BEING SEEN!

Deaf to Deaf
Peer Support Services & Training
Successes and Lessons Learned

Marnie Fougere
Coordinator, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Peer Support Project
The Transformation Center

Lucille Traina
Project Manager, NASMHPD TTI grant to Massachusetts DMH
Ally

Deborah Delman
Executive Director
The Transformation Center

NASMHPD - Arlington, VA - August 7, 2016
Today we will share lessons learned

- How isolation, trauma and serious mental health problems are more prevalent yet less seen
- How Deaf To Deaf Peer Support lifts communities
- How the Deaf Community communicates
- How steep the learning curve is for hearing
- Why State Mental Health Authority leadership makes sense
- To keep building Deaf to Deaf peer support together....
FIND OUR STORIES

On the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Recovery page:
- All 8 videos
- Other resources
  www.transformation-center.org
TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES PROMOTE DEAF RECOVERY

http://www.nasmhpd.org/content/trauma-deaf-population-definition-experience-and-services

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

TRAUMA IN THE DEAF POPULATION:
DEFINITION, EXPERIENCE, AND SERVICES

Alexandria, Virginia
July 2012
Deaf Experience

Feeling like a fish in a fishbowl

• I feel that I am separated by a glass bowl
• “I am alone looking out.”
• Being isolated from the hearing world
LANGUAGE FLUENCY & DYSFLUENCY

- 95% Deaf Community members are from hearing families; many families don’t learn a visual language

- Language deprivation can lead to “dysfluency”
  - The child does not share a language with anyone
  - Lack of language stimulation in early stages of language acquisition

- The circumstances of hearing loss affect whether English is a first, second or even third language
DIVERSITY

Late Deafened

Hard of Hearing

Deaf

Deaf Blind

Dysfluent Deaf

Immigrants

“The Deaf Community”
Specific Approaches for d/hh/db and Late-Deafened Individuals

- Certified Deaf Interpreters – used with individuals not fluent in ASL or English – Immigrants or language delayed

- Assistive listening devices or CART – used by Hard of hearing individuals and Late Deafened

- Tactile interpreters – For Deafblind Individuals

- Interpreters – Used by Deaf Individuals/HH and Late Deafened
ASL IS A VISUAL LANGUAGE

“A different language is a different vision of life.”
Federico Fellini

- Adjective placement... *after* the noun like French
- Use of pronouns....
- No written form...
- Different rules of discourse...
- Higher content; less implication
AREN’T THE ISSUES SIMILAR TO OTHER LINGUISTIC MINORITIES?

- Fewer accessible resources
- Less access to information
- No generational changes
- Language deprivation - dysfluency
- Non-native Interpreters
Who Benefits From Deaf to Deaf Peer Support Services & Training?

People:
- ...Who use ASL as a preferred or only method of communication
- ...Whose deafness or hearing loss is a significant part of their life experience including their mental health issues or treatment
- ...Of the Deaf Community affected by stigma
- ...In emergency rooms, in-patient or other settings where long stretches of treatment & time have no communication access
Why Access to Peer Support & Recovery is Key

- A personal and ongoing journey to learn about oneself, like oneself and be able to envision a future that is meaningful
- Recovery is the fertile soil which can support the use of treatment, skills and options
- The impact of promoting peer support and recovery
- People recover in communities
- Not a Treatment approach
- Not a Philosophy
- Not an Orientation
INTERPRETERS: “TERPS” HELP ACCESS, BUT MUCH IS LOST IN RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTENT

- Level of Fluency in the Person’s language
- Terps don’t necessarily understand Recovery
- Delay disrupts connection, mutuality fails
- Wit and nuance may not work
- Deaf person must monitor accuracy
- English-driven training is culturally different
- Eyebreaks, terp breaks and small group work
Deaf To Deaf Peer Support Allows Us To Be “At Home”

- The ability to communicate with each other in our natural ways
  - Visual stories
  - It’s like laying out a chess board then action
  - Information presented visually is integrated into cognition and memory

- The ability to understand each other

- Share trauma issues and other experiences in life in both Deaf and hearing worlds
INTRODUCING PEER SUPPORT TO DEAF PEERS

- Ask the group what does a word or concept means, then have a discussion
- Share stories of real life experiences
- Experience peer support “in the moment”
- Show and discuss pictures, drawings, images
- Show the differences between
  - Peer Support vs. being a friend
  - Peer Support vs. Peer Pressure
- Role Plays: Seeing the action
Learning Together: Sharing Our Ideas about Peer Support and Recovery

We selected key words and discussed the concepts in many meetings across the state:

- Peer Support
- Wellness
- Recovery
- Trauma
- Mutual

Often these were new English words, but as we discussed and told stories, the ideas made sense
Using the videos to find allies in the Deaf community

- Many Deaf experience great shame about mental health problems, and sharing about this is not common.

- The Deaf community may be about 20 years behind in understanding mental health, trauma, and mental health recovery.

- Deaf are more used to sharing about addiction problems.

- But sharing about our stories inspires others to share theirs... “coming out” is a personal choice.
Lessons Learned in the Hearing Peer Support Community

- Passion overcomes anxiety
- How clueless we have been; how hard Deaf work to connect with hearing people
- Including everyone in the celebration of multi-language work reduces aggression and increases connection
- Think beyond “Let’s have Deaf teach us ASL!”
- Visuals & down-to-earth language helps all
- Finding roles for people’s strengths
- Maintaining curiosity and openness
- Opening access to power & sharing resources
A Statewide Approach That Integrates Learning, Peer Support Practice & Community Development

Complexity: Affinity & Ally work that produces new pathways where none existed...
THE ROLE OF TREATERS AND SYSTEMS

- Provide support and opportunities to further those journeys of recovery
- Actively work to minimize systemic barriers and triggers
- Celebrate strengths and resilience through acknowledgement and opportunities for participation and leadership
WHAT CAN YOU DO NEXT WEEK?

Identify allies and interested parties: Deaf-run organizations, Deaf serving agencies, hearing peer run organizations, interpreter organizations

Sponsor community forums at different venues using the videos

Start dialogues about the impact of substance use on the Deaf community

Offer CEUS for professionals and terps

Learn from Deaf community leaders
FIND WAYS TO INVEST IN PEER SUPPORT

- Sponsor Deaf individuals to attend the DCPSS training in Minnesota
- Create opportunities for Deaf individuals to shadow hearing peers
- Identify a Deaf individual(s) in recovery or not to provide support/supervision
- Identify ongoing funds in your peer support system to fund Deaf peers
- Using the videos and PowerPoints: sponsor peer support groups
- Learn and teach Ally Skills in cross system training or training teams (Substance abuse/Domestic violence)