

CIL-NET at ILRU Presents...

**Effective Service Coordination: Engaging Consumers
with a Holistic Approach to IL Services**

***Effective Components of a
Peer Support Program: One Center's Model***

March 27, 2013

1:30 P.M. -2:45 P.M.

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Agenda

- Definition of Volunteer Peer Mentor Program
- Overview of ABIL Volunteer Peer Mentor Program
- Review barriers to Volunteer Peer Mentor Programs
- Discuss effective program components

Definition of Volunteer Peer Mentor Program



- Peer support is a **Core Service** and thus is offered at every Center for Independent Living
- How we do that varies by Center
 - Paid staff, volunteer peer support mentors
 - One on one meetings, groups, or a mixture of both
- Each Center must consider what will work best for their consumers and what can be maintained by their staff

Definition of Volunteer Peer Mentor Program, cont'd.



Peer Support as an organized Peer Support Program

- An organized Volunteer Peer Mentor Program trains and supervises volunteers who act as role models and coaches for others with disabilities
 - This does not include part-time staff, or paid Independent Living Specialists or Advocates
 - This **does not** replace staff providing peer support as appropriate, but is an additional support for the consumers

CIL Mentoring Nationally

Programs vary from Center to Center

- In a 2008 CIL-Net survey, 61.3% of the respondents stated that they offered an organized peer mentor program
- 53.7% stated they had a formal training program/curriculum for their peer mentors

CIL-NET, December 2008, *Peer Support Services in Centers for Independent Living*

CIL Mentoring Nationally, cont'd.

- 38.7% of respondents indicated they do NOT have a peer support program, and of that group, 53.2% said they once DID have an organized program but found it difficult to maintain

CIL-NET, December 2008, *Peer Support Services in Centers for Independent Living*

Overview of Peer Support

- Mentoring is at the heart of the Independent Living movement
- Mentors work with anyone who is adapting to living with a disability or seeking to increase their independence
- Peer Mentors can utilize their own personal experience living with a disability to empower others in reaching their independent living goals
- Sometimes reluctant leaders are the best because consumers may not realize what they have to offer as mentors.

Overview of Peer Support, cont'd.

- We know it works
 - Strong research supports the peer support model
- Other groups have also successfully utilized peer support models
 - AA
 - Weight Watchers
 - Mental health community

ABIL Peer Mentor Program

- Began in 1990
- Justification for the program
 - ABIL had a large service area with few staff
 - We knew consumers and community members who had untapped knowledge and resources that they could share with others
 - CIL leadership had utilized a peer mentor and found it a beneficial experience

ABIL Peer Mentor Program, cont'd.

- Peer Mentor Program Today
 - 40 active mentors who volunteered 2000 hours during FY 11-12
 - Some of the mentors, along with other volunteers, provided an additional 8200 hours of technical and clerical support to ABIL programs.

Volunteer Peer Mentor Program Goals

- Provide qualified peer mentors to teach independent living skills
- Support ABIL consumers in reaching their independent living goals
- Support ABIL staff and programs

Who Coordinates ABIL's Volunteer Mentoring Services?



- **ABIL designated a full time staff person**
 - Effective Volunteer Coordinator qualities
 - Funded by Rehab Act DOA Part C funds
- **The Volunteer Coordinator coordinates the Peer Mentor Program**
 - Responsible for the recruitment, orientation, and training of mentors
 - Organizes matches
 - Conducts program evaluations
 - Volunteer support and recognition

Who are ABIL Volunteer Peer Mentors?



- **Individuals with disabilities who:**
 - are already living independently
 - are integrated into the community
 - have a desire to help others do the same
- **Peer Mentors are NOT, nor do they try to be, medical professionals, counselors or therapists**

Paid or Volunteer?

- Programs vary by Center, some train and pay qualified mentors
- ABIL believes that mentors should be volunteers for several reasons:
 - May mean more to the mentee if their mentor is someone who chooses to be with them
 - Mentors being there voluntarily help to contradict the disempowering role of “patient” many mentees experience
 - Mentors can be available to the mentee more than business hours (evenings and weekends)

Who Receives Volunteer Peer Mentoring?



- **Mentees are individuals with disabilities who:**
 - Are ABIL consumers who have been through an initial application process with a consumer service record
 - Are working one-on-one with an ABIL staff on specific goals they have identified
 - Not every ABIL consumer is referred to participate in the Peer Mentor Program. Consumers must be ready and committed to full participation with a mentor.

What do ABIL Mentors Do?

- Work with any ABIL consumer who is adapting to a disability or seeking to increase their independence
- Help newly disabled individuals adapt to living with a disability
- Have regular contact with mentee
 - Mentors must agree to be in touch with a mentee a minimum of two times a month

What do ABIL Mentors Do, cont'd.

