Service User Participation and Peer Support

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Welcome!

• Who are you and what brought you here?
• Who am I and what brought me here?
Agenda

- What is service user participation? What is peer support?
- Why participation and peer support?
- How do service users participate?
- What are some of the challenges to service user participation and peer support?
- What are some strategies to face those challenges?
- How do organizations encourage service user participation and peer support?
Service user participation

• Meaningful engagement of those receiving services in the planning, provision and assessment of services

• Requires:
  • Willingness to learn
  • Respect for life experience
  • Partnership with those who may not share our perspectives
  • Openness to different perspectives and life experiences
Peer Support

• Similar life experiences
• Person with lived experience
• Peer
## Types and location of peer support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim: Mutual Aid</th>
<th>Peer-controlled</th>
<th>Non peer-controlled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-help groups</td>
<td>Peer initiatives</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim: Service Provision</th>
<th>Peer-run services</th>
<th>Peer employees</th>
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</table>
Discussion

• Does your organization support the idea of service user participation?
• Why/why not?
## Why service user participation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Customer service perspectives</th>
<th>Social justice perspectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service user</strong></td>
<td>May reinforce their own growth&lt;br&gt;Increase self esteem&lt;br&gt;Source of income</td>
<td>Experiential knowledge valued&lt;br&gt;Change relationship/power dynamic?&lt;br&gt;Social inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>More responsive&lt;br&gt;More creative&lt;br&gt;More diverse&lt;br&gt;Increasingly required by funders/accreditors&lt;br&gt;Better employees*</td>
<td>Learn from those with very different perspectives...learn how to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systemic</strong></td>
<td>Advocates for system change</td>
<td>Fight stigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share power&lt;br&gt;Challenge knowledge</td>
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Why service user participation?

• In a study of Ontario mental health organizations, 70-83% said increasing participation would improve services.

(See Grant, 2007)
Outcomes of peer support

• When effectively administered and supported:
  • Equally effective or more effective (functioning, symptoms, quality of life, social network, length between hospitalizations, strength of helping relationship) (e.g. Walker & Bryant, 2013)
  • Additive effect (e.g. Doherty, Craig, Attafua, Boocock, & Jamieson-Craig, 2004)
  • Particularly positive: relationship, issue identification, empathy, hope
  • (e.g. Grant, 2006; Shaw, 2014; Walker & Bryant, 2013)
Discussion

• How do service users participate in your organization?
• What roles have you envisioned?
How do service users participate?

- Mogulof (1974)
  - Advisory
- Coalition
- Adversarial
How do service users participate?

• Planning
• Boards/Advisory Committees
• Policy creation
• Evaluation
• Staff training
• Staff hiring
• Employment
• Others?
Some potential dangers

• Tokenism

• Cooptation
Challenges to service user participation

- Discrimination (stereotypes, judgements, practical barriers...)$)*
- Front line staff may feel threatened
- Lack of training for front line staff
- Power relations
- Lack of resources
- Lack of changes to accommodate and encourage participation
- Burnout if we always ask the same people
- Often ask those who are most like us, while that may be the opposite of what would be most helpful

J Grant, University of Windsor
Strategies for facing challenges

Create the context

• Ask key questions:
  • Why are you encouraging participation?
  • Are you willing to grow and learn?
  • Are you willing to be challenged?
  • Are you able to see the value?
• Educate and support front line staff
• Provide strong leadership
• Celebrate strengths of service users
• Trust service users
Strategies for facing challenges

Set up service users for success

• Train service users

• Make it manageable
  • Is there a cost for service users (transportation, childcare, etc.)?
  • Minimal jargon
  • Reasonable length

• Make it flexible (“accommodations” are good for everyone)
  • breaks
  • accessible exits
  • refreshments
Strategies for facing challenges

Value and support service users

• Never just one
• Catch yourself explaining....try to learn, not to change the service user
• Recognize contributions
• Provide debriefing opportunities: perhaps peer support?
Discussion

• How do you encourage the participation of service users?
What do other organizations do?

- Clear, strong leadership that values service user participation
- Start small
- Ask input before decisions are made
- Invite and highlight why
- Clearly and honestly describe role, lines of communication
- Separate advisory committee?
- Be careful of burnout: don’t always ask the same person/people (who may not be the ones you could learn the most from)
- Service user reps on all committees
- Evaluation: what would service users ask?
Your plan

• What?
• Why?
• Champions?
• Barriers?
• Strategies?
• Resources?
References