

Recovery to Practice Monthly Report

July 2013

InterNational Association of Peer Supporters

In July, the iNAPS RTP team completed the retreat-format pilot in Grand Rapids, Michigan. That pilot yielded valuable input regarding the recovery curriculum. Specifically, the following comments were noted:

- The pre-course work required too much time and effort.
- The curriculum was more interactive, participatory and experiential than many expected.
- The retreat format offered many advantages, particularly a relaxed atmosphere conducive to learning.
- Although all participated “on their own time,” they found the retreat format attractive and much less demanding than traditional trainings. The atmosphere was conducive to participation even during nice summer weekends.
- Scheduling to avoid holiday weekends is important although it did not pose a barrier to participants.
- Food service and provision of retreat amenities requires more planning and human resources than expected.
- A “toolkit” for peer supporters that includes icebreakers and certain activities was greatly desired so that participants could immediately use material and facilitation methods in support groups and similar settings.

What appeared to be an especially important component of this pilot was the debriefing of EVERY activity. Absent a meaningful debriefing, certain activities, even the viewing of the Gina Calhoun and Scott Heller interview, have less power and miss the opportunity to relate all training aspects to the purposes of the RTP project.

As a result, the question, “What does this mean to your peer support practice?” became a “mantra” with surprising results. The two-weekend retreat was led by Steve Harrington and he discovered it sometimes required some courage to ask the question not knowing what the responses might be. He discovered, however, that participants enthusiastically described meaningful ways activities could be used in their practices.

Noelle Pollet and Rita Cronise attended both retreat sessions. They took comprehensive notes (they were asked not to participate in any manner and, instead, look for lessons to be learned as the curriculum was delivered) and continue to make modifications to the recovery curriculum.

Implementation issues have become a high priority for the iNAPS RTP team. Many of the RTP advisors have been contacted individually regarding the development of implementation strategies but a conference call is in order to share ideas.

Exploration of having the 2014 national peer support conference in conjunction with Pillars of Peer Support has been initiated in the hopes of focusing on both the RTP recovery curriculum for peer specialists and endorsement/implementation of the peer support practice guidelines. The initial response by Pillars of Peer Support organizers has been extremely encouraging. Much will depend, however, upon the dates of the 2014 Pillars summit and hotel negotiations.

In July, a webinar was presented by Lyn Legere on wellness. This was part of the ongoing RTP webinars designed to introduce participants to the RTP curriculum. Technology support is provided by OptumHealth. And although technical difficulties remain to be an issue, the number of participants continues to increase. Despite audio difficulties, approximately 150 people participated in the July webinar. It appears as though the webinars will be offered after all RTP modules are covered and may lay the foundation for much more interaction with iNAPS stakeholders. Future webinars will be recorded and links available on both the OptumHealth and iNAPS websites. Previous webinars will be recorded so they will be available as well.

Planning for the iNAPS-sponsored 7th Annual National Peer Support Conference, Aug. 27-28 in Anaheim, California, include a plenary session that updates participants on the RTP project. In addition, the RTP project will be discussed, to some extent, at upcoming conferences in Australia and Canada. The iNAPS RTP team will also participate in a session addressing RTP at the Alternatives Conference in Austin, Texas in December. Steve Harrington, Rita Cronise and Antonio Lambert are expected planners/participants for that session.

The iNAPS RTP team continues to find the monthly check-in calls extremely helpful and continual reference to the situational analysis has proven valuable as well. The expertise of Deidra Dain of the Development Services Group (DSG), the primary contractor for the RTP project, has proven extremely helpful not only for the RTP project but for organizational development as well.

In August, the iNAPS RTP team will be contacting the advisory group to arrange for a conference call and key organizations, including the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, the Council of Social Work Education and the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association, will be consulted regarding implementation issues.