

New Jersey Forensic Peer Bridger Training and Internship Program



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**SPECIAL THANKS TO JOE BIRKMANN AND KEN GILL OF THE
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Background

2

- In FY 2014-2015, CMHS awarded NJ a Transformation Training Initiative (TTI) grant to develop a curriculum and to train forensic peer bridgers.
- Brief overview and literature review
 - Positive outcomes for peer-provided programs, but few reported studies on peer bridgers
- Currently, no standardized certification or training exists for forensic peer bridgers.

Timeline

3

- **Recruitment of applicants by Rutgers School for Health-Related Professions**
 - Nov. 2015- Feb. 2016 - Interviews of applicants
 - Feb. and March, 2016 - Background check and Vetting of applicants
- **Training and Internship**
 - March 31 2016 – May 12, 2016 - Classroom training
(6-7 hours training once weekly for seven weeks)
 - May 16, 2016-June 30, 2016 - state hospital internship
(one day a week for six weeks)

Rutgers -SHP Training

4

- Curriculum developed by Rutgers-SHP faculty and experienced peer specialists
- Process involves focus groups of consumers in three state hospitals and in peer-provider organizations.
- Learning strategies
 - in class didactic program
 - onsite (in vivo) experiences
 - audit-feedback
 - quizzes

Training Curriculum

5

1. Professional Conduct-Respect for Diversity
2. Crisis Intervention
3. Recovery and Wellness
4. Legal Status and Forensic Issues
5. Communication
6. Trauma-Informed Approach
7. Employment
8. Addiction
9. Knowledge and Access to Services and Resources
10. Skill Development and Supervision

Peer Trainees

6

- Recruited trainees with criminal-justice experience
- Background and demographics of the trainees
 - Ave. age 48
 - past arrests, convictions, NGRI, and Meghans law status
 - prior paid and unpaid (volunteer) peer service
- Seven of the consumers completed the training, and five of them completed the internship.

Challenges reported by Rutgers-SHP

7

- Hospital staff buy-in
- Alignment with recovery and wellness model
- Recruiting adequate numbers of hospital patients
- More efficient vetting process
- Peer involvement in training and in instructional roles
- Infrastructure to support enhanced peer services

Rutgers-SHP Recommendations

8

- Recruitment process must address the need to conduct background checks of peers with criminal history
- Assess peer trainees before participation in the internship
- Orient state hospital staff on the role of peers in promoting recovery
- Need for larger number of hospital patient participants
- Include individual/group observations and journaling to insure adequate feedback

Rutgers-SHP Recommendations

9

- Devote more time to forensic issues in the curriculum
- Consider having a Department of Peer Services to provide better infrastructure of support
- Consider other sites for the internship experience, including on-site peer-operated programs
- Expand role of forensic peer bridgers to other justice-involved settings

Summary

10

- Hospital patients and peers both report that their experience was empowering and very positive.
- Training and a brief internship experience can help prepare consumers for the forensic peer bridger role.
- Adequate numbers of peers and patients need to participate to insure optimal effectiveness.
- State psychiatric hospital placement presents challenges, but these can be addressed.