

Florida Peer Network Transformation at a Glance

The Florida Peer Network in coordination and collaboration with other consumer organizations has identified the following issues as critical to Florida's transformation efforts.

- **Leadership** FPN should assume a leadership role statewide and in each district for transformation planning. “Consumers are the primary authors and decision makers in developing policies affecting local, state, and national mental health service delivery.”...*CMHS Draft Principles of Consumer-Driven Care*
- **Definitions** Consumers are best qualified to define the concepts of recovery, what constitutes a “consumer/survivor” and the requisite outcomes of a transformed system.
- **Support for Consumer Involvement** Financial assistance needs to be made available for travel expenses in order to encourage consumer involvement in all planning.
- **Cultural Diversity** The variety of worldviews, values, lifestyles, sexual orientation, language, race and ethnic origin in society is profound. Affirmative policies regarding the inclusion of this diversity must be developed as part of the transformation process.
- **Office of Consumer & Family Affairs** The OCFA should partner with the Network and other groups to promote peer run programs and initiatives. OCFA positions should be developed in each district SAMH office.
- **Peer Specialist Certification** The Network is dedicated to the development of a Peer Specialist credential for the state. Peer participation in recovery support services has demonstrated its’ value in mental health services nationwide.
- **Medicaid** AHCA and DCF should formalize ongoing participation of mental health consumers in the development of policy and changes to Medicaid services. A greater range of recovery services including those provided by Certified Peer Specialists should be reimbursable under Medicaid guidelines.
- **Transitioning Youth from Children’s Mental Health to the Adult Mental Health system** FPN supports the creation of a Taskforce to address the needs of youth in transition from children’s mental health to the adult system. This taskforce should include the participation of individuals who have experienced this transition.
- **Outcomes & Action Plans** The Network supports the precept that all work groups and other meetings be goal oriented. Each group should result in a specific action plan or outcome.

Transformation at a Glance

The following comments were made by consumers from around the state at a recent Florida Peer Network transformation teleconference.

Peer Specialist Certification “Peer Specialist Certification is at the top of our priorities because it puts consumers into the delivery of services system.”... “The more peers we have certified to deliver services, the more consumers can reach out for peer-directed care.”... “All providers who contract with the state should be required to hire a certain amount of our peers as a stipulation for contract renewal. Those positions must be substantial and not token positions.”

Peer Run Services “Consumers know what is best for them and don’t want providers to dictate what services they need for recovery.”... “In 1998-2002...SAMSHA spent \$20 million in the COSP Multi-site Research Project to research the effectiveness of consumer operated service programs. In this way, the federal study compared eight peer-run programs nationwide, and their results indicate that consumer operated programs are, in fact, a Best Practice”

Choice and Self-Directed Care “It is important to focus on what people want, instead of what the professionals think they need.”...”There needs to be some choice about finding a place that promotes recovery, rather than being stuck in a hospital or a service that your provider happens to cover but provides no benefit to the consumer”...”Self-Directed Care opens up a number of choices for people. You choose where you go for your services, what you are going to budget for those services and what type of services you get. The money follows the person instead of the program.”

Transportation Participants agreed that transportation issues are of great importance, and often transportation to and from programs is inadequate or even non-existent.

Cultural Diversity “Cultural barriers are another side of access to care. Services offered may not be appropriate to an individual and there is no choice of case managers.”...”Cultural diversity plays a huge role even in getting access to Medicare Part D. Can the clients even understand what’s being explained to them?”

Benefits and Homelessness “Another issue to access to care is the problem of indigence vs. Medicaid and managed care.” One person mentioned transportation for indigent people who have no way to get to their services or job opportunities and decreasing co-pays for clients who are not able to get their medication after using their money for other things.

Case Management and Other Needed Services “When case managers in Florida are hired they aren’t required to actually know anything about mental health.” In speaking about his drop-in center one person said, “We are open 365 days per year. Mental illness doesn’t take a holiday.”