EFFECTIVENESS IN CONSUMER GOVERNANCE

Katherine Cavanaugh
Consumer Advocate, National HCH Council

Joseph Benson
Chair, National Consumer Advisory Board
Health Care for the Homeless – Houston; Houston, TX

Walter Truehart and Greg Morris
Consumer Advisory Board Member and CEO
Ascending to Health Respite Care, Inc.; Colorado Springs, CO
This workshop focuses on how a consumer advisory board (CAB) and a governing board can enhance consumer involvement in governance and advocacy on behalf of consumers of the HCH project and in the community.

Different models for CABs and governing boards will be discussed, including real-life challenges and achievements.

Goals: Equip consumers and staff with knowledge, skills and inspiration.
IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMERS ON ADVISORY AND GOVERNING BOARDS

“*The only way to affect change in policy is to be part of the conversation*”

- Help decision-makers understand the needs of consumers from the consumer point of view.
- Keep focus on the needs that homeless and formerly homeless consumers represent.
- Monitor HCH project performance and challenge decision-makers to consider consumer-driven options for health care delivery.
- Increase consumer confidence in making a difference
FEDERAL GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS THAT AFFECT HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS PROJECTS

Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act:

• The governing board is composed of a majority of individuals being served by the center

• If your health center is a 330(h), or HCH center, waivers to the “consumer” majority rule can be requested, but consumer participation in governance is still required.
WAYS TO FACILITATE CONSUMER FEEDBACK AND REPRESENTATION

• Include consumers or former consumers on the project’s governing board
• Conduct consumer satisfaction surveys
• Create regularly constituted focus groups
• Create a Consumer Advisory Board
Consumers

Consumer Advisory Board

Governing Board

Staff/Administrators

KEY ROLE OF CAB: Enabling feedback loop
CONSUMER ADVISORY BOARDS
WHAT IS A CAB?

A group of homeless and/or formerly homeless individuals, advocates, providers, and community members brought together to improve services and delivery of care at their Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) project.
PURPOSE OF A CAB

• Help decision-makers understand and maintain focus on the needs of consumers from the consumer point of view.

• Help the Center recognize its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges in accomplishing its mission.

• Advocate for consumers with respect to services at the Health Center.
CAB ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCH Services</td>
<td>• Reviews and recommends program services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Feedback</td>
<td>• Solicits and communicates suggestions and grievances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Awareness</td>
<td>• Organize or speak at community events or forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>• Advocate throughout community for rights of consumers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAB’S DO NOT MAKE POLICY. THEY ADVISE.
CAB STRUCTURE AND BYLAWS

- Name and Purpose of Board
- Membership and Terms
- Officers and Responsibilities
- Meetings and committees
- Decision – Making Process
MEMBERSHIP

Important Questions

• Who is eligible for the CAB?
• How many members should be on the CAB?

Your CAB should reflect the diversity in your HCH community:

• People who are currently and formerly homeless
• People who are current or formers users of clinic’s services
• Inclusive of all the project’s services and populations

NCAB TIP:
Get recommendations from staff
CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

Consensus aims to find a proposal that all members can support and no member opposes. Consensus is not a majority vote. Consensus is based on compromise, and the ability to find common ground.

Consensus requires:

- time
- active participation of all members
- communication skills
  - listening, conflict resolution, discussion facilitation
- creative thinking and open-mindedness

NCAB Recommendation
ENGAGING THE CONSUMER VOICE AT CAB MEETINGS

- Set ground rules and guidelines for conduct
- Be mindful of task and process/relationship goals
- Ensure all voices are heard
- Summarize key points and clarifying understanding
- Pay attention to personal and group dynamics, including non-verbal cues
- Listen to understand, not to respond
CONSUMER LEADER GUIDELINES

DO’S

• Know the HCH’s mission, goals, programs and services
• Get all the information before making a decision
• Pitch in enthusiastically
• Come to meetings prepared to participate

DON’TS

• Lose your sense of humor!
• Speak for anyone else
• Ask staff for special favors
• Hold grudges with other members based on voting
Governing Boards

- Makes decisions
- Focus on budget, organizational structure, programs
- Includes professional experts, community stakeholders and sample of population served

Advisory Boards

- Offers recommendations
- Focus on services, impacts
- Representative sample of population served
ENGAGING CONSUMERS IN GOVERNANCE
LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Interpersonal Skills
- Communication and Empathy
- Understanding and Cooperation

Creativity and Analytical Skills
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Project Management and Delegation

Functional Knowledge
- Mission, Goals, Resource Management
- Strengths and Needs Assessment
PERSONAL GROWTH

• Empowerment through engaging with the decision making process

• Can increase confidence in our abilities to make a difference and affect change
PEER SUPPORT

• CAB’s allow members to see the connection of their struggle with the struggles of others

• We can build on this empathy and understanding to better understand how we can support one another in the struggle
CHALLENGES TO CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

- Priorities of meeting basic needs
- Possible disengagement from systems
- Frustration with previous attempts to advocate
- Comfort telling your own story
- Overcoming stigma, fear and shame
- Education on policies, history and systems context
BENEFITS OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

• Authentic voices of those directly impacted
• Facilitates direct conversation
• Builds self-esteem, confidence, sense of worth
• Instills sense of purpose and community
• Demonstrates value of participation
• Improves engagement with care and health
HEALTHCARE FOR THE HOMELESS – HOUSTON

- BALANCE OF CAB MEMBERSHIP
  - Stability and comfort with experience
  - Constant recruitment and change

- SETTING UP MEETING TO MEET NEEDS
  - For CAB members and HCH Site
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS
THE UPS AND DOWNS
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS

- Welcome
- Walter Truehart CAB
- Formerly homeless in Colorado Springs
- Past to Present – Journey to CAB
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS
Why get involved?

What it means to participate.

Is certainly not for everyone.
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS

- What worked initially.
- What did not work after time.
- Tragedy struck the CAB.
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS

- Gregory Morris PA-C
- Executive Director Ascending To Health Respite.
- Wanted a CAB from the beginning.
- Attached to a Respite Care and soon HCH Peak Vista.
- Cannot provide quality care and evolve with the needs of the population we serve without feedback!
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS

- CAB is important to our organization.
- Asked to have T/A from The Council.
- Off an running!
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS

- Five initial members.
- Accomplished great work.
- The Springs Housing & Resource Guide.
- Then there were none!
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS
CAB COLORADO SPRINGS

- Respite and CAB both new to the game.
- Reborn after several months of down time.
- New character and new passion.
- Connecting to the local homeless provider community.
• Lessons learned.
• Looking to the future.
WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH CABS AT YOUR SITE?
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
THANK YOU!

Katherine Cavanaugh
kcavanaugh@nhchc.org
(443) 703 – 1320