- Teach specific Independent Living skills
 - budgeting, using public transportation, increasing self-esteem
 - role model and teach self advocacy skills
- Assist in finding and connecting to community resources
- Provide support and encouragement
- Advocate with service providers

Additional ABIL Peer Mentor Volunteer Opportunities



- Peer Mentor Volunteers participate in a variety of other capacities
 - Disability Awareness Presentations
 - Group Mentoring Sessions
 - Group Volunteer Activities
 - Community Advocacy
 - Community Outreach

Barriers to Successful Mentor Programs



- Inappropriate referrals
- Making effective matches
 - Mentors ready to take self-responsibility
- Role of the mentor
- Inappropriate behavior of mentors or mentees
- Ongoing need for new mentors

Barriers to Mentor Programs, cont'd.

- **Funding** for dedicated staff person to coordinate program
- **Service area**
 - Rural area vs. Urban
 - Technology
 - Transportation
- **Volunteer Coordinator**—wrong person for the job, lack of appropriate temperament and skills

Taking on Barriers

- These barriers seem to be common among Centers offering peer mentoring services
- Many of these barriers can be addressed by the core program components you develop

Volunteer Coordinator Qualities

- **Volunteer Coordinator**—Your program totally depends upon the right person coordinating it. This is a highly skilled role, somewhat like a human resource coordinator with counseling or social work skills and training.
 - Adequate mentor support and/or match evaluation skills
 - Organizational, communication and collaboration skills.
 - Good coaching, motivational, judgment and assessment skills
 - Commitment to ongoing professional development
 - Good IL Philosophy—helping vs. dependency

Effective Volunteer Peer Support Program Components



- Recruitment
- Mentor qualifications
- Mentor training
- Mentor supervision
- Mentor recognition
- Program evaluation

Mentor/Mentee Recruitment & Selection



- **Mentor Recruitment**—Ongoing outreach for new mentors is important in maintaining a diverse and active mentor list
 - Volunteers call Centers looking for opportunities
 - Agency newsletter articles, local publications, and community outreach presentations
 - Referrals from Center staff
 - Consumers who received mentoring volunteer to give back what they received

Mentor/Mentee Recruitment & Selection, cont'd.



- **Mentee recruitment**—Mentees are consumers, already working with Center staff, such as ILS staff
- **Policies and Procedures**—Create program paper work specific to the Peer Mentor Program
 - Consumer Request for a Peer Mentor form
 - Sign a confidentiality release specific to the PM Program

Mentor/Mentee Recruitment & Selection, cont'd. 2



Mentee Recruitment Tips

- ⇒ Tap into those advocacy and transportation leaders in your community
- ⇒ An application and screening tool helps ensure that the individual is appropriate for mentoring services and gives the mentor information on the mentee's needs

Peer Mentor Qualifications

Peer mentors must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Complete an application and provide character references
- Complete a phone or in-person interview with Volunteer Coordinator or staff person coordinating the services

Peer Mentor Qualifications, cont'd.

- Have a **Mentor Rules & Guidelines Form** that sets boundaries and establishes expectations
 - Mentor must sign at Peer Mentor Training agreeing to:
 - maintain consumer confidentiality
 - report any consumer suicidal or homicidal thoughts or suspicion of abuse
 - maintain proper mentor/friendship relationship (No mentor/ mentee dating!)

Peer Mentor Qualifications, cont'd. 2

- **Background check**
 - Mentors must sign a Criminal Self-Disclosure form indicating that they have no felony convictions.
 - Mentors must successfully complete a fingerprint and background check

Peer Mentor Qualifications, cont'd. 3

- **Peer Mentor Qualifications Tip**—Have your application and other forms in place before you start recruiting.
 - What characteristics are important for a mentor to have? Have a Mentor Job description.
 - Writing your Rules and Guidelines policy first will help you focus on what skills and abilities your mentors should exhibit

ABIL Orientation and Training

- Mandatory for all mentors
- CIL staff assist in presenting the curriculum
- Participants get to meet each other and learn why others are interested in mentoring
- Peer mentor panel—current mentors share their mentoring experiences and answer questions
- Participants receive a training manual

→ **Tip: Orientation training is a good opportunity to evaluate volunteer's potential for 1-1 mentoring.**

ABIL Orientation and Training, cont'd. 2

Independent Living Philosophy

Though most participants have a disability, many are unfamiliar with Independent Living Philosophy, People First Language etc.

→ This must be provided in the training in addition to the information on mentoring.

