Empowering Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities: The Role of the Peer Model of CILs

Overview of Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL)

Presenter:
Sarah Launderville
Executive Director
Vermont Center for Independent Living
“Project Outreach Campaign”—1978

- Asked 750 Vermonters with disabilities: What do you need to be independent?

- Responses included: home modifications, assistive technology, socialization, connections to other people who have disabilities, housing, information, personal attendant services, transportation, washing machine
VCIL

• Founded in 1979 Statewide Nonprofit
  • Original bylaws—people who have physical disabilities
  • Eventually changed to be cross-disability rights
• Today still operate core services of IL
  • Peer Advocacy Counseling
  • Information, Referral & Assistance
  • Independent Living Skills Training
  • Individual & Systems Advocacy
  • Nursing Home & Youth Transition
VCIL—Additional Programs & Services

- AgrAbility
- Technical Assistance (Disability Related Laws)
- Home Access Program
- Meals on Wheels for people with disabilities under age of 60
- Sue Williams Freedom Fund: Assistive Technology
- Wellness Workforce Coalition
- VT Interpreter Referral Service
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Overview of Northeast Independent Living Program (NILP)

Presenters:
Ruthie Poole, Transformation Center
Justin Brown, Northeast Independent Living Program
Northeast Independent Living Program (NILP)

• 1988 Charlie Carr, Executive Director of NILP, hired Pat Deegan, Psychiatric Survivor Activist
• Charlie and Pat got to know each other’s stories
• Ruthie Poole and Jim Shaw as activist organizers
• Independent Living Exploration Group for people with Psychiatric Disabilities
• Lawrence Organizing Voices for Empowerment (LOVE)
• Organizing with the Saul Alinsky model
  • Immediate
  • Specific
  • Winnable
NILP

- NILP Executive Director recognizes need for “affinity” groups based on “Mad Pride” movement
  - We need to love ourselves before reaching out to others
  - Justice is “love distributed”

- Psychiatric Survivors not alone in need for affinity groups
  - Examples: Deaf Culture, Young Adults, etc.

- Personal Care Attendants (PCA) rate cuts
  - Psychiatric Survivors go to the State House as allies
  - Cross Disability organizing across affinity groups
  - Recognize and support affinity group leadership
NILP, cont’d.

• Charlie & Pat secure small Department of Mental Health (DMH) pilot grant ($60,000)
• This grows over time to $130,000 from DMH Central Office
• Campaign for Written Informed Consent
• Annual No-Surrender Conference (1989 – 2009)
  • People with lived experience from clubhouses and day treatment programs
  • Workshops—discussions about stigma
  • Movie 1990 “Crazy People”—letter campaign
• Share your talents music, poetry, art ($5 recognition)
NILP, cont’d. 2

- Peer-to-Peer Counseling Project
  - DMH-funded $60k annually
  - Peer Counseling Curriculum
  - Drew Upon Samaritans “Be-Friending” Curriculum
  - 4 hours a week for $50 monthly stipend
  - Another $60k for outreach to the Latino Community
  - Bi-lingual and Bi-cultural peer counselors
  - Translated Curriculum to Spanish
NILP, cont’d. 3

- Recovery Learning Communities (RLC) funded by DMH
- Request for Response (RFR) for six RLCs statewide
- NILP is only Independent Living Center to apply
Recovery Learning Communities

From the Department of Mental Health website

• RLCs are consumer-run networks of self-help/peer support, information and referral, advocacy and training activities. Training in recovery concepts and tools, advocacy forums and social and recreational events are all part of what goes on in a Recovery Learning Community.
Recovery Learning Communities, cont’d.

From the Department of Mental Health website (cont’d.)

• First and foremost, RLCs create significant culture change that shifts the focus on symptom management to a focus on promoting recovery, resilience, and wellness. RLCs also support consumers to take charge of their own recovery process. Emerging evidence shows that peer services and Peer Specialists speed a person's recovery, a key component of RLCs.
Northeast Recovery Learning Community

- 52 Cities and Towns in Northeast Massachusetts
  - Covers about 4 CIL areas
  - Six “hubs” (satellite locations)
- DMH Cost Reimbursement Contract for $575,000
- Eight full-time employees; Six part-time employees
- Peer “bridging” between state hospital and community
- Local peer-to-peer support groups
- “Recovery Through Community” Events
  - Social activities such as talent shows, music, etc.
  - Educational activities such as speakers and workshops
Northeast Recovery Learning Community, cont’d.

• Resources
  • Pat Deegan’s Blog
    www.patdeegan.com/blog
  • Pat Deegan’s Recovery Library:
    www.recoverylibrary.com
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