

# FACTORS SUPPORTING THE EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG ADULT PEER PROVIDERS: PERSPECTIVES OF PEERS & SUPERVISORS

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Annual Research & Policy Conference on Child, Adolescent, &  
Young Adult Behavioral Health  
March 7, 2017



# Acknowledgements

The Transitions RTC aims to improve the supports for youth and young adults, ages 14-30, with serious mental health conditions who are trying to successfully complete their schooling and training and move into rewarding work lives. We are located at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, Department of Psychiatry, Systems & Psychosocial Advances Research Center. Visit us at:

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The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant with funding from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, 90DP0080-01-00, United States Department of Health and Human Services (ACL GRANT # 90RT5031.). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Additional funding provided by UMass Medical School's Commonwealth Medicine division. The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



# Hello!

- ❖ Vanessa is a clinical social worker turned researcher with experience supervising young adults with lived experience.
- ❖ Jon is nationally-recognized expert in peer support, with years of advocating & researching peer integration. Jon has also supervised young adults with lived experience.
- ❖ The information in this talk can be found in: Delman, J., & Klodnick, V.V. Young Adults with Mental Health Conditions as Peer Support Workers: Perspectives of Workers and Supervisors. *Community Mental Health Journal*, in press. DOI 10.1007/s10597-016-0059-6



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# Peer Support Theory

*“By sharing their experiences, peers bring **hope** to people in recovery and promote a **sense of belonging** within the community.”*

- Peer support is delivered by individuals with **common life experiences** with clients.
- People with mental and/or substance use disorders have a unique capacity to help each other based on a **shared affiliation** & a **deep understanding** of this experience.
- In **mutual support**, people strength & hope to peers, which translates into personal growth, wellness promotion, & **recovery**.

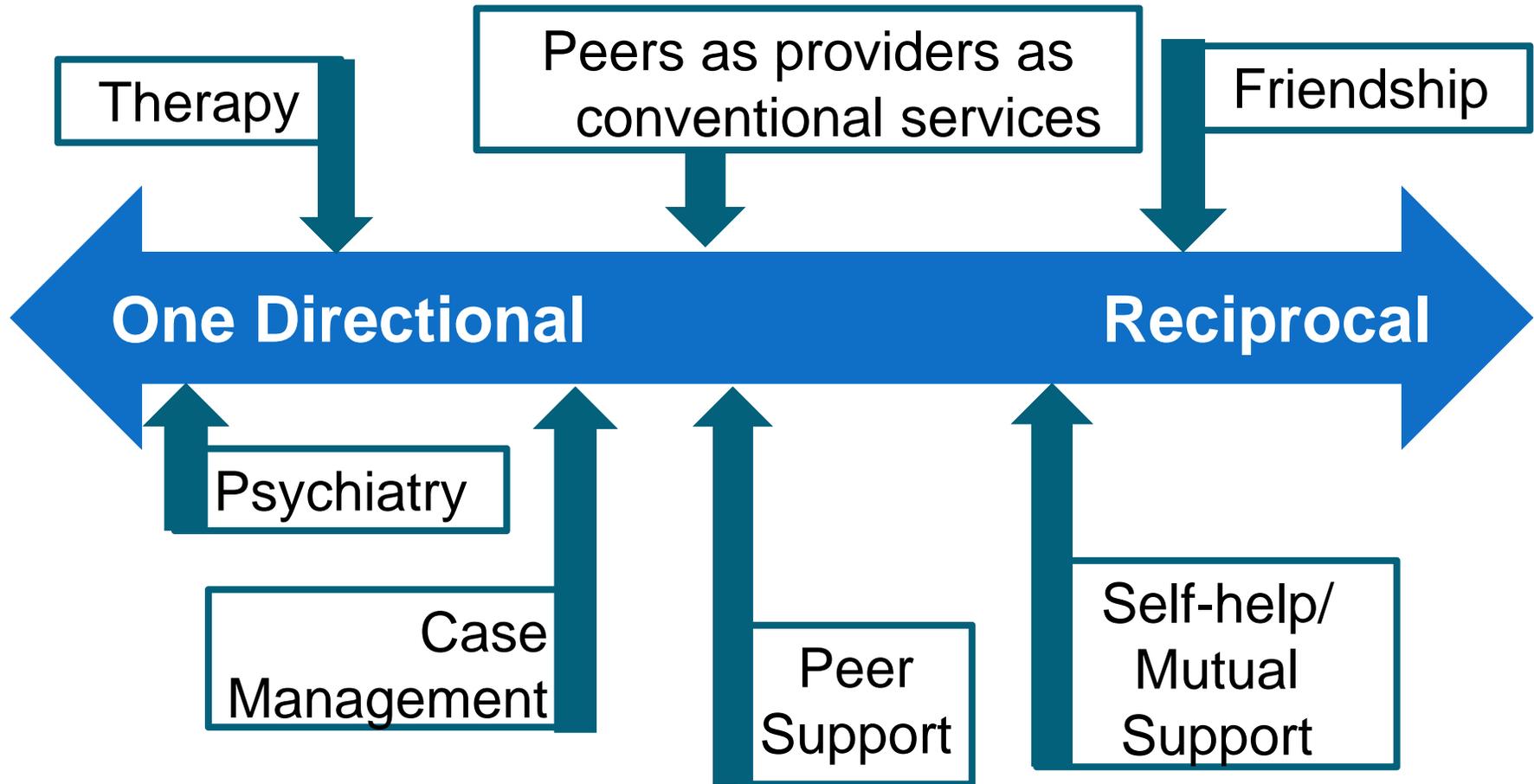


# What really is “Peer Support?”

- Peer support can look different depending on the setting
- Often includes sharing lessons learned; coaching; skill teaching & practice; navigating systems together; advocating with or on behalf of clients; role modeling
- In adult world, there is a focus on certification of peers, with completion of specific trainings & testing
- There is less specification for training TAY Peers; in practice training & development are integrated into supervision



# Continuum of Helping Relationships



Adapted from Davidson et al., 2006

# Evidence for Peer Support?

- ❖ “Peers” are recognized as key in engaging **challenging to engage** populations & helpful with **early engagement**
- ❖ Decreased symptoms, reduced psychiatric hospitalizations, improved quality of life, increased hope & empowerment (Ahmed et al. 2015 ; Chinman et al. 2014)
- ❖ **No research** that directly addresses the impact of peer support for youth or young adults with SMHC – but peer support recognized as valuable by young adult clients & their parents (Radigan et al., 2014)
- ❖ **“Near-age” peer mentoring** programs are popular for at-risk youth (Rhodes, 2008)



# New Scoping Review of Peer Support Services for TAY



Journal of Adolescence

Volume 55, February 2017, Pages 88–115



## Utilization of peers in services for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges: A scoping review

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### Abstract

This scoping review synthesizes published and unpublished information on Youth Peer Support Services (YPSS), where young adults with current or prior mental health challenges provide support services to other youth and young adults currently struggling with similar difficulties. Existing published and unpublished "grey" literature were reviewed, yielding 30 programs included for data extraction and qualitative syntheses using a descriptive analytic framework. Findings identify variations in service delivery structures, program goals, host service systems, peer roles, core competencies, training and supervision needs, outcomes for youth and young adult consumers, as well as organizational readiness needs to integrate YPSS. Recommendations for future research, practice, and policy include more studies evaluating the unique impact of YPSS using rigorous methodological study designs, identifying developmentally appropriate training/supervision strategies and overall service costs and financing options, as well as distinguishing YPSS from other peer models with regard to certification and billing.

## For this project, we asked:

- What factors impact young adult peer provider success in the workplace/on the job?
- **Capital Theory** influenced study design:
  - Human capital
  - Cultural capital
  - Psychological capital (PsyC)
  - Personal social capital
  - Organizational social capital



# And, to answer this question:

- **We went to the experts:** YA Peer Providers & Supervisors
- **YA Peer Provider Eligibility:** Ages 18-30; in role for over 3 months; experienced job success
- **Method:** Conducted 4 focus groups at 2 providers
- **Analysis:** Focus group transcripts were analyzed by a team that included a YA Peer Research Assistant
- **Meaning:** Return to the literature for more sophisticated coding, which led to the expansion of “capital” types



# Participation

## 7 YA Peer Providers

- Mean age=24 years, range=21-26 years
- 100% White
- 4 female & 3 male
- 2.5 yrs in role on average; worked 15-40 hours a week
- 4 had a single administrative supervisors; 3 had both an administrative & clinical supervisor

## 7 Supervisors

- Mean age=44 years, range=25-56
- 5 female; 2 male
- 5 provided administrative supervision; 2 provided clinical supervision



# Findings: Uniqueness of Role

- Primary focus=provide peer support, but included peer bridging, peer navigating & vocational support
- Work is highly satisfying compared to previous positions; 3 had been promoted with increased hours & higher pay
- Work is complex & challenging with conflicts between PPs & other staff common:
  - “It is discouraging when some people on your team ignore what you say in meetings, it was emotionally exhausting, but over time it’s happened less.”*
- Role Confusion with clients & challenges posed with the inherent power imbalance the role introduces



# Findings: Psychological Capital

Theme	Respondent Examples
Resilience	<i>“There are days when I ask myself whether I can do job. Three years ago I would have just left the job if it was difficult or frustrated, but now I fight through the negativity.” [YA PP]</i>
Persistence	<i>“I don’t have the education so I need to continue to prove myself...I show up for every meeting because there is always something to learn” [YA PP]</i>
Job Confidence	<i>“She clearly feels very comfortable in her role, really a natural, and as a result staff and clients believe in her.” [Supervisor]</i>



# Findings: Organizational Social Capital

Theme	Respondent Examples
Supervision	<i>“You need one who is in your corner and not micromanaging, trusting that you will do your job well and so that you’ll come to them when having a tough time.” [YA PP]</i>
Other Staff	<i>“Communicate to the staff person that the peer mentor is taking time [to learn the job], just like with anyone else, so don’t just go to help them like a client- they will rise to the expectation.” [Supervisor]</i>



# Findings: Cultural, Social, & Human

Capital Domain	Theme	Response Example
Cultural	YA PP Communication Style	<i>“You can’t just disagree with staff; you need to explain to them why you disagree using language that is used in a clinical setting.” [YAPP]</i>
Social (Personal)	Close family & significant others	“A few have young children and need lots of help at home. In this case it really makes a difference what kind of boyfriend you have. If you have a bad one, forget about it.” [Supervisor]
Human	Training	<i>“While they learn important skills through trainings, they attend too many and there is no organized training plan for young adults.” [Supervisor]</i>

# So, what does this tell us about how to best support YA PP Success?

- **Novel concepts:** Social Organizational Capital & Psychological Capital
- Efforts to address Psychological & Organizational Capital need to be included to best support YA PPs.
  - Family, friends, and romantic partners that are supportive of work
  - Employer focus – need to improve employer practice & culture
  - Job confidence – address & boost – Employment hope? Grit?
- **Intervention can occur on multiple levels:**
  - Young Adult Peer Provider
  - Individual team practice & culture
  - Organization culture, policy & practice



# Questions? Comments?

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