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At the time of this publication, Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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CRISIS SERVICE PEER COMPETENCIES

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

The history of the consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement and an appreciation for differences in culture, family, identity, and history.

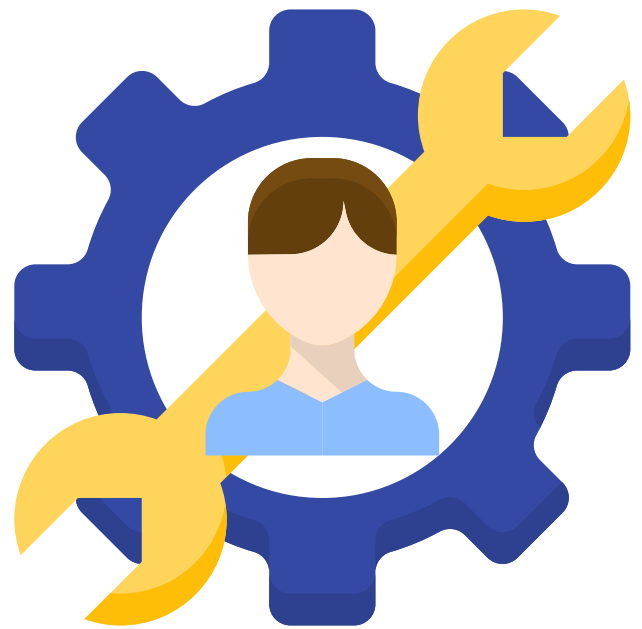
Sensitivity to the effects of trauma, including legacy trauma of racism and colonialism, intergenerational trauma, lack of access to quality healthcare, poverty and social injustice, and the use of involuntary and coercive or forced treatments.

Trauma-informed care, specifically in Peer Specialist roles within crisis services.

Supporting clients in their processing of or talking through experiences of coercion or police involvement.

The recovery model compared to medical models of crisis services.

Psychosis and other extreme states in specific context of peer support roles in crisis services.



Peer Specialists using their lived experience in recovery to connect, to mutually support, and to instill hope is perhaps the biggest thing that differentiates peer support from other providers working in crisis services. In peer support, the focus is on individual's strengths and skills. Peer workers advocate for individuals to find their own choices and direct their own life and recovery goals. Peer workers in crisis services are also often uniquely qualified to be able to approach personal emotional and mental pain and distress as opportunities for personal growth and transformation. Peer supporters can offer "solidarity in suffering" to those people experiencing crisis, while also embodying principles of recovery.

-Stephanie Jack

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

Employment-related skills include dress, conduct, professionalism, and documentation.

The belief is that people are the experts on themselves, no matter how distressed they may be at that moment or how much support they may need to remember/uncover the knowledge they have within themselves.

The distinction between suicidal thoughts and feelings, suicidal actions, and a suicide emergency.

CPR and how to take vitals.

Safety intervention techniques to be able to maintain safety.

Privacy laws.

Approaches for locating, recognizing, and linking individuals with beneficial resources of their choosing.

The boundaries of Peer Specialist (a clear understanding of what the peer support role is and isn't).

Handling conflict and uncomfortable situations.



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Active listening, meaningful sharing.



Crisis de-escalation, creative questioning.



Skillful validation, support over advice.



Prioritize supported decision-making.



Open-ended conversations, no preset outcomes.



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Being present without judgement.



Reflect the regional demographics and culture.



Collaborative suicide prevention planning.



Empower others and explore alternatives.



Maintain equitable power dynamics.



ONGOING PERSONAL and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The issue of "peer drift" raises substantial concerns among peer experts. This phenomenon occurs when Peer Specialists/Supporters deviate from their distinct role, values, and mindset, providing services that resemble those offered by other professional staff. Some peer experts are hesitant for Peer Specialists to provide crisis services due to the conflicts that may arise or the drift that may occur. Peer Specialists working in Crisis Service settings will benefit from supervisors and organizations who understand the distinct role they play in crisis services.

SELF-CARE & SUPPORT

Maintain self-care and wellness practices and identify when to reach out for support from your team or supervisor.



SELF-AWARENESS

Awareness of self, ability to tolerate emotional discomfort and be present with another's pain.



BOUNDARIES

Determine and maintain boundaries; understand the code of ethics and what it means to uphold it

SELF-REGULATE

Stay composed and attentive during crises, respond thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively, and learn to self-regulate your nervous system against perceived threats.

ADVOCACY SKILLS

Peer Specialists possess the skill of advocating for both themselves and the individuals they assist.

Peer Specialists often serve as a "bridge" between individuals and their providers, necessitating skills in negotiation, diplomacy, and conflict resolution.

Peer Specialists navigate the system independently, possessing essential competencies, understanding its language, avoiding co-optation, and representing a distinct voice.

Peer Specialists catalyze change by challenging norms, advocating within their organization, engaging in social justice movements, and influencing policy.



Nothing about us without us - making sure someone is present in conversations that are about them; Co-learning - staff are growing and learning along with people receiving services; Coming alongside someone and meeting them where they are - acknowledging that someone is the expert of their life and experiences ...

-Morgan Pelot

When an individual in crisis is validated, met with an open-mind and with empathy, peer specialists remain true to the core competencies, ethics, and values.

- Lauren Rozenweig



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