ABIL Peer Orientation and Training, cont'd. 3



Volunteer Duty to Report Policy Form

- Mentor must sign the Volunteer Duty Report at the Peer Mentor Training
- Outlines requirements for mentors if their mentee reports feeling suicidal, homicidal, or reports any incident of abuse

ABIL Peer Orientation and Training, cont'd. 4



Crisis Intervention or “Pass the Buck” policy describes the ABIL **Volunteer Duty to Report Policy**

- Peer Mentors are required to notify the Volunteer Coordinator immediately about any expressions of threat to self (suicidal) or threat to others (homicidal). If supervisor cannot be reached immediately, volunteer will seek out another ABIL supervisor to report the incident.

ABIL Peer Orientation and Training, cont'd. 5



- **Mentor Training Manual Break Down**
 - Independent Living Philosophy
 - ABIL
 - Adaptation to Disability
 - Disability Liberation and Awareness
 - Self Advocacy
 - Language and Etiquette
 - Goal Planning

Ongoing Training and Development

- **Follow-up training opportunities include:**
 - Self-advocacy, legislative advocacy, and community resource workshops, or Disability Liberation/ Attitudinal Barriers workshops
- At ABIL, the Volunteer Coordinator does training one-on-one with mentors as needed
 - Coaching Mentor to learn about a new disability, or community resource
 - Coaching mentees through challenging situations

Ongoing Training and Development, cont'd.



- **Training as opportunity** to get to know the mentors better and make sure they are good fit for your program.
- **Provide a manual** that mentors can refer to at anytime after the training. The manual helps set the expectations for the mentors.
- **Don't be afraid** to train mentors on the hard topics (i.e., crisis intervention, liability)
- **Volunteers need to know who you are and what you believe.** Devote part of your training to teaching IL philosophy, disability history, and the core programs.

Mentor Supervision

Mentors need to be treated individually

- Some need little supervision
- Others are just one step ahead of their mentees and need more support
- Some mentors do not like working one-on-one but really enjoy community advocacy
 - Many enjoy participating in Disability Awareness Presentations, and the Group Mentoring Sessions

Volunteer Peer Mentor Supervision

- At ABIL the Volunteer Coordinator is the primary contact and support for all the mentors
 - It is critical that mentors feel comfortable contacting the coordinator with any questions or concerns
 - Mentors stay active longer if they have a trusting, interactive relationship with the coordinator
- **VC Supervision:** Volunteer Coordinator needs supervisory support to discuss difficult situations as they come up.

Peer Mentor Program Supervision

- **Document** mentor/mentee contact and progress of match and work on mentee's goals
- **Track volunteer hours** which can be used as in-kind donations for purposes of program funding matches
- **Meet regularly with referring staff** to maintain open communication and ensure that staff understand the role of the peer mentors, and that staff mentee referrals are appropriate

ABIL Mentor Program Evaluation

- Effectiveness of program relies on **consistent evaluation** of both the mentor and mentee experiences
 - At ABIL, surveys are typically conducted at one, three, and six months from the date of the initial meeting
 - The Volunteer Coordinator manages mentor evaluations and referring staff manage mentee evaluations
- ⇒ **Evaluation Tip**—In your evaluation forms include questions about the quality of the match and the overall effectiveness of the program

Volunteer Peer Mentor Recognition

- **Value celebrating and recognizing accomplishments!**
 - ABIL holds an annual holiday event in December for mentors and mentees
 - The annual “Spirit of ABIL” Awards reception honoring peer mentor volunteers
 - Feature mentor/mentee stories in monthly newsletter periodically
 - **Recognition Tips**—Doesn’t need to be expensive or a significant amount of staff time to plan. Mentors really appreciate the thought.

Benefits of Mentoring to Mentors

Mentors report satisfaction:

- From being able to “give back”
 - Benefiting by increasing their own advocacy skills
 - awareness of community resources
 - leadership skills
 - sense of community
 - knowledge of civil rights
 - Increased self-esteem and self-confidence
- Often set new personal goals

Benefits of Mentoring to Mentees

- Don't have to start from scratch or re-invent the wheel
- Offers of hope, support, knowledge and resources
- Achievement of Independent Living Goals
- Increases self-confidence and self-esteem

Benefits of Mentoring to Community

Mentors and mentees often go on to contribute to their community by:

- Volunteering
- Continuing education
- Finding employment
- Increasing their disability advocacy

Summary

- **Focus on the key** components of recruitment, peer mentor qualifications, training, supervision, evaluation and recognition to build an effective peer mentor program.
- **Don't let fear hold you back!** For all the barriers that can occur in offering a peer mentor program, the benefits to the mentors, mentees, and community are undeniable.

Resources

ABIL's Peer Mentor Training Manual—

- <http://wiki.ilru.net/images/f/fd/ABILPeerMentorManual.pdf>

For more information

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