

**Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery
Consumer-Provider Collaborative**

PROVIDER: **MILESTONE DIALOGUE**

DATE: **Friday, March 20, 2009**

AM Session: **The Definition of Recovery**

PM Session: **Communication**

Number of Consumers: 19
Number of Providers: 12

Facilitators: Margaret Park & Mary Lu Zemaitis and Sandra Johnson & Stephanie Santoros

Notetakers: Barbara Reith and Dennis Hughes

Observers in training: Denise Weis, Aurelia Carter, Mary Kay Clement, Charlene Saner and Breon Powell

Service Provider Participants:

Certified Nurse Practitioner, LCSWs, Art therapist, MSW student intern, program director and residential director

Consumer Participants: from Milestone's Social Rehab. Day Treatment, Out Patient services and their residential program

AM Session: The Definition of Recovery

Question: What is your definition of Recovery? Was there a point in time when you felt you were starting to get better?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Recovery is a combination of my physical problems disabilities as well as my mental health problems.
- The length of my illness (40/yr) means recovery isn't for me. I depend on the mental health system along with my church for my spiritual welfare.
- When I got drug free and clean is when my recovery began
- Getting out into the community along with getting back into the community. Having my own apartment and a job.

- Recovery means sticking to my daily agenda like cleaning my apartment.
- How we label ourselves regarding the situations we are in.
- The place where we receive services is the main thing that helps.
- Group therapy is very important.
- Picking up pieces and putting them back the best that you can.
- Trust factor plays a vital part in recovery.
- Communication between you and your therapist.
- You must know what your goals are.
- Having someone to talk to when you are set off plays a very important part in recovery.
- You can change a lot of situations by speaking up. A lot of people don't speak up until something tragic happens.
- Having support other than peer support.
- Communicating with other people and listening to other people.
- I have had to recover from a lot of deaths in my family.
- If you have a bad doctor you have a choice in getting another. People don't know that.
- Recovery takes place out of the place that you receive services too.
- Working out plays a big part in my being able to see the end of the tunnel.

Provider (Some common themes):

- Focusing on wellness but with a solution in mind (this makes being a provider easier when having wellness in mind). Not focusing on the Medical Model as in previous times.
- Focusing on the positive.
- Focusing on goals (what is working).
- Focusing on the opportunities rather than on the consumer's illness.
- Taking away the "labels".
- Helping the consumer to reach goals and moving on.

Facilitator question: Triggers can be positive as well as negative. Tell us about triggers you may have for recovery.

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Reaching goals makes me feel like I'm recovering
- Recognizing boundaries
- Peer support—when others share recovery with you

Provider (Some common themes):

- Using the consumer's name instead of the diagnosis.
- Pushing boundaries in a positive way.
- Being willing to share.

Facilitator question: Discussion of the recovery journey.

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Leaving the safety of my home as a 14/yr old. Being 302'd.
- Changing my perspective.
- Getting out of the hospital and into the community.
- Making goals and completing them, then, setting new goals.

Provider (Some common themes):

- As a therapist....giving the consumer a choice of where to sit (i.e.: in the desk chair with wheels as opposed to the usual chair I had him/her sit in changed her whole perspective on who was in control of her life)

Facilitator question: How can the providers help the consumer have hope in recovery?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Provide services and guide me.
- Being assertive with your provider.

Provider (Some common themes):

- Sharing and changing patterns.
- Being a “cheerleader”
- Reinforcing that the consumer can do it (possibly having materials to distribute).

Facilitator question: What can the consumer do to help the provider move the recovery process along and work together?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Move me at my own pace.
- Give me choices.
- Setting treatment goals.
- Being able to make decisions on when things are to be done.
- Offering feedback
- Help with focusing on the program when I can’t focus.
- Helping me to know: “Where I need or want to go”.
- Knowing your enemies and friends.
- Recognizing that everyone has problems.

Provider (Some common themes):

- Sharing and changing patterns.
- Having a Peer Specialist work with the consumer to reach goals.
- Having expectations.
- Continue to persevere
- Making positive decisions and being a positive role model.

