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Problem Statement

Behavioral Health Consumers (patients) trained as Peer Specialists have limited employment prospects and opportunities for career advancement. Few workforce development programs exist to provide training in healthcare related fields.

Discovery

I proposed a model to use MHA Workforce Development funding to support Peer Specialists to obtain training as Medical Assistants and assist with job placement and support.

Conducted 59 Interviews discovering the following:

1. Early strong support from Department Leadership including the Director of Workforce Development who became a strong advocate for this project. Targeted funding was identified.
2. Peer/Consumer Leadership was enthusiastic and helped to spread the word among Peer Specialists and helped to identify a cohort with interest.
3. Merritt College: Dean, Medical Assistant Training Director and the Director, Office for Student Disability Services all took interest in supporting this program and individual students.
4. Some skepticism voiced by leadership of Primary Care Programs.
5. Family Partners were originally considered for participation. Based on interviews, Family Partners were ultimately not included.
6. Significant barriers were identified including economic, criminal convictions and immigration status. These barriers would reduce the pool of potential participants.

Goals and Objectives

Goal:

To provide a supported pathway for Behavioral Health Peer Specialists to obtain training as Medical Assistants and to successfully obtain and maintain employment in various healthcare settings.

Outcome-oriented Objective:

Five Certified Peer Specialists will be recruited, and enrolled in Medical Assistant training at Merritt College. (12 month supported training program with externship placement). With departmental support, these five will complete training and obtain employment as Medical Assistants with peer Specialist expertise within 18 months.

Results

Interest and enrollment:

- Supported Medical Assistant (MA) training program promoted to certified Peer Specialists working in Alameda County.
- Recruitment was through messaging, social media and scheduled meetings.



Experience in Program:

- One student left the program stating that it was "too much." One had to leave due to immigration status.
- Participation has been at varying paