

Fourth Year Report of Activities

International Association of Peer Specialists

Recovery to Practice Project

Activities

The past year saw activities primarily focused on refinement of the recovery curriculum. Through five pilots involving 85 participants, the iNAPS RTP team obtained much valuable input that resulted in a series of modifications. There were relatively few suggestions regarding curriculum content but much input was received regarding the format of the curriculum.

To help determine how the curriculum could be presented in a variety of formats, some pilots were presented in a “traditional” manner in a one-week classroom setting, in a multi-week format and in a two-weekend retreat format. These different approaches provided valuable feedback and enabled the RTP to adapt the curriculum so it could be readily adapted to a variety of formats.

In addition to the pilots, input was received from reviewers from the core advisory group. A few comments were also received from interested individuals who asked to review specific portions of the curriculum.

Although the five formal pilots provided the best contextual feedback, the RTP team also had the benefit of “practice runs” of portions of the curriculum. These practice runs were intended to inform curriculum development and occurred primarily in Year 3 of the project.

Outreach at conferences, through the iNAPS newsletter and website, conversations with stakeholders and other means helped create a broader awareness of the RTP project and the curriculum.

Below are key RTP activities of Year 4:

- Five formal pilots involving 85 participants
- Refinement of the recovery curriculum
- Presentations about the RTP project at six conferences
- Featuring of the RTP project in iNAPS newsletters and website
- Preparation and sharing of project progress at the September in-person meeting
- Posting of RTP monthly reports on the iNAPS website (inaops.org)
- Responding to inquiries about the RTP project
- Communication with key stakeholders (i.e. state and national peer organizations, established training entities, government officials, organization administrators)

Outcomes

RTP outcomes are almost exclusively related to the pilot experiences. Those outcomes include:

- Refinements/modifications to the recovery curriculum
 - Content was supplemented with links and other resources
 - The delivery method went from heavily didactic to almost exclusively participatory and experiential
 - Debriefings were detailed to ensure participants could relate activities to the peer support practice
 - A series of workbooks were created to facilitate learning of knowledge-based content and to reduce the time required for in-person sessions
 - Activities were modified and refined to ensure relevance to the peer support practice
 - A facilitator's guide was created
- Many participants presented modules and in doing so had an experience base upon which to make suggestions for improvement and become especially familiar with the curriculum
- Input regarding implementation of the curriculum was obtained

Plan for Year 5

The focus of Year 5 will be implementation of the curriculum. This means promoting and facilitating use of the curriculum and evaluations.

It is important to recognize that peer supporters do not enjoy a structured training system such as university/college settings experience by other disciplines. Training for peer supporters has evolved in different ways by the approximately 35 states that have Medicaid reimbursement for peer support and, as a result, have training and certification programs.

Because of the diversity of training programs, continued networking with existing training entities will be especially important. And because the preferred delivery method (facilitation as opposed to instruction) is different than what most are accustomed to, training of facilitators will be vital to the success of the project. Sustainability and quality assurance are also important issues.

Implementation has been the focus of many discussions with a variety of stakeholders and interested parties. The consensus is that a single approach will not be workable so a variety of strategies must be used simultaneously.

Below are elements of the implementation plan with time frames:

- Finalization of all curriculum materials [October 31]
- Train-the-Facilitator session-Grand Rapids, Mich. [week of November 18]
- Train-the-Facilitator session by DBSA [TBD-after Jan. 1]
- Train-the-Facilitator session-New York State [TBD-after Jan. 1]
- Networking with existing training entities, stakeholders and interested parties [ongoing]
- Additional Train-the-Facilitator sessions at state peer support conferences [TBD]
- Networking with state certification officials to facilitate continuing education credits [ongoing]
- Monitoring/evaluation data gathering and reporting [ongoing—note that we will be exploring evidence of practice change]
- Completion of webinars [week of November 18]
- Updates/reports via website and newsletters [ongoing]

Additional, Unanticipated Outcomes

The iNAPS RTP project has been a catalyst for development of the peer support profession. Some outcomes may be considered minor but even small contributions are important when a profession is faced with rapid growth and regulatory change. Clearly, some unanticipated outcomes are major and have already contributed significantly to the profession not just in the U.S. but internationally.

Below are some unanticipated outcomes from the iNAPS RTP project:

- Increased frequency of newsletters and bulletins to the profession (quarterly to monthly)
- Efficient electronic communication system that allows iNAPS to “touch” the field with more than 2,000 individuals receiving e-mails with a few keystrokes
- Development of peer support practice guidelines
 - Use of the guidelines by peer supporters to advocate for appropriate job roles
 - Use of the guidelines by administrators to create/modify job descriptions
 - Use of the guidelines by administrators and others to inform the development of ethical codes
 - Anticipated use of the guidelines to identify and describe core competencies and a code of ethics
 - Three articles in professional journals about how the RTP project resulted in the development of peer support practice guidelines
 - Creation of an international initiative to define peer support and create practice standards (countries expressing at least an interest in this initiative include the U.S., United Kingdom, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, India and the Netherlands—some of these countries have committed to be involved in the entire process to accomplish the previously stated goals)
- Broader and increased involvement in the iNAPS organization
- Development and implementation of a webinar series based on the RTP project
- Development and promotion of a collaborative learning approach for peers
- Sparking conversation in the profession about ethics, practice standards and continuing education
- Increased networking between stakeholders, the field and interested parties
- Collaboration with key organizations (including Faces and Voices of Recovery) to foster cooperation/collaboration between the mental health and substance use disorder fields
- Broader recognition of iNAPS as a viable voice for peer support in the U.S.

- Increased iNAPS membership

The last year has seen much progress not only with the RTP project but in the profession's development as well. The iNAPS RTP team recognizes the need to remain focused on the RTP project as it is the "fuel" that is driving the profession's development. The team would also like to thank the staff of the Development Services Group for providing timely and wise counsel on a variety of issues that have arisen during the project.