

Outline

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- Discussion and Conclusions
- Implications for Public Health

Research Question and Objectives

What are the key elements of peer support programs, and how do they facilitate success in recovery and reentry?

- Highlight the key foundational components of peer support programs, encompassing staffing, funding, leadership, partnerships, resources, and unique approaches from Wisconsin-based community organizations.
- Identify and analyze contextual barriers and facilitators that impact the success of peer support programs.
- Contribute actionable insights to the development and delivery of peer support programs focused on recovery and reentry.

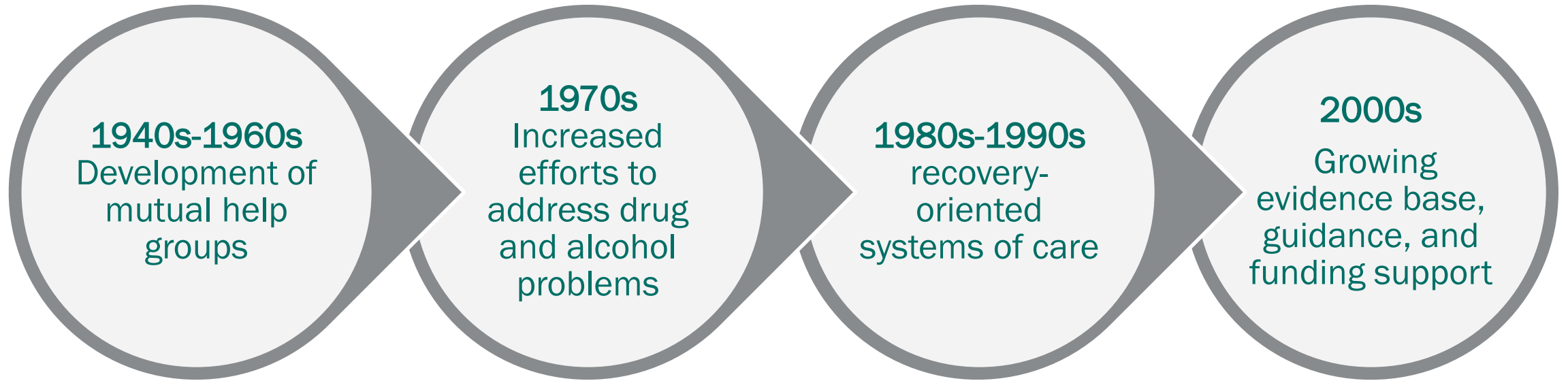
Peer Support



Individuals with lived experience that provide support to others who are struggling.



Introduction



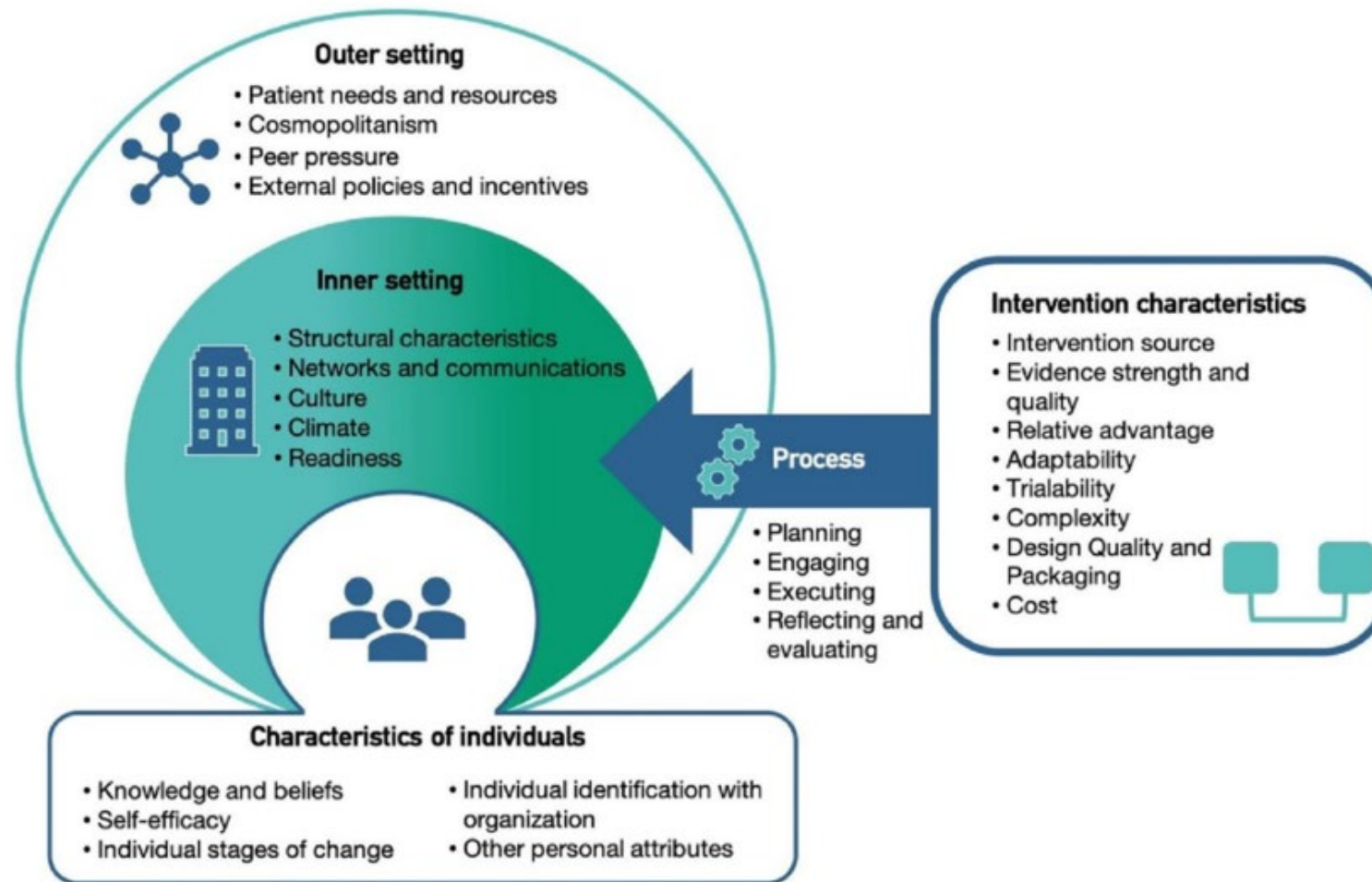
Increased formalization of the role, credentialing process, and legitimacy

Introduction

- 30,000 Peer Mentors in the United States
- Work in a variety of settings
- Medicaid expansion in 2007 – reimbursement for peer support
- Wisconsin began covering peer support in 2021
- Wisconsin State Certification: Certified Peer Specialist available since 2010
 - Substance use and mental health
 - Parent peer specialist



Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR)



Source: <https://thecenterforimplementation.com/implementation-in-action-bulletin/mar-2021>

Review of the Literature

- ~Two million individuals incarcerated in jails and prisons
 - 3.9 million under community supervision
- Black people incarcerated in prison at 4.8x the rate of White people
- 65% of US prison population meets criteria for substance use disorder
- Rate of overdose is 10x greater among those recently released from prison
 - First two weeks after release have most elevated risk

Review of the Literature

Reentry:

- Peer support helps to connect clients with resources such as housing and employment
- Lower odds of recidivism and decreased probation and parole status
- Reduced stigma, higher self-esteem, psychological well-being
- Positive social support, help navigate challenges



Review of the Literature

Recovery:

- Increased drug and alcohol abstinence, improved housing stability, reduced Emergency Department admissions, reduced anxiety, and improved treatment adherence
- Reduction in relapse and individuals returning to homelessness, reduced cravings, increase in self-efficacy, improved perception of community affiliation

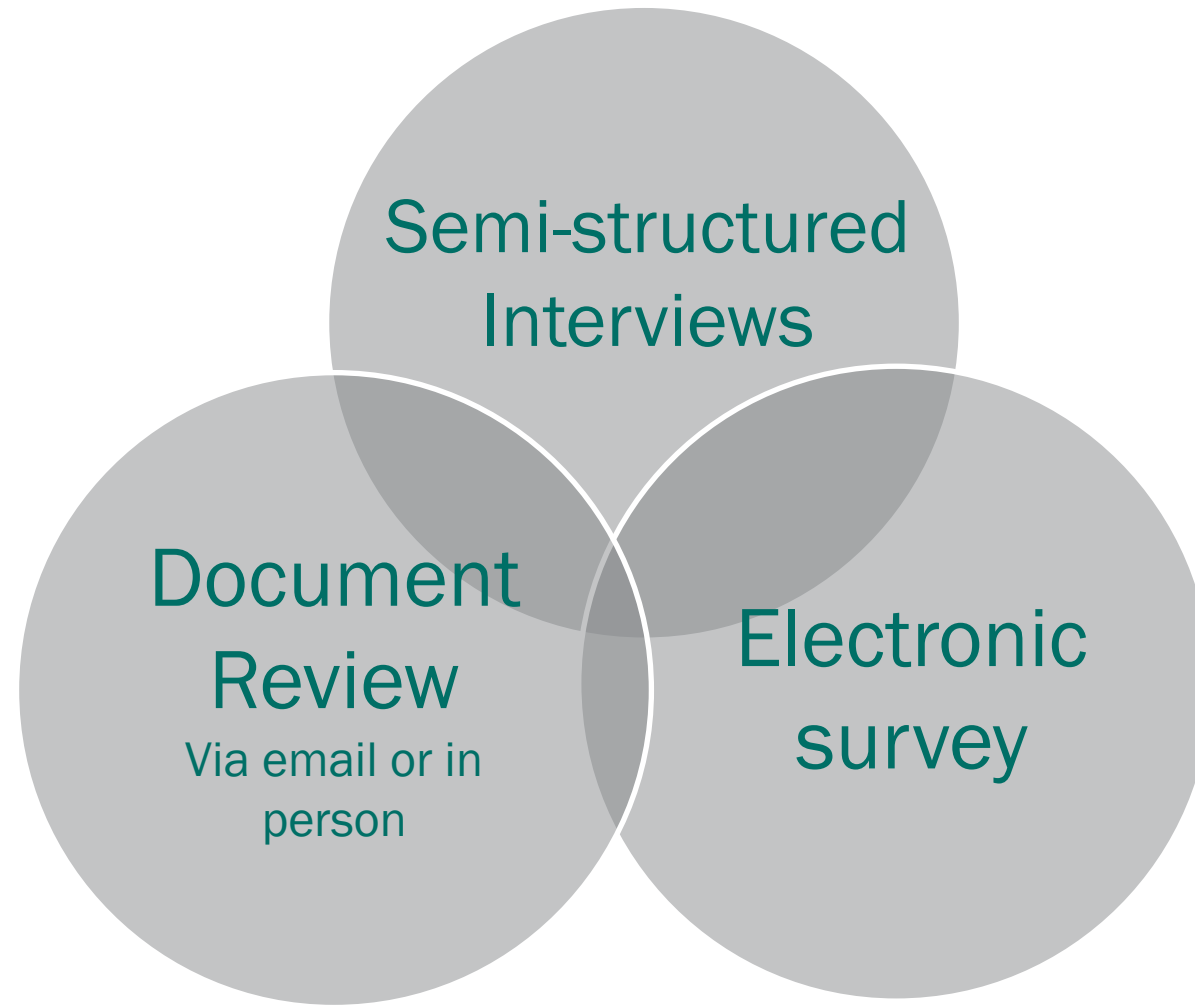


Methods – Study population



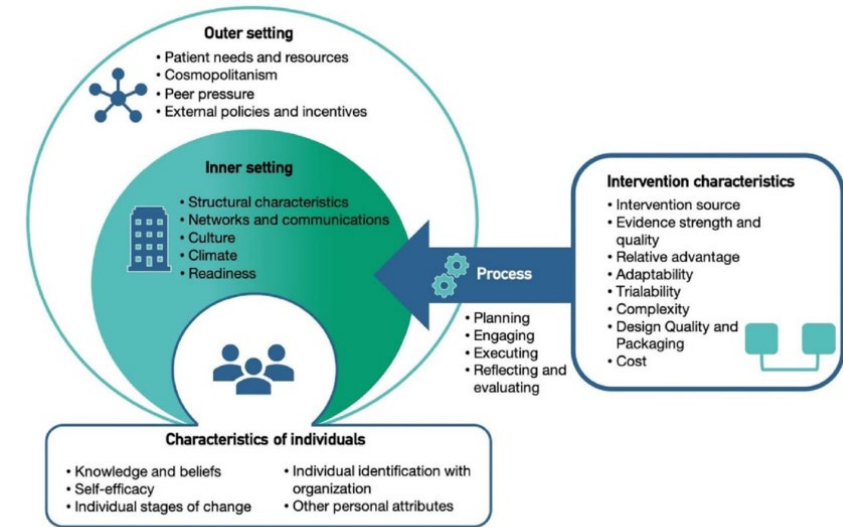
- The study was completed in fall 2023 and spring 2024
- 7 Wisconsin community-based organizations participated
- 20 participants, all held leadership position related to peer support program
 - Program Administrators and Program staff
- 2-4 participants from each organization

Methods – Data Collection



Methods – Data Analysis

- Framework approach using the CFIR
- Qualitative data analyzed using template analysis, a style of thematic analysis
 - *A priori* codes (predefined)
- Coding of eight diverse transcripts was completed using the *a priori* coding template
 - Codes were modified based on the data and some new codes developed
 - Code definitions were developed
 - Feedback on the codebook was provided by the community expert and modifications made to the codebook
 - Final codebook applied to all transcripts



Results - Survey

Organization	Year Organization was founded	# of years w/ peer support mentors	# of Peer mentors employed	# of Clients assigned to each peer mentor	Program Funding Source
1	2020	4	65	3-8	Contracts Medicaid
2	2008	16	20	10+	Grants Medicaid
3	2013	10	3	Varies	Contracts Grants
4	1963	14	6	7-10	Grants Medicaid
5	2018	0	2	One	Grants Private
6	2021	3	4	N/A	Contracts
7	1912	10	50+	12-14	Contracts Grants Medicaid Private

Results – CFIR Rating System

- Assigned + or –
 - + Factor contributed to the facilitation of implementation
 - - Factor hindered implementation
 - 0 indicated neutral influence
 - M for missing data
- Strength component 1 to 2, based on level of agreement, the use of examples, and the level of emphasis participants gave to the construct

M, -2, -1, 0, +1, +2

Results - Codes and Themes

- Partnerships and Connections
- Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)
- Financing

External Components

- Internal Communication
- Reporting and Oversight
- Mentor Client Interactions
- Organizational culture

Relationships

- Success as a leader
- Characteristics of Peer Mentors
- Impact of Program on Staff
- Adapting

Program Implementers

- Program structure and Governance
- Training
- Program Development
- Referral and Initial Connection to Organization

Program Structure

Results - Codes and Themes

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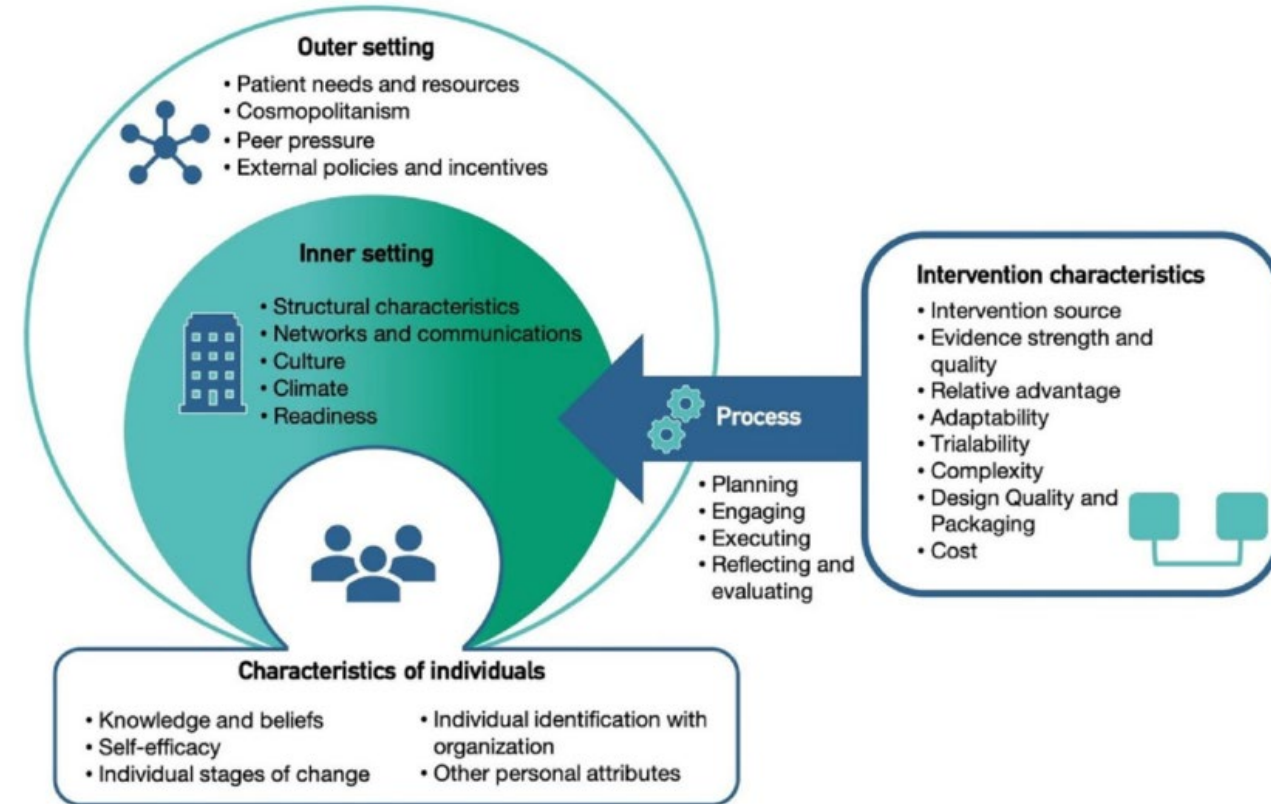
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Program Structure



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Results

- Partnerships and Connections
- Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)
- Financing

External Components

Partnerships and connections with outside organizations expand the knowledge and network

- Conferences
- Events
- Online Trainings
- Professional organizations
 - Peer Excellence Academy
 - Wisconsin Peer Specialists

“I get in the community to establish partnerships with other agencies to kind of see what services we can offer them based on what we have and how they might be able to come in and help us.” Program Administrator 7

Results

- Partnerships and Connections
- Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)
- Financing

External Components

Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) is a program that reimburses for peer support through Medicaid. CCS also offers supportive services that assist clients with securing employment, housing, insurance, and more.

- Care coordinator provides referrals
- Established structure reporting system
- Facilitated by each county

“There are a lot of CCS providers that do peer support statewide. I would say that Milwaukee County has the largest number of peer supports and they also probably have the most well established system.” Program Administrator 8

Results

- Partnerships and Connections
- Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)
- Financing

External Components

Financing for peer support often uses a multi-layered funding structure

- Medicaid
- Contracts
- Grants
- Private donations
- Other revenue

“We stay in one space...we’re doing peer support. So our grants are geared just for that. Nothing else.”

Program Administrator 3

Results

- **Internal Communication**

- Reporting and Oversight
- Mentor Client Interactions
- Organizational culture

Relationships

Consistent **internal communication** among the staff is a key to successful program implementation. Smaller organizations reported frequent informal communications. Larger organizations use more structured communication methods

- Staff meetings
- Informal and scheduled check-ins
- Emails

“We all work in the same office. So we all learn from each other... Our team is really, really open and we’re here for each other.” Program Staff 3

Results

- Internal Communication
- Reporting and Oversight
- Mentor Client Interactions
- Organizational culture

Relationships

Staff look to leaders for clear **reporting** guidelines and **oversight**. Leaders provide guidance, resources, and training opportunities.

- Meetings – personal or professional guidance
- Clinical oversight
- Promote opportunities for growth

“My goal is to really lift peers up and have them be leaders.”
Program Administrator 8

Results

- Internal Communication
- Reporting and Oversight
- **Mentor Client Interactions**
- Organizational culture

Relationships

The **peer mentor and client** relationship takes time to establish and build trust.

- Share personal experiences
- Use of technology
- Establish boundaries
- Peer Mentor Code of Ethics

“I’m pretty candid about what I went through. I was in the exact same shoes as them, I was in drug court. I went through this whole thing and I’m pretty candid about my experiences and the parts where I didn’t do well and how I ended up succeeding and I think that helps.” Program Staff 5

Results

- Internal Communication
- Reporting and Oversight
- Mentor Client Interactions
- Organizational culture

Relationships

An **organizational culture** that is open and supportive allows staff to feel valued. Clients and staff benefit from being part of a person-centered organization.

- Work-life balance
- Prioritization of self-care
- Equal value of professional and lived experience

“Peers will sit at the emergency room with somebody until it’s done. But if you worked a 12-hour shift, you deserve to take a few hours off the next day, or even a full day. And they’ll show up, unless I’m like, Hey, take a break.” Program Staff 8

Results

- Success as a leader

- Characteristics of Peer Mentors
- Impact of Program on Staff
- Adapting

Program Implementers

Leaders support successful programs by being intentional in supporting their staff

- Lived experience
- Encourage team to share ideas
- Open mind to different approaches

“I really just want to be there to support them, and open the door for conversations that maybe wouldn’t necessarily have with your normal boss, and to highly encourage self-care.” Program Staff 11

Results

- Success as a leader
- **Characteristics of Peer Mentors**
- Impact of Program on Staff
- Adapting

Program Implementers

Peer Mentors share their lived experiences to help someone else who is currently navigating challenges.

- Strong in own recovery
- Allow clients to define their own recovery
- Set boundaries
- Self-awareness

“When somebody is kind of continuing on their own journey, they might not have the strongest boundary skills and then you have somebody that is super, super new in recovery and pushing on those boundaries a lot. I think that that can be hard to navigate.” Program Staff 6

Results

- Success as a leader
- Characteristics of Peer Mentors
- Impact of Program on Staff
- Adapting

Program Implementers

The **impact of peer support** on staff is a motivating factor to continue in this work.

- Sense of purpose and belonging
- Skill development and personal growth
- Challenges with limited compensation

“You need to grow with people you work with, as a drug addict, alcoholic, anybody with any trauma if you stay stagnant, you always return to what you were.”

Program Staff 1

Results

- Success as a leader
- Characteristics of Peer Mentors
- Impact of Program on Staff
- Adapting

Program Implementers

Peer support programs need to be **adaptable** to meet the needs of evolving programs.

- Organizational growth
- Unexpected situations
- Various client needs

“We have to adapt all the time. What works for one person does not work for another. So there's really a whole lot of out of the box thinking that happens here.” Program Administrator 2

Results

- Program structure and Governance
- Training
- Program Development
- Referral and Initial Connection to Organization

Program Structure

Program structure and governance differs based on organizational resources, goals, and priorities.

- Staff autonomy
- Individual strengths contribute to team
- Restructure as needed based on growth

“A long time ago, our agency was set up where the therapist was the head of the team and that was the fit back then and it’s no longer the fit now. So, everybody on the team here, you’re all equal partners, you all have an important role.”

Program Staff 8

Results

- Program structure and Governance
- Training
- Program Development
- Referral and Initial Connection to Organization

Program Structure

Training ensures mentors have the necessary skills and knowledge to be an effective peer mentor

- State certification
- Limited availability for state training
 - MKE Peer Academy
- Population specific training (Veterans)

“The peer support training, it was very, very educational, very informative, very helpful. It helped walk me through situations that I never realized was going to come up that for sure are going to come up so that you don’t get caught on the spot.” Program Staff 11

Results

- Program structure and Governance
- Training
- Program Development
- Referral and Initial Connection to Organization

Program Structure

Program development is a process, it takes time to develop infrastructure and create efficient processes.

- Trauma informed approaches
- Strength-based treatment
- Incorporate feedback

“Because we’re new, were still working out processes... were creating systems and processes in order to promote best practices and to see oh, did that work? Did it not work?” Program Staff 10

Results

- Program structure and Governance
- Training
- Program Development
- Referral and Initial Connection to Organization

Program Structure

As peer support programs become more established, they develop more streamlined **referral** systems.

- Variety of referral sources
- Foster client buy-in
- Need for clarity of peer mentor role

Discussion of Results

External connections

Relationships



Program implementers

Program structure

Limitations

- Participant views are not representative of all organizations or individuals that deliver peer support
- Participants were all in leadership positions, peer mentors and clients may have offered differing perspectives
- Some partial and missing responses to survey questions
- Only reviewed documents shared by the organizations

Conclusions

This study provides actionable insights to community organizations developing and delivering peer support programs



Peer support changes lives.



