

META Peer Specialist Certification Program

Currently, Jon Gudeman, MD, Jon Berlin, MD, Our Space, Inc, the Mental Health Association in Waukesha County (MHA), the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD) the Waukesha Department of Health and Human Services and the Grassroots Empowerment Project (GEP) have a Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program (HWPP) Development Grant to initiate Peer Support Services within the behavioral health systems of both Waukesha and Milwaukee County and their community-based continuum of care. A training has been identified, which was created by Meta Services, Inc. in Phoenix, Arizona, and 51 individuals have attended three trainings, which were delivered by GEP staff certified by Meta Services. Four individuals have been working in the BHD's Adult Crisis Service, and in the period from September 1st to November 30th, 225 individuals were served. Five additional Peer Support Specialists work in the BHD's Acute Inpatient Service, and five at a community-based Supported Apartment facility. Four Parent Peer Support Specialists have just been hired to work at the Mental Health Association in Milwaukee County's Family Resource Center, and others serve on various committees and offer wellness and spirituality programming at the BHD. In Waukesha, Peer Specialists are utilized to provide one-to-one therapeutic support, consumer education, and skill development within the array of mental health services. Peer Support is offered through the Mental Health Association, the Friendships Unlimited Drop-In Center, and the Spring City Corner Clubhouse. Waukesha has also initiated a Peer-run, non-crisis hotline.

Research has been conducted to assess the efficacy of the trainings and employment on recovery and self-concept. Analyses of pre and post Tennessee Self-Concept Scales have revealed statistically significant changes in the Self-Concept total. Analyses also demonstrated that individual attitudes toward personal recovery were developed or reinforced. Further, six individuals who have provided Peer Support for over 6 months, completed surveys measuring illness management, hospitalization, substance use, etc. 100% felt able to deal effectively with daily life, had not utilized crisis/inpatient services, and felt they were managing their medication and illness. Eighteen individuals who received Peer Support Services completed recipient surveys. 88% felt they had more control over their life as a result of Peer Support, 75% felt increased knowledge about managing medications, and 83% found Peer Support helpful to their recovery. Finally, surveys completed by professional providers working with Peer Support Specialists indicated that 87.5% felt Peer Support was beneficial, 80.8% would recommend Peer Support to other departments and 57% would like an increase in the number of Peer Support Specialists.