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Get to the Core of It: Peer Support— A Proven Volunteer Model

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Evaluation Survey & Contact Information

Your feedback on this webinar is important to us. At the end of the presentation you will be asked to complete an evaluation. Please click on the link provided at that time and fill out the brief survey.

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What you will learn...

- Effective peer support program elements that can ensure successful service delivery, including peer recruitment, training, and supervision.
- The far-reaching benefits of a successful program for the CIL, the mentors and mentees, and the community.
- How to identify and build high potential volunteers to serve as future mentors.
- Approaches for educating mentors to increase their ability to support, coach, and guide their mentees.

Overview of Peer Support Role in CILs

- Mentoring is at the heart of the Independent Living movement
- Mentors work with anyone who is adapting to a disability or seeking to increase their independence
- Peer mentors can utilize their own personal experience with living with a disability to empower others in reaching their independent living goals

Ability360 Peer Mentor Program

- Began in 1990
- Justification for developing the program:
 - Ability360 had a large service area with few staff
 - We knew consumers and community members who had untapped knowledge and resources that they could share with others
 - Admin staff had utilized a peer mentor and found it a valuable experience

Ability360 Peer Mentor Program, cont'd.

- Peer Mentor Program Today
 - 42 active mentors who volunteered over 2000 hours during FY 14-15
 - Some of the mentors, along with other volunteers, provided an additional 6500 hours of technical and clerical support to Ability360 programs.

Volunteer Peer Mentor Program Goals

- Provide qualified peer mentors to teach independent living skills
- Support Ability360 consumers in reaching their independent living goals
- Support Ability360 staff and programs

Who Coordinates Ability360's Service?

- Ability360 designated a full time staff person
 - Qualities needed in Coordinator
 - Ability360's Volunteer Coordinator position is funded by Rehab Act ACL Part C funds.
- The Volunteer Coordinator coordinates the Peer Mentor Program
 - Responsible for the recruitment, orientation, and training of mentors
 - Makes matches
 - Conducts program evaluations
 - Volunteer support and recognition

Who are Ability360 Mentors?

- Individuals with disabilities who—
 - are already living independently
 - are integrated into their community
 - have a desire to help others do the same
- Peer Mentors are NOT, nor do they try to be, medical professionals, counselors or therapists

Ability360–Paid or Volunteer?

- Ability360 believes that mentors should be volunteers for several reasons
 - May mean more to the mentee if their mentor is someone who chooses to be with them
 - Mentors being there voluntarily help to contract the disempowering role of “patient” many mentees experience
 - Mentors can be available to the mentee more than business hours (evenings and weekends)
 - Consumers more likely to return as volunteer

Who are Ability360 Mentees?

- Individuals with disabilities who—
 - are Ability360 consumers, working one-on-one with an Ability360 staff person on their goals
 - Not every Ability360 consumer is referred to participate in the Peer Mentor Program. Consumers must be ready and committed to full participation with a mentor

What do Ability360 Mentors Do?

- Work with any Ability360 consumer who is adapting to a disability or seeking to increase their independence
- Help newly disabled individuals adapt to living with a disability
- Have regular contact with mentee
 - Mentors must agree to be in touch with a mentee a minimum of two times a month

What do Ability360 Mentors Do? cont'd.

- Teach specific Independent Living skills
 - Budgeting, using public transportation, increasing self-esteem
- Assist in finding and connecting to community resources
- Provide support and encouragement
- Role model and teach self advocacy skills
- Advocate with service providers

Additional Ability360 Peer Mentor Volunteer Opportunities

- Peer Mentor Volunteers participate in a variety of other capacities
 - Disability Awareness Presentations
 - Group Mentoring Sessions
 - Group Volunteer Activities
 - Community Advocacy
 - Community Outreach

Questions & Answers

Ability360–Barriers to Program

- Making matches
- Role of the mentor
- Inappropriate behavior of mentors or mentees
- On-going need for new mentors
- Inappropriate referrals

Effective Peer Support Program Components

- Recruitment
- Mentor qualifications
- Mentor training
- Mentor supervision
- Mentor recognition
- Program evaluation

Ability360 Mentor/Mentee Recruitment & Selection

- Mentor Recruitment—Ongoing outreach for new mentors is important in maintaining a diverse, active peer mentor list
 - Volunteers call us
 - Agency newsletter articles, local publications, and community outreach presentations
 - Referrals from staff and mentors viewed as good role models
 - Consumers who received mentoring volunteer to give back what they received.

Ability360 Mentor/Mentee Recruitment & Selection, cont'd.

- Mentee Recruitment—Mentees are Ability360 consumers, already working with an Ability360 staff person, and they must—
 - complete Consumer Request for a Peer Mentor form
 - sign a confidentiality release specific to the PM Program

Ability360 Peer Mentor Qualifications

Peer mentors must—

- Be at least 18 years old
- Complete an application and provide three character references
- Complete a phone or in-person interview with Volunteer Coordinator

Ability360 Peer Mentor Qualifications, cont'd.

- Mentor Rules & Guidelines Form
 - Mentor must sign at Peer Mentor Training agreeing to—
 - Maintain consumer confidentiality
 - Report any consumer suicidal or homicidal thoughts or suspicion of abuse
 - Maintain proper mentor/friendship relationship (do not date mentee)

Ability360 Peer Mentor Qualifications, cont'd. 2

- Background check
 - Mentors must sign a Criminal Self-Disclosure form indicating that he/she has no felony convictions
 - Mentors must successfully complete a fingerprint and background check

Ability360 Orientation and Training

- Two-day peer mentor training class
 - Held twice a year
 - Mandatory for all mentors
 - Flexibility—alternative training opportunities
 - Staff assist the Volunteer Coordinator in presenting curriculum

Ability360 Orientation and Training, cont'd.

- Participants get to meet each other and learn why others are interested in mentoring
- Peer mentor panel—current mentors share their mentoring experiences and answer questions
- Participants receive a training manual

Ability360 Orientation and Training, cont'd. 2

- Though most participants have a disability, many are unfamiliar with Independent Living Philosophy, People First Language, etc.
 - This must be provided in the training in addition to the information on mentoring

Ability360 Peer Orientation and Training, cont'd. 3

- Volunteer Duty to Report Policy Form
 - Mentor must sign the Volunteer Duty to Report at the Peer Mentor Training
 - Outlines requirements for mentors if their mentee reports feeling suicidal, homicidal, or reports any incident of abuse

Ability360 Orientation and Training— Crisis Intervention

- This is called the “Pass the buck policy”
- Describes Ability360’s Volunteer Duty to Report Policy
 - Peer Mentors are required to notify Volunteer Coordinator immediately about any expressions of threat to self (suicide) or others (homicide). If supervisor cannot be reached immediately, volunteer will seek out another Ability360 supervisor to report the incident.

Ongoing Training and Development

- Mentors are invited to attend follow-up training opportunities at Ability360 that include—
 - Self-advocacy, legislative advocacy, and community resource workshops, or Disability Liberation/Attitudinal Barriers workshops
- Volunteer Coordinator does training one-on-one with mentors as needed
 - Example: Mentor learning about a new disability, or community resource
 - Coaching mentees through challenging situations

Building Mentor Awareness, Skills, and Commitment

- Mentor Training Manual Break Down
 - Independent Living Philosophy
 - Ability360
 - Adaptation to Disability
 - Disability Liberation and Awareness
 - Self Advocacy
 - Language and Etiquette
 - Goal Planning

Questions & Answers

Ability360 Mentor Supervision

Mentors need to be treated individually

- Some need little supervision
- Others are just one step ahead of their mentees and need more support
- Some mentors do not like working one-on-one but really enjoy community advocacy
 - Many enjoy participating in Disability Awareness Presentations, and the Group Mentoring Sessions

Ability360 Program Coordination

- Documents mentor/mentee contact
- Documents progress of match and work on mentee's goals
- Tracks volunteer hours which can be used as in-kind donations to Ability360 for purposes of program funding matches
- Meets with staff and periodically attends unit meetings, to maintain open communication with referring staff to ensure that staff understand the role of peer mentors, and that staff mentee referrals are appropriate

Ability360 Mentor Program Evaluation

- Effectiveness of program relies on consistent evaluation of both the mentor and mentee experiences
- Surveys are typically conducted at one, three, and six months from the date of the initial meeting
- The Volunteer Coordinator manages mentor evaluations and referring staff manage mentee evaluations

Ability360 Ongoing Maintenance & Support

- The Volunteer Coordinator is the primary contact and support for all the mentors
 - It is critical that mentors feel comfortable contacting the coordinator with any questions or concerns.
 - Mentors stay active longer if they have a trusting relationship with the coordinator.
- Referring staff is the primary contact for consumers (mentees)

Ability360 Peer Mentor Recognition

- Value in celebrating and recognizing accomplishments
 - Annual holiday event in December for mentors and mentees
 - The “Spirit of Ability360” Awards reception honoring peer mentor volunteers
 - Feature mentor/mentee stories in monthly newsletter on a quarterly basis

Benefits of Mentoring to Mentors

Peer Mentors report satisfaction—

- From being able to "give back"
- Benefiting by increasing their own advocacy skills, awareness of community resources, leadership skills, sense of community, knowledge of civil rights and self-esteem.

Benefits of Mentoring to Mentees

- Don't have to start from scratch or re-invent the wheel
- Offer of hope, support, knowledge and resources
- Achievement of Independent Living goals
- Mentees often become mentors

Benefits of Mentoring to the Community

- Mentors and mentees often go on to contribute to the community at large by—
 - Volunteering
 - Continuing their education
 - Finding employment
 - Increasing their disability advocacy

IL-NET Peer Support Resources

- On-demand training “Building an Effective Peer Support Program: A Proven Volunteer Model”—includes video recordings, PowerPoint presentations, transcripts, and additional resources for CILs: <http://www.ilru.org/training/building-effective-peer-support-program-proven-volunteer-model>
- Ability360’s (formerly ABIL) Peer Mentor Training Manual—<http://www.ilru.org/resources-cil-core-services>
- Individualized Technical Assistance for CILs—for intensive support and TA tailored to your center contact Paula McElwee, IL-NET TA Coordinator: paulamcelwee@sbcglobal.net
- CIL-to-CIL Peer Mentoring—to apply for peer mentoring for your center, contact Mary Olson at APRIL: mary.olson@mso.umt.edu

Final Questions & Answers and Evaluation

Any final questions?

Please click the link below to complete the evaluation survey:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2405149/CIL-NET-Webinar-Peer-Support>

CIL-NET Attribution

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