Implications for Public Health Practice

- Public Health 3.0 – multisectoral partners and collaborations to improve social determinants of health
 - Peer support can be a bridge between clinical care, public health initiatives, and the community
- Consideration for different approaches to funding peer support
 - Fee-for-service vs Value-based care
- Peer support advances health equity and promotes the health of the whole person
 - Increase engagement with services, increase drug abstinence, reduce recidivism, and improve quality of life

Future Research



- Inclusion of peer mentor and client perspective
- Impact of peer support relative to the length of time client participates in peer support
- Comparative studies on fee for service vs. value-based care model in relation to client outcomes
- Comparison of modalities in delivering peer support

KEY ELEMENTS OF PEER SUPPORT IN COMMUNITY-ORGANIZATIONS



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Medical College of Wisconsin
2024



This guide is a tool for community-organizations that are developing or delivering peer support programs. It was developed with the input of 20 individuals from seven Wisconsin community-based organizations that focus on recovery or reentry and have peer support mentors as part of their team. This document highlights lessons learned on implementing successful peer support programs and identifies key elements that have supported their successes as well as challenges they have encountered.

As the integration of peer support into behavioral health services continues to grow, more guidance is needed for organizations to successfully implement and integrate peer support into their supportive services. This project utilized the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research to guide data collection and analysis and identify barriers and facilitators to successful peer support programs in community-based organizations.

INTRODUCTION

KEY ELEMENTS TO A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

01

Partnerships & Connections

Engage with other organizations that offer additional services that can benefit clients. Seek opportunities for collaboration to share knowledge, resources, and develop relationships with likeminded organizations. Strengthen the organizational network through participating in conferences, events, and trainings.

02

Funding

Develop sustainable funding sources. Consider funding opportunities available through Medicaid, contracts with other agencies, grants, or private funding sources. Be mindful of reporting and structural requirements from each funding source.

03

Internal Communication

Frequent and consistent communication among staff is crucial. Team members should feel valued and comfortable sharing their opinions. Regular team meetings and individual meetings with leaders provide opportunities for mentors to receive support and address challenges.

04

Reporting & Oversight

Mentors look to their leaders for guidance both professionally and personally. Promoting mentors to leadership positions allows for career growth and allows peer mentors to receive peer support from their supervisor. Clinical supervision is also very valuable as it provides a clinical perspective and professional guidance when mentors are paired with clients exhibiting challenging behaviors associated with a clinical diagnosis.

05

Strong Mentor/Client Relationships

Developing a strong relationship between mentor and client takes time. Trust is a foundational element of peer support and can be difficult to earn. Mentors must establish strong boundaries at the beginning of the relationship and adhere to ethical standards. Clients should define their own recovery and reentry goals and mentors support and guide them in achieving their goals.

06

Organizational Culture

Organizations should foster a culture that is inclusive and supportive of peer mentors. Mentors should be valued as an equal member of the team and be encouraged to share their ideas. The challenging nature of the job should be acknowledged and flexibility provided to honor a work-life balance and opportunity for self care.

07

Leadership

Leaders must exemplify the characteristics they want to see in their staff. They should be open to new ideas, lead by example, be an attentive listener, and value all members of the team. Leaders should empower staff and not micromanage them. When leaders share their own lived experiences and challenges it fosters a supportive and understanding environment.

08

Program Implementers

Peer mentors are the key to successful programs. Mentors should be strong in their own recovery or reentry. They must be have a strong sense of self-awareness be able to recognize triggers and manage setbacks in a productive way. Mentors need to be empathetic, have effective communication skills, and be comfortable sharing their own experiences to support and guide others.

09

Adaptability

Organizations must adapt when challenges arise or as organizational needs change. New organizations must adapt programs as they receive feedback and develop new work processes. Growing organizations need to adapt to needs for additional staff, more training and tools, and implementing quality assurance and clear reporting structures. Flexibility is crucial to meet the needs of evolving programs.

10

Program Structure & Development

Program structure varies based upon organizational resources, size, and objectives. Many organizations develop their programs using evidence-based, strength-based, and trauma informed approaches which impacts how programs are delivered and what training is needed for staff.

11

Training

Peer mentors need adequate training to effectively meet the needs of clients and navigate challenges. The state certification provides a comprehensive training program. Organizations may choose to develop their own tailored training programs as well. There are trainings on various topics available through peer support networks and organizations.

12

Client Engagement

Organizations receive referrals from a variety of sources, including counties, the justice system, probation and parole agents, and hospitals. Case managers and care coordinators are often key to connecting clients to an organization. Peer mentors play an important role in engaging with new clients and fostering a welcoming environment.