Facilitator question: How can peers help?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Visiting and assisting me.
- Just being present.

Provider (Some common themes): providers discussed how they could be peer supports to each other

- Not feeling judged.
- Developing a relationship over time.

- Having empathy with each other
- Recognizing the importance of peers.

PM Session: Communication

Facilitator question: How do you have positive communication with others?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Being able to communicate with staff and clients.
- Being able to speak-up about what is happening with me.
- Being clearly heard.
- Building self-esteem.
- Telling the truth and being straight-up.
- Having family (and others) knowing where I am coming from.
- Getting my thoughts across.
- Thinking it out.
- Having trust if something bad happens.
- Recognizing that “sometimes you have to go away”.
- I got to the art gallery.
- You can show expressions with your hands and eyes.
- Sometimes consumers don’t pay attention.
- Getting into other people’s space in not helpful.
- Bossy people are not helpful.
- Stigma still plays a big part in not reaching positive communication.

Provider (Some common themes):

- Recognizing that there is a “sender” and receiver.
- Remembering that’s its 50/50 and being good on each end.
- Explaining the set-backs.
- Listening to the consumers and the staff.
- Draw on past experiences.
- Being empathic.
- Making sure staff is educated.
- Having an open-door policy.
- Using human experiences vs. diagnosis.
- Being on a human level.
- Focusing on wellness and being open-minded.
- Trust works on both sides.
- You have to be aware of what else is going on.
- You have to listen and be aware that other people may want to speak.
- Calling people on the phone can make a difference.

Facilitator question: What are the barriers to communication?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Not be able to fit the piece of the puzzle into place.
- Not getting the opportunity to share.
- Meeting someone that reminds me of my set-backs.
- Not having “free speech”. Being able to speak my mind and having rights. As an adolescent I wasn’t allowed to have rights, but as time went by, I learned to communicate better.
- Time limits of appointments especially with doctors.
- Sharing experiences with family members can be good and not so good
- When I share experiences and get feedback, I am able to challenge myself and others.

Provider (Some common themes):

- Not being able to understand “what is going on in the consumer’s head”.
- Barriers can be a “bridge” to communication.
- Speaking on the same level.
- Authority figures vs. non-authority figures. Getting out of the authority figure role when possible
- Sharing with staff -- there’s always someone in authority above us.
- Accepting the facts that there is not always a means to the end. Some problems are not able to be solved, although, we are able to manage our live around them.
- Getting by (day by day).
- Knowing that some problems don’t go away.
- Asking consumers to make lists.
- Trust impacts communication. If there is a lack of trust, then, we do not get the complete picture.
- The ability to trust is important. Some people have paranoia.

Facilitator question: How can communication be improved?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Taking my counselor with me to appointments, so I have someone else to explain things.
- Being assertive.
- Having peer support at providers.
- Rehearsing with peers.

Provider (Some common themes):

- Being honest and communicating trust.

- If there's a lack of trust, we do not get the whole picture.

Facilitator question: What are the barriers for recovery in the various ways we communicate?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Stigma.
- The way we speak and hear things.
- Being able to listen.

Provider (Some common themes):

- Getting the right information first and remembering that there are two sides to every story.
- Negative information.
- Conclusions may not be the same for all parties involved.
- Not being able to go outside the situation.
- Not getting another opinion.

Facilitator question: How do providers feel about seeking advice from their peers regarding professional growth?

Provider (Some common themes):

- Honesty is important.
- Trust is very important

Facilitator question: How do you resolve communication issues concerning common rules?

Consumer (Some common themes):

- Consumers are asked to obey rules even when they are found out to have disobeyed rules and want an exception.
- Rights are important.
- Be verbal.
- Possibly signing an agreement.
- Live alone in your apartment.
- Being able to learn a lot from others

Provider (Some common themes):

- When it comes to rights...softy overrides all else.
- Emphasize that the rules are set-up for the protection of all involved.

Note takers: Barbara Ann Reith and Dennis Hughes