

Survey Results and Analysis

Peer Support Services in Centers for Independent Living

December 2008

Background

The CIL-NET conducted a survey in December 2008 titled *Peer Support Services in Centers for Independent Living* in order to collect information regarding implementation, maintenance, and ongoing success of these programs in CILs. For purposes of the survey, we used the functional definition of a peer support program as one that recruits, trains, assigns, and supervises a group of individuals with disabilities whose role it is specifically to provide either one-on-one or group support to other individuals with disabilities. This may include individuals who are paid or volunteers, excluding full or part-time staff who are hired to fill basic positions within their centers, who also have a disability. This report summarizes the results from the 124 respondents who completed the survey.

Summary of Survey Results

A majority of respondents (61.3%) stated that their CIL offers an organized program, most commonly referred to as Peer Support (57.9%), Peer Mentoring (15.8%), and Peer Counseling (15.8%). Slightly more than half (52.6%) utilize unpaid volunteers, with services provided in formats of both one-on-one and groups. The overwhelming majority (92.1%) serve populations that cut across disabilities. Respondents indicated areas of life that their programs assist with include living with a disability, community integration, independent living skills, advocacy issues, transportation, and employment.

The data indicated that 57.3% of respondents have a formal training program/curriculum for their peer mentors/specialists.

38.7% of respondents indicated they do NOT have a peer support program, and of that group, 53.2% said they once DID have an organized program but found it difficult to maintain. They cited reasons including insufficient funding, lack of staff with skills to coordinate peer mentors/specialists, diverse complexity of the numerous types of disabilities that consumers have, transportation to group meetings, lack of qualified peer mentors, and burnout among peer mentors. When asked if they would like training or technical assistance in establishing or re-establishing a peer support program, 79.2% of the respondents who said they don't have peer support programs indicated yes.

The following four pages provide a detailed breakdown of the survey questions and responses. For additional information, please e-mail dljones@ilru.org.

Question 1: Does your center offer an organized peer support program, i.e. do you recruit, train, assign, and supervise a group of individuals with disabilities whose role it is specifically to provide either one-on-one or group support to other individuals with disabilities? This may include individuals who are paid or volunteers. However, this does not include full or part-time staff who are hired to fill basic positions within your center, who also have a disability (e.g. housing specialist, independent living specialist, transition coordinator, etc.)

Response	Percent
Yes	61.3%
No	38.7%

If respondents answered YES to the first question, they were directed to Questions 2-8.

Question 2: What do you call your peer program?

Peer Counseling	Peer Mentoring	Peer Support	Peer Consulting	Other
15.8%	18.4%	57.9%	0.0%	7.9%

Other:

Peer Advocate Program
Peer Specialists
Peer Advocacy

Question 3: Are your peer mentors/specialists paid or volunteer?

Response	Percent
paid	47.4%
volunteer	52.6%

Question 4: How is your service provided?

Response	Percent
one-on-one	21.3%
in groups	16.0%
both	62.7%

Question 5: Tell us about the population you serve, e.g. does it cut across disabilities or is it confined to a single disability population, e.g. people with mental illness?

Response	Percent
cut across disabilities	92.1%
serve a single disability population	7.9%

Question 6: What areas of life does your peer support service assist with? (Check all that apply)

	yes	no
living well with a disability	58.9%	0.8%
nursing facility transition	30.6%	21.0%
community integration	58.1%	1.6%
advocacy issues (such as dealing with a landlord)	54.0%	4.8%
independent living skills (such as budgeting)	54.8%	2.4%
employment	39.5%	14.5%
other, please specify below	17.7%	7.3%

Other:

Public transit, accessibility consultation, disability awareness presentations in schools, systems advocacy
Transition program for young adults
Benefits, case management, housing, crisis intervention, recovery model, employment services, community resources, facilitating groups, co-occurring disorder
Socialization opportunities
Brain injury, counseling people with multi-disabilities, etc.
Home modifications
Interpersonal relationships
MH/drug court
Sexual health
Health & nutrition
Mock Interviewing
Personal Attendant Issues
Information & referral

Question 7: How many peer mentors/specialists do you generally employ (or have as volunteers) at any given time?

Response	Percent
1-3	46.1%
4-10	36.8%
11-20	13.2%
21-35	3.9%
36-50	0.0%
50+	0.0%

Question 8: Do you have a formal training program/curriculum for your peer mentors/specialists?

Response	Percent
yes	57.3%
no	42.7%

If respondents answered NO to the first question, they were directed to Questions 9-11.

Question 9: Has your center EVER had an organized peer support program, but found it difficult to maintain?

Response	Percent
yes	53.2%
no	46.8%

Question 10: If yes, why was it difficult to maintain?

	yes	no
It was difficult to maintain because of insufficient funds	11.3%	7.3%
It was difficult to maintain because of no staff with skills to coordinate peer mentors/specialists	8.9%	8.9%
It was difficult to maintain because of problems with quality of services	5.6%	10.5%
It was difficult to maintain for other reasons. Please explain below.	12.1%	4.0%

Other:

Lack of interest among possible peers
It was difficult to maintain because of the diverse complexity of the numerous types of disabilities that consumers have. It has been difficult to link consumers with rare disabilities to others because they are not specific or relatable enough.
No consumers felt comfortable providing peer support or they went through training and never did anything after that
Transportation to group meetings

Consumer involvement and ownership was low and consumer would just not attend
We were unable to sustain a stable group of consumers who wanted to participate
It is difficult to find qualified Peer Counselors/Mentors
Rural area with no available transportation provided for peer group attendance. Limited meeting spaces available for the group to locate.
Peers grew discouraged/weary

Question 11: Would you like assistance (through training or technical assistance) in establishing or re-establishing a peer support program?

Response	Percent
yes	79.2%
no	20.8%

Question 12: Please make any other comments here:

We are searching for training for our staff so we can offer an organized Support Group Program and would greatly appreciate any assistance you can offer.
We would like to review/assess any training available that could assist with beginning and maintaining support groups.
It would be very helpful to have more willing consumers interested in Peer Support group activities. If we could learn possible strategies to grow this program we would be grateful.
We have to think of alternatives to face to face communication since transportation is difficult and we cover a rural area. Not many consumers have internet either.
A better answer is maybe. We would want to look at how to allocate staff to this task, and if we feel we have sufficient staff to coordinate/oversee such an effort, would be glad to have training/technical assistance
We have a very hard time getting consumers to invest in ownership of the Center and really get a peer support group active...we struggle.
How to attract and bring back consumers.
I would like information on establishing a peer support group and methods to recruit appropriate consumers to act as peer mentors. Right now, the majority of peer support occurs as 1:1 interaction between staff with disabilities and consumers.
We are very small (two FT and one PT employee) and have had funding cuts and a lot of other things going on
With the funding for federal CILs being cut significantly for the third straight year, our CIL is operating on a bare bones budget with no room for expansion or a means to hire new staff.
I believe this would be beneficial to our transitioning youth and veterans program which we are starting. I would welcome assistance and support in this area.