Peer support changes lives.



CHALLENGES OF PEER SUPPORT



Peer mentors use their experience to provide hope and be a positive inspiration to individuals in the midst of challenging circumstances. The impact of peer support is evident as clients build skills to become more resilient and better equipped to face current and future challenges.

Organizations frequently encounter challenges when developing and implementing peer support programs. When challenges arise, organizations have the opportunity to employ innovative approaches to overcoming barriers and make modifications to support program success.

- 01 Training**
Organizations that require or encourage peer mentors to become state certified may encounter challenges enrolling mentors into training. There are limited available spots for training. Interested individuals must apply as soon as possible and organizations may consider hosting a private training for their staff.
- 02 Burn out**
Peer mentors have emotionally and mentally taxing jobs that can lead to burn out. Organizations should offer support for the mentors through empathetic and understanding leadership, job flexibility, and encouragement of self-care.
- 03 Limited Opportunity for Job Growth**
Peer mentors often experience limited opportunity for promotion or career growth. These limitations can cause mentors to feel discouraged and lead them to seek other opportunities. Organizations can offer additional training to enhance the skills of mentors and create a path for career growth within the organization.
- 04 Funding**
Funding sources may have required elements that must be included in peer support programs. Organizations often use funding from a variety of sources which requires acute attention and understanding of compliance requirements.
- 05 Workforce**
Organizations have a need for more peer mentors to support the needs of the clients they serve. Hiring qualified staff has proven challenging, rural areas are especially affected by a limited number of peer mentors. Unique approaches using technology can help expand services into underserved communities.
- 06 Boundaries**
Mentors may struggle to hold professional boundaries with clients. Mentors must establish boundaries early on and follow the peer support code of ethics. When difficult situations arise, mentors should seek advice from leadership to navigate challenges.

PEER SUPPORT PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

Peer support has a profound impact on advancing health equity and promoting the health of the whole person. It expands access to care while reducing the barriers of stigma and distrust. Peer support acts as a bridge between clinical care, public health, and the community. Organizations that facilitate peer support programs are making an important impact on addressing health disparities that create inequities.

Peer support plays a key role in leveraging community expertise to improve social determinants of health and achieve health initiatives. The inclusion of the voice of the community is crucial when developing programs that seek to advance health equity. The work of community organizations is enhanced when efforts are aligned through partnerships and collaborations with multisectoral agencies. Organizations benefit from connecting with similar organizations and professional groups, sharing their missions and goals, and identifying opportunities to align efforts.

Trained and passionate community members with expertise in peer support provide significant value to achieving public health objectives. The organizations that employ these individuals are essential to provide the support, structure, and oversight needed for peer mentors to be successful and to make a positive impact on the community.



You are making a difference
and providing hope to those
who need it most!

Thank you to the individuals who provided
insight regarding their experience with peer
support. Your valuable contributions made
this project possible.

Thank you!



RESOURCES

Doors to Wellbeing

National Consumer Technical Assistance Center

Supports the integration of peer support workers into behavioral health services. Provides resources, databases, webinars and more.



Dryhootch

Peer Support By Veterans for Veterans

Dryhootch offers a Quick Reaction Force training program that provides tools and knowledge specific to peer support for Veterans. The completion of the training certifies individuals as a Veteran Peer. Dryhootch also offers peer support to Veterans through the [QRF Mentor Smartapp](#).

National Association of Peer Supporters

Peer Support Community

Promotes the integration of peer specialists throughout the healthcare and community systems. Provides guides and resources for mentors and supervisors and opportunities to connect with other peer supporters.



Peer Recovery Center of Excellence

Peer-led National Center

Provides training, resources, and technical assistance to organizations that focus on substance use disorder recovery. Opportunities for ongoing education and collaboration among peers during facilitated virtual discussions.

Peer Support Toolkit

City of Philadelphia

Robust toolkit that aims to support behavioral health organizations that have recently hired or plan to hire peer providers. Provides insights, assessments, and tools for organizations implementing peer support.





- Dr. Staci Young, Dr. Katherine Quinn, Dr. David Nelson
- Organizations and participants
- DrPH Cohort 1
- Moriah Iverson
- Family

Thank you!



