

MENTAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION IN FLORIDA TRANSFORMATION WORKING GROUP

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STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOVERY/ RESILIENCY BASED SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

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Statewide system transformation requires a clear vision of recovery/resilience, comprehensive planning and the coordinated efforts of all of the key stakeholders. This report describes guiding principles and a step-by-step systems improvement strategy for implementing recovery/resiliency based programs in the Florida mental health system.

Principles for Systems Improvement

The following background principles provide important guideposts for integrating recovery/resiliency-based practices across the state of Florida.

Consumer-Staff Partnerships

Recovery-based models and programs cannot be effective unless they are implemented by staff who form trusting partnerships with persons/families receiving services and persons who are in personal self-help recovery. Recovery-based services are by definition person centered. Consumers/family members should be equal partners in all policy development, program development and service implementation efforts. Strong consumer/staff partnerships are the cornerstone of effective recovery/resiliency-based interventions.

Responsiveness

The districts and programs within the state represent a broad range of attitudes, knowledge, and skill, in implementing recovery-based programs, ranging from uninformed and/or resistant to various levels of competency in implementation. Consequently, our approach to statewide change needs to be responsive to the level of each district and to the programs within each district. (*i.e. Exposure, experience, implementation*)

Strength-Based Approach

To achieve enduring systems change, we should build upon strengths. Program activities in the Suncoast Region and District 8 are prime examples of localities with evolving approaches. We need to identify bases of strength and recognize them as “exemplars” and “champions” in our planning and implementation efforts. Our goal should be to support the passion and skills of these providers and consumers so that it will become contagious and spread across programs throughout the state.

Single Model Trap

The International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services (IAPSRS), now USPRA (United States Psychosocial Rehabilitation Association), has expressed concern about the adoption of a single model of rehabilitation and community support as a matter of policy. Single model approaches can ultimately have the effect of limiting consumer choice. IAPSRS recommends that states work in collaboration with consumers and families to identify the constellation of services that are most needed and to support the development of diverse models in each community.

Our approach to implementing recovery-based service should include the full range of models that are consistent with recovery principles, such as clubhouse, supported housing and employment, housing first, skills teaching, peer support, and assertive community treatment (FACT). Our focus should be on supporting the implementation and integration of these and other models in achieving outcomes that are desirable to consumers.

The Need for a Common Framework Specific to the Needs of Florida Programs

Because there are a diverse range of models, programs, and services that come under the recovery umbrella, a framework to guide statewide planning and implementation will be of critical importance. A state-level Transformation Framework will provide an anchor for systems change efforts at the district/region and local levels, and should link the logical connections between the needs of consumers, services, and intended outcomes. It also provides means to develop a feedback loop to monitor program progress, a point of reference for all planning, implementation, and systems change or system improvement efforts.

Recommended Approaches for Mental Health System Transformation

This proposal describes a process of strategic planning/implementation that is guided by a simple state level framework and implemented at the district/local level. All key stakeholders are given the opportunity to participate. The state

and stakeholders develop (approve) a set of principles and critical action steps that serve as a foundation for district level planning.

Because each district is at a different level of development, implementation plans will differ. Districts who have little awareness or knowledge about recovery will need to be exposed (oriented) to fundamental concepts and practices. Districts at an intermediate level may choose to focus on tasks specific to program development/implementation that will take them to the “next level”, and districts with more advanced programs may seek to build upon these strengths in developing district-wide initiatives. However, all plans are guided by the structure of the state-level Transformation Framework (including common definitions, guiding principles, practice guidelines, and system improvement plan).

1. Develop A Guiding Transformation Framework:

- A Transformation framework provides the key point of reference for all transformation activities. It should include the vision, principles, program types, program activities, clinical interventions and outcomes that will guide the approach to implementing a recovery based system. The framework will ensure that there is a common understanding of recovery-based principles and practices at the state, district, and program level.
- Much of the information for this framework has been prepared on pages 4 to 6 of the 10/3/05 state plan. In addition, I recommend adapting frameworks that have been developed by other states and national organizations to best meet the needs of Florida. I have attached practice guidelines and a self-assessment tool from Connecticut that provides an excellent example, as well as a set of questions that can help service providers determine levels of recovery capability.
- This framework needs buy-in from key service providers and consumer stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation.

