Preparing the Peer Workforce to Support People in Crisis Services

Results of the NE MHTTC Interviews and Focus Groups with Peer Support Workers

March 16, 2023
Agenda

• Overview: Crisis care system and peer support services
• NE MHTTC’s efforts to identify essential competencies for peer support workers employed in crisis service programs
• Peer support workers in crisis services: Role, function, and competencies
• Peer support services: Supportive program structures and activities
• Professional development of peer support workers in crisis services
What is the Crisis Now Framework?

Someone to Talk to, Someone to Respond and a Place to Go

- Crisis Call Center
- Mobile Crisis Team
- 23-Hour Stabilization
- Short-term Stabilization
9-8-8 Overview

The 9-8-8 law requires states to enhance the current system’s ability to respond to those experiencing a behavioral health crisis by providing:

- **Someone to Talk To**
  - Available 24/7 for calls, text and chat
  - Peer-run warm lines offering callers emotional support, staffed by volunteers who are in recovery themselves

- **Someone to Go**
  - Mobile crisis response available statewide
  - Coordination with 9-1-1/EMS as appropriate
  - Outpatient community provider response

- **Somewhere to Go**
  - Crisis receiving and stabilization units
  - Peer crisis respite (living room models)
  - Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment
  - Inpatient treatment
  - Outpatient crisis
Crisis “System” Past and Present

• Over-reliance on law enforcement
• Over-reliance on hospital emergency departments
• “Psychiatric boarding” in emergency departments
• Potentially traumatizing for all involved
• Increases risk for violence
• Lack of effective responses to crisis
• Lack of available needed services & support
• Lack of follow-up
Principles of Crisis Services

- Embracing recovery
- Significant role for peers
- Trauma-informed care
- Suicide-safer care
- Safety/security for staff and consumers
- Crisis response partnerships with law enforcement

National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care, SAMHSA, 2020, p. 26
Peer Roles in Crisis Services

• Peer support specialist/recovery coach in ED
• Peer support provider on inpatient unit
• Peer support on a crisis warmline/hotline
• Staff in peer-run residential respites
• Peer support provider on mobile crisis teams
• Peer support provider in crisis care center
• Outreach/Harm reductionist
• Outreach team member
• Staff in peer-run drop-in centers
Peer Roles in the Crisis Care Continuum

<table>
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<th>Crisis Prevention</th>
<th>Crisis Response</th>
<th>Post-Crisis Care</th>
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<td>• Individual peer support</td>
<td>• Crisis Call Centers</td>
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<td>• Mobile Crisis Services</td>
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<td>• Peer drop-in center</td>
<td>• Peer-run Respite Programs</td>
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New England MHTTC Activities
NE MHTTC Activities

Conducted literature review on peer support in crisis service settings

Aug. 2021

Conducted interviews with 15 people working in peer support roles in crisis service environments
  • Interviews focused on the actual tasks and skills used by peer support workers in their role

Sep. 2021 – May 2022

Conducted expert panel of 18 peer leaders from across the US.
  • Collected panelists’ perspectives about peer support roles within the continuum of crisis care environments-
    competencies and organizational characteristics

June 2021

Currently

Drafted training curriculum on important competencies for peer support workers currently working in crisis care services
NE MHTTC Current Activities

- Conducting a series of trainings with experienced peer support workers employed in crisis services in New England
- Revising training curriculum based on experiences and feedback
- Collaboration with the South Southeast MHTTC to learn more about opportunities and challenges related to peer support services and workers integrated into behavioral health crisis services. Analyzing interviews with 18 peer support leaders
What We’ve Learned
Listening to the voices of people working in crisis services

• Interviews with people providing peer support who work in crisis services
• Expert panel of leaders in peer support in crisis services
Learnings

Competencies
- Engaging people experiencing crisis in empathetic supportive relationships
- Supporting decision-making
- Advocating for self-determination
- Promoting team resiliency

Organizational Structures
- Supervision
- Training, cross-training
- Opportunities for connection with team members
- De-briefing sessions
- Recovery-oriented mission and values
Competencies for Peer Support Workers in Crisis Care Services
Engaging people experiencing crisis in empathetic supportive relationships

- Core peer support skills
  - Listening
  - Empathetic responding
  - Expressing curiosity
  - Non-judgmental stance
- Calming strategies
  - Non-coercive language
  - Non-threatening body language
  - Centering yourself
- Demonstrating positive regard
Supporting Decision-making

• Listening for understanding
  • Person’s preferences, needs, and resources
• Expanding options
  • Brainstorming options
  • Natural supports
• Planning for resolution
Advocating for self-determination with team members

- Expressing curiosity about team choices
- Upholding person-centered principles and peer practices
- Presenting other options
Promoting Team Resiliency

• Engage in excellent self-care for work
• Connect with colleagues
• Participate in team meetings, including debriefings
Organizational Structures
Supervision

• It’s essential for organizations to invest in competent supervisors and prioritize time for supervision and staff development.

• Supervisors need management skills in addition to the skills that support people to perform their jobs most successfully.

• In crisis services a strong program of supervision is necessary for all team members—lots of opportunities for learning.
Training and Cross-training

Opportunities for on-going training and education for all staff

Opportunities for providers from different disciplines to train together

Training on peer practice for all staff

Training on recovery from mental illness and substance use disorder for all staff

Staff members train each other on areas of interest and expertise
Organizational Training/Implementation

Training
• All staff have a recovery orientation
• All staff understand the role and benefits of peer support services
• Staff are trained in compassionate de-escalation processes
• Staff know how to participate in de-brief sessions with colleagues

Implementation Needs
• Organization has strong commitment to supervision
• Organization has capacity to support peer practice
• Organization has recovery culture
  • Strengths-based
  • Goal oriented
  • Learning
  • Support
• Hiring qualified personnel
De-briefing Meetings

- Team members – 2, 3, or more people with different professions and roles in the crisis
  - What were we trying to do?
  - What happened?
  - What can we learn from this?
  - What can we do differently next time?
  - How is everyone?
- Planned, safe, honest space for reviewing an event or process—may be structured and facilitated
What We Need to Learn
Into the Future

01
Crisis services will expand and will include peer support services

02
US will continue to experience mental health and addiction crises

03
The behavioral health workforce shortages will continue
Thank you!

https://ttc-gpra.org/P?s=621857
Preparing the Peer Workforce to Support People in Crisis Services

- NE MHTTC will disseminate and train peer support workers in the competencies of crisis care services
- NE MHTTC will provide technical assistance to organizations wanting to incorporate peer support in crisis services
- NE MHTTC wants to hear from you about your experiences in crisis services
Contact Us

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