

Developing Career Pathways in Mental Health for Consumers and Family Members

Tim Stringari, MA, MFT

Rick DeGette, MA, MFT

Sylvia Thomas, MA



What are we looking for in a Social Service Employee?

- Someone with the **Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes** needed to carry out the role of today's front-line social service provider



Knowledge

- Knowledge of
 - Mental health system
 - Community resources
 - Mental illness
 - PSR and wellness/recovery principles



Skills

- Skills in
 - Counseling
 - Mentoring
 - Problem solving
 - Partnering
 - Advocacy
 - Service coordination
 - Record keeping



Attitudes

- That reflect a focus on
 - Strengths
 - Appreciation of cultural diversity
 - A strong belief in and commitment to recovery



How are knowledge, skills & attitudes acquired?

- Experience.....Education.....Training
 - Each of us here has acquired the knowledge, skills and philosophical outlook necessary to do our jobs through *Experience, Education, and Training*



Experience, Education & Training

- It is the accumulated combination of these three elements that has made us successful and has led to our career advancement
- These same elements are equally essential to developing career pathways for mental health consumers



Experience: A Consumer Strength

- All consumers or family members have a wealth of experience with the mental health system
- Additionally, large numbers have experience as a member of an underrepresented group or culture



Experience

- Many also have experience in the general workforce
- A growing number have accumulated work experience in mental health or social services



Education

- Our greatest challenge to workforce development, employment and career advancement



Education

- Because of the early onset of mental illness, many consumers lack secondary education (high school or GED) necessary to gain entry level jobs and job experience



Education

- Even more have had their post-secondary education interrupted by mental illness
- Community college degrees and certificates, Bachelors and Masters degrees from universities are necessary for well paying careers and promotions in mental health



Training: A growing consumer strength

- Training has traditionally been something you received on the job or that you acquire post employment to maintain and improve your knowledge and skills
- Maintaining a strong workforce requires that employers create opportunities for their workers to receive ongoing training



Training

- Mental health consumers and family members are taking advantage of the numerous training opportunities offered to prepare them for jobs as peer mentors and entry level mental health workers
- Combined with education and experience, training can lead to promotions and career advancement



Career Pathways

- **A Mental Health Career Pathway for consumers and family members must include experiential, educational and training opportunities with accompanying supports if they are to be successful at work and achieve career advancement**



Best Practices in Career Pathway Development

- Active diversity-focused recruitment and career counseling
- Wellness Training, Work Prep, Basic Skills and Peer Mentoring programs
- Supported Education programs at educational sites
 - Including summer programs for TAY



Career Pathway Development

- Human Services, Peer Services and PSR programs (*with integrated educational supports at local community colleges or high schools*)
- Internship programs and supervised field placements at high school and/or college levels



Career Pathway Development

- Workplace Readiness Assessment and agency preparation for consumer and family member participation
- Job Development and Job Placement services
- On-the-job support programs, job coaching and mentoring



Career Pathway Development

- On-the-job training, continuing education and certification
- Career Development services
- Benefits counseling



Career Pathway Development

- Combined together, these best practices make up a **Workforce Development “Pipeline”** that starts at the high school, community education center, and/or community college and ends in career positions in mental health



Assistance Available

- The State Departments of Mental Health and Rehabilitation (DMH/DOR) provide consultation, training and technical assistance to support the development of Career Pathways in mental health for consumers and family members



Assistance Available

- For information contact
 - ricder_ricder@yahoo.com
 - justsylviat@sbcglobal.net
 - tim.stringari@sbcglobal.net
 - edie.covent@dmh.ca.gov (California Dept of Mental Health) 619-644-8967

