

Forensic Peer Support: Research & Implementation Science Perspectives

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Mechanisms & Contributions

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Mechanisms of Peer Support

Sense of community/sense of belonging

- Especially important in the context of stigmatized group identities/experiences
- Criminal justice record – housing & employment

Other psychological variables

- Hope, confidence, positive self-regard

Experiential knowledge

- Navigating systems, benefits
- Managing symptoms, substance use
- Social rejection, discrimination

'Connector' and 'bridger' functions

- Clinical <-> community resources
- Clinical <-> social/community relationships



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Potentially Unique Contributions

Credibility of support/guidance with respect to:

- Substance use in the context of incarceration/release/probation
- Navigating incarceration related institutional trauma & “post-incarceration syndrome”
 - Understanding and acceptance
 - Listening and *hearing*
 - Experiential knowledge
- Gang involvement (as applicable)
- Crime (as applicable)
 - Including navigation of relationships with current/former ‘criminal associates’
 - Forming alternative social networks

Employment/career discovery

- In light of the ramifications of a CJ history

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Post-Incarceration Syndrome (Gorski; Liem & Kunst, 2013)

Institutionalized personality traits

- Stem from deprivations experienced during incarceration & the often high threat prison environment
- Chronic learned helplessness
- Psychological defenses
 - E.g. behavioral adaptations to deal with threats/coercion/bullying

Social sensory deprivation

- Prolonged exposure to solitary confinement
- Restricted social contact
- Restricted sensory experience

Also valuable parallels with returning service members

- Eg loss of community crystallized through common hardship/trauma

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Implementation

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Organizational Preparation & Support

Buy in from key organizational (and community) thought leaders

- Executive leadership
- Senior clinicians

Buy in for the broader values in which peer support is embedded

- Recovery orientation
- De-pathologization – focusing on social goals and contexts rather than intrinsic illness or psychopathology
- Belief that people can/do change



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Optimizing Implementation

Finding & hiring peer support workers who match the target client population

- Credibility tends to hinge on
 - Similar experiences, including navigation of the systems that clients are working within

Training and ongoing coaching

- Specifically, training that maximizes responsiveness to the effects & consequences of incarceration
 - Psychological, legal, physical, social, environmental
- Understanding contexts/experiences not personally shared
 - Eg hearing voices, violence/aggression, substance use
- Co-reflection when possible
 - Deepening understanding of challenges faced through collaborative discussion and reflection with peers

Materials that support implementation

- Strong awareness of workplace accommodations (ADA), processes in place
- Peer role manual
- Concrete tools, potentially including psychosocial/community needs & strengths assessment, WRAP or PADs etc

Wages kept as high as possible

Investment in career development & career ladders, where possible

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Training in Other States

George DBHDD

- week-long intensive, didactic and experiential training
- Focuses on helping FPS use their own experience of past CJ involvement and recovery to help individuals they will support with transition/release planning

Pennsylvania

- 3 day intensive FPS training curriculum
- Train the trainer model (to build capacity statewide)

Connecticut

- FPS training developed at Yale PRCH
- 3 day intensive
 - Understanding the culture and impact of incarceration
 - Rates and impact of trauma/PTSD, including trauma experienced within prison settings
 - Trauma informed care as it applies in the specific contexts of FPS
 - Person centered planning & Intentional Peer Support
 - Citizenship – proactive focus on reentry as a return to citizenship
 - Employment with a CJ history
 - Probation and parole



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Performance Monitoring & Evaluation

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Performance & Outcomes Monitoring

Fundamental to quality improvement in general

We have to understand problems & gaps in order to address them

Funder-driven reporting/monitoring not the same as high quality CQI

- The goal is *not* to make the program look good

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Measuring individualized goals/priorities & linking goals to peer support relationship(s)

INSPIRE

People talk about recovery in different ways. One way to think about it is 'living a satisfying and hopeful life'. This questionnaire asks about how your worker supports your recovery. The Support section asks about areas that may be important to your recovery and how your worker supports you in these areas. The Relationship section asks about your relationship with your worker. If you do not want to answer a question then just leave it blank. Please answer all of the questions about _____ (name of worker).

Support section

Please read each question and decide whether it is important to you or not. If you circle No then go to the next question. If your answer is Yes, then circle the grey box to rate how much support you get from your worker.

An important part of my recovery is...

	No	Yes	Not at all	Not much	Somewhat	Quite a lot	Very much
S1 Feeling supported by other people							
S2 Having positive relationships with other people							
S3 Having support from other people who use services							
S4 Feeling part of my community							
S5 Feeling hopeful about my future							
S6 Believing that I can recover							
S7 Feeling motivated to make changes							

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Support section

An important part of my recovery is...

	No	Yes	Not at all	Not much	Somewhat	Quite a lot	Very much
S8 Being able to manage my mental health							
S9 Trying new things							
S20 Building on my strengths							

Relationship section

Circle the option that best matches your relationship with your worker

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
R1 I feel listened to by my worker					
R2 I feel supported by my worker					
R3 I feel that my worker takes my hopes and dreams seriously					
R4 My worker respects me					
R5 My worker treats me as an individual – more than a 'diagnosis' or a 'label'					
R6 My worker supports me to make my own decisions					
R7 My worker keeps hopeful for me even when I feel at my lowest					

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

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QUESTIONS
