CPSs responded (a response rate of 54%)
- 43.4% of those CPSs responding were employed part-time
- Potential loss of SSI/SSDI benefits was the most common barrier to working full time
- CPSs have a variety of different roles in agencies across the state; Table 1 shows the top five tasks performed by peer specialists

Table 1: Top 5 Tasks Performed by Peer Specialists* (n=53)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-on-One Peer Support Services</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitating Support Groups</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocating for Clients</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informational Peer Supports (contact with clients while engaging in leisure/recreational activities and storytelling)</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
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</tbody>
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*Participants were allowed to select more than one response

The survey also addressed the CPS/supervisor relationship. Figure 1 shows CPSs’ responses to questions about this relationship. The relationship of the CPS to the workplace was also of interest. Findings showed that:

- 75% of CPSs are satisfied (always and mostly) with their work
- CPSs feel the greatest reward for their work is helping others
- 48.6% of CPSs feel respected in the workplace
- The majority of CPSs believe their supervisor respects their work as a peer specialist

![Figure 1. Certified Peer Specialist and Supervisor Relationship (n=32*)](image)

*Responses reflect those CPSs working with a supervisor
CPS Supervisor Survey

- 33 supervisors responded (a response rate of 53%)
- They listed the most common activities performed by CPSs as:
  - One-on-one peer support services (90.9%)
  - Client advocacy (80.6%)
  - Identifying community resources (67.7%)
- Table 2 shows how helpful supervisors thought CPSs were in performing a variety of tasks
  - Supervisors felt CPSs were very helpful performing:
    - One-on-one peer support services (90.9%)
    - Community resource identification (74.1%)
    - Facilitating support groups (73.3%)

Table 2: Helpfulness of CPS Activities: Supervisor Responses (n=33*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Very helpful</th>
<th>Somewhat helpful</th>
<th>Not very helpful</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-on-One Peer Support Services</td>
<td>90.6 %</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Support Groups</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for Clients</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Resource Identification</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation Assistance</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Workshops</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Assistance</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Assistance</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Sample size ranges from 19 to 32
Respondents who indicated “Not a peer specialist activity” are not included in the table. “Not a peer specialist activity” responses ranged from 0% (one-on-one support services, advocating for clients) to 38.7% (housing assistance).

“Clinicians, administrators and veterans are beginning to understand recovery is possible.”

-- Peer Specialist Supervisor

Perception of Benefits When Using CPSs

- Supervisors have seen agency-wide changes since adopting the peer specialist program. Changes include:
  - Increased retention of clients and more buy-in from clients
  - Change in agency cultural, including being more person-centered
  - Improved client outcomes
  - Greater acceptance of consumers as part of the workforce
  - Showing that recovery is possible
- Peer specialists have found the program to be quite helpful in their own recovery
“The additional support for clients is great. Good for peer specialists to give back and teach others on what they have learned.”

-Peer Specialist Supervisor

Supervisor Recommendations for the CPS Program

Training
- Have more training for peer specialists, including refresher trainings and trainings on new topics

Funding
- Create more billable services to allow agencies to hire more than one more peer specialist

Role Clarification
- Clearly define the roles of CPSs

Supervision
- Devote time to weekly supervision

“The services are very valuable and have great potential to benefit many in need.”

-Peer Specialist Supervisor

Conclusion

The CPS program is well received by both the CPSs and their supervisors. Job tasks appear to be appropriate to the position. CPSs generally perceive the workplace as helpful and the relationship between CPSs and their supervisors are overall very positive.

Supervisors have seen agency-wide changes since adopting the peer specialist program, including increased retention and buy-in from clients, change in agency culture and more person-centered care, improved client outcomes, greater acceptance of consumers as part of the workforce, and showing that recovery is possible.

“Our agency has become much more recovery focused as a result of the peer specialists. Our support groups now have purpose and direction.”

-- Peer Specialist Supervisor