2. Implement a Statewide Implementation Group (Transformation Work Group):

The Transformation Work Group (TWG) is essentially a state level steering committee that should be responsible for providing critical inter-agency oversight of the transformation process and for ensuring that key stakeholders are supporting this process.

The following are key tasks that will require TWG leadership, support, and oversight:

- Transformation Framework Buy-In:

The TWG should take the lead in getting buy-in from key stakeholders on the Transformation Framework. Details of the framework do not need to be complete to start this process. It can evolve over time with the support of the Recovery and Resiliency Task Force.

- Support District/Local Level Planning and Implementation

District/level planning and implementation is the heart and soul of the transformation effort. A primary role for the TWG is to respond to issues that are identified by communities and to help maximize strength areas and address barriers to implementation.

- Establish Recovery and Resiliency Task Force

The Recovery and Resiliency Task Force (R&R) should function as the working arm of the TWG and provide the home base for state-level implementation activities. Some of the key R&R tasks will include:

- Assemble Baseline Information:

Conduct a brief survey of programs in each of the districts based on the transformation framework to establish a baseline of the principles and practices of recovery-based interventions. The survey should target the full constellation of programs that are currently implemented, including: clubhouses, supportive housing/living, supported employment, Florida Assertive Community Treatment (FACT), Drop In/Self Help Centers, Intensive Case Management, etc.

- Develop an Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan should be based on the Transformation Framework. It should also integrate findings from the baseline survey, and provide general guidelines for all of the districts. Consumer and service provider involvement are critical for the plan to be viable.

The plan should identify priorities as part of a strategic approach. For example, if consumer involvement and direction is identified as a top priority, Person Centered Planning may be identified as a required core competency and a primary activity of the Implementation Plan

The plan should account for infrastructure development: personnel and other resources that will be required to successfully implement the project

The plan should also identify a “district anchor” or home base, with an identifiable infrastructure, including staff persons and community partners who have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Each district should have a staff person who can assume leadership and facilitate the process of systems change.

- Monitor the progress of the plan.

A standing committee should develop a structure and process to monitor progress and to ensure that the project is accountable.

3. Involve/Orient Districts:

- Orient district managers to the transformation/recovery initiative.
- Define roles and responsibilities, and establish buy-in for implementing key principles and practices.
- Develop leadership at the district level for the project.

4. Conduct Recovery Kickoff Event:

- Create an inspirational event to mark the beginning of the statewide initiative.
- Bring together key participants, including a national-level recovery expert to provide inspiration/visibility, senior state-level staff to articulate project vision, as well as local-level consumers, and providers, and key stakeholders from throughout the state to provide a “ground-level” perspective.

5. Develop District-Specific Implementation Plans:

- Each district should develop specific implementation plans based on the Transformation Framework. The plan should establish priorities

based on the specific needs of the district, the functioning of its programs and the levels of readiness to implement. Priorities for training and technical assistance can then be identified.

- Each district should identify a “home” or anchor for the plan, such as any existing planning committees (District 11 Planning Council, Adult Planning Committees, etc.) who will be accountable at the local level. If such committees do not exist, one will need to be created. Key task will include directing the process of orientation/education, coordinating trainings, facilitating meetings, and evaluation of existing services,

6. Develop Information Sharing Mechanisms:

- Develop formal mechanism for district level and state level communication on the progress of the implementation plans.
- Develop a Florida Recovery web site and bulletin board.
- Develop information sharing mechanisms that maintain a statewide perspective for the project and that create opportunities for districts/localities to share information across the state.
- Provide positive example by featuring exemplary programs and staff (champions).
- Provide a forum for consumer participation.
- Provide a mechanism for DCF Office input.
- Provide a means to disseminate tools and important publications.

Conclusion

Recovery refers to the process in which people are able to live, learn, and participate fully in their communities. It builds upon the natural resilience in individuals that enables them to rise above stresses and adversities associated with serious mental illnesses. The President’s New Freedom Report provides a clear vision for transforming our systems of care in order that they may facilitate rather than inhibit the process of recovery. However, to be effective, the process of transformation must take place at the state and local level. This proposal describes an approach to realizing the recovery vision in the state of Florida by engaging the community of stakeholders in a structured process of systems change with clear goals and objectives. These efforts are designed to promote the implementation of evidence-based practices that improve the functioning of persons with mental illnesses in domains relevant to recovery. Our hope is that this initiative, much like the New Freedom Commission, will become a milestone for Florida, marking a new era of recovery for all persons with serious mental illnesses.

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