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# From Recuperation to Life-Long Leadership: Consumer Governance in Medical Respite

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# Disclaimer

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# Presenters

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# Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to...

- Identify barriers to consumer engagement in Medical Respite programs
- Discuss the organizational structures and supports that are needed for consumer engagement in organizational governance
- Name 3 strategies for developing consumer engagement in governance at my Medical Respite program

# What is Consumer Engagement in Governance?

- Inviting consumers to participate in the governance structures of the organization to help shape policies, procedures, and service delivery.
- Moving beyond passive feedback mechanisms towards developing proactive partnerships that bring consumers to the decision-making table.



# Consumer Advisory Boards

A group of homeless and/or formerly homeless individuals, advocates, providers, and community members brought together to improve services and delivery of care.

## HCH Services

- Reviews and recommends program services

## Consumer Feedback

- Solicits and communicates suggestions and grievances

## Education and Awareness

- Organizes or speaks at community events or forums

## Policy

- Advocates throughout community for rights of consumers

# Why Engage Consumers in Governance?

- Helps decision-makers understand the needs and experiences of consumers from the consumer point of view.
- Keeps governing boards focused on the needs of the special population
- Supports our values of client self-determination and inclusion
- Combines feedback mechanisms with critical leadership development



# Organizational Considerations

- Building consumer leadership and a supportive organizational structure takes time, resources, and energy.
  - Make sure to consider the direct and indirect costs (staff time and resources for recruitment, training, and management).
  - Needs both administrative and leadership development support.
- **Feedback cannot go into a black hole**
  - The organization needs to develop a feedback loop for the consumer engagement mechanism so consumer's know what is done with their contributions.



# Developing Consumer Engagement

## Planning

- Engage community
- Define mission
- Assess organization
- Define volunteer positions
- Develop implementation plan

## Recruiting

- Assess image
- Consider volunteer motivations
- Develop recruitment plan
- Develop message
- Find and select volunteers

## Training

- Determine necessary knowledge or skills for position
- Develop orientation program and materials
- Schedule and conduct orientation

## Managing

- Assign a staff liaison
- Communicate regularly with volunteers
- Provide ongoing training
- Avoid volunteer burnout
- Recognize volunteer efforts

## Evaluating

- Design the evaluation
- Collect data
- Analyze results
- Report results

# Consumer Considerations

- Environments, meetings, and interactions must ensure dignity, create safety, and foster empathy through a trauma-informed lens.
  - Nurture a non-judgmental and open-minded approach
  - Attend to emotions and the emotional climate of meetings
  - Cultivate relationships within the group
- **Find ways to share power with consumer leaders.**
  - Develop opportunities for consumer leaders to guide the work and enhance their skills.

# Recruitment

- Relationships are critical for successful recruitment
  - Find out about people's interests, passions, goals, and skills. Connect those to the opportunities to engage.
- Volunteers give their time to organizations they consider valuable and where they can make a difference.
  - When developing a plan and message, consider why volunteers should give their time to the organization.
- Advertise and promote these opportunities often and in a variety of ways.



# Recruitment Ideas

- **Get recommendations from providers, community partners, current consumer leaders, or leaders in the community with the lived experience.**
  - Behavioral health or case management providers who spend the most time with clients may be able to gauge consumers' core values or potential for key skills.
- **Promote opportunities at other client groups and all site locations.**
- **Post flyers**
- **Have current consumer leaders engage do 'in-reach' by talking to consumers to build relationships and invite them to future meetings.**
- **Use feedback mechanisms to recruit participants from focus groups and listening sessions.**
  - Consider topic-based focus groups so people can plug into discussions they are interested in.
  - Use current consumer leaders to facilitate these sessions to develop spaces for new attendees to feel comfortable in, and build leadership development for current members.

# Overcoming Challenges

- Limited funding means that priority goes to client care.
  - Creating time and space now for improvement or consumer engagement can help to improve clinic flow or develop spokespeople to help with funders.
- Programs may have consumers in different locations, making it difficult to build community or find a common meeting space that current and former clients are comfortable accessing.
  - Developing community space for staff and consumers to connect helps to fulfill our emotional needs and can help consumers heal from trauma.

# Success Strategies

- Short-term services and acute care focus on immediate well-being and can make it difficult to form long-term relationships
  - Build relationships when people start at the program, and maintain relationships with alumni. Let alumni know about the engagement options when they leave.
- **Having limited staff makes it difficult to provide the necessary support**
  - Encourage all staff to have conversations with their clients about the structural causes of housing and health injustice.

# Respite within larger organizations

## Challenges:

- We have a staff person who is dedicated to client engagement, but their time is split over four sites.
- Respite is different than all of our other services. The rest of our services are based on an outpatient model.
  - For instance, our client survey is based on questions about outpatient care.
- Respite clients may not stay connected to our services after discharge.



# Respite within larger organizations (cont'd)

## Solutions:

- Make client engagement a project for interns
- Weekly residents' meeting.
  - Invite client engagement staff and agency client representatives to a residents meeting once a month.
- Integrate respite clients into ongoing consumer programming
  - Lobby day
  - Agency wide weekly client advocacy meetings
- Recruit agency wide board members from respite





# Consumer Experience



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# Resources

- If You Build it, Will They Come? Recruiting and Retaining Consumers Experiencing Homelessness in Health Center Governance
  - Available at: <https://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/final-consumer-recruitment-and-retention-brief.pdf>
- Quick Guide on Consumer Governance in HCH Programs
  - Available at: <https://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/quick-guide-on-consumer-engagement-formatted.pdf>
- Guidance for CAB Support Staff
  - Available at: <https://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/cab-support-staff-guidance.pdf>
- Consumer Advisory Board Manual
  - Available at: [http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NCAB\\_Manual-rev-Jan10.pdf](http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NCAB_Manual-rev-Jan10.pdf)