

# 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

	Peer-controlled	Non peer-controlled
Aim: Mutual Aid	Self-help groups	Peer initiatives
Aim: Service Provision	Peer-run services	Peer employees

# Discussion

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

# Why service user participation?

	Customer service perspectives	Social justice perspectives
Service user	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May reinforce their own growth</li> <li>Increase self esteem</li> <li>Source of income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experiential knowledge valued</li> <li>Change relationship/power dynamic?</li> <li>Social inclusion</li> </ul>
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More responsive</li> <li>More creative</li> <li>More diverse</li> <li>Increasingly required by funders/accreditors</li> <li>Better employees*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn from those with very different perspectives...learn how to learn</li> </ul>
Systemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocates for system change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fight stigma</li> </ul>
Structural		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share power</li> <li>Challenge knowledge</li> </ul>



# 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

# 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?

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