

CHAPTER 3

Section 3.5.1. Peer Supports Practice Guideline

Overview

“Peer supports” is a generic term that applies to a variety of services that may be provided by individuals with lived experience to assist other individuals recover a more independent life while living with a serious mental illness or developmental disability or substance abuse or some combination of the three. Nationally, other terms used to identify types of peer supports are: “consumer operated” or “consumer driven” or “consumer providers”. For the purpose of our NorthCare Peer Supports Practice Guideline, we are limiting our focus to two specific types of peer supports offered in Michigan. Under the Medicaid contract with the Michigan Department of Community Health, Community Mental Health (CMH) agencies are required to employ certified Peer Support Specialists (PSS) to work with individuals with serious mental illness. An individual receiving services is to be educated about the option of having a PSS as part of their treatment team and the person centered planning process is used to identify the medically necessary services that the PSS will provide. A second type of peer support is a Consumer Run Drop In Center which is a social/educational club in the community operated by a Board of Peers and staffed by peers with lived experience with mental illness. In the Upper Peninsula, all five CMH have Peer Support Specialists on their staff and there are seven Drop In Centers in the Upper Peninsula.

Section 3.5.2 outlines the national evidence for the efficacy of peer supports. Included are a research report by the Rand Company and a letter to the states outlining the commitment of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid to providing these treatment options. The third document allows the reader to examine how the state of Michigan ranks with other states in the U.S. in relation to providing services based on peer supports.

Section 3.5.3 contains the recently published (Spring 2011) SAMHSA Toolkit for providing Consumer Operated services. The toolkit consists of eight separate documents and they may be used as a whole package or parts used as applicable to the local site. Consumer Operated services (COS) covers a large array of potential services and if the reader is just learning about this area, [Building Your Own Program](#) is a good introduction to the topic. Also in this section is the Michigan specific manual on Consumer Run Drop Ins that was carefully researched and validated by Dr Carol Mowbray and her assistants. A fidelity review model was developed and validated based on the manual.

Section 3.5.4 focuses on the specific Peers Support Specialist (PSS) services developed in the state of Michigan in 2005/2006. While MDCH developed a Medicaid service definition for Peer operated services (see 3.5.4.A), they did not prepare a statewide protocol or guideline for hiring, training, supervising and evaluating PSS services. In 2010, a NorthCare workgroup composed of PSS, clinical supervisors, Human Resources Directors and NorthCare staff developed a draft NorthCare Policy and Guideline for PSS. After a thorough review process, the guideline was adopted by the CEO of NorthCare Network and the five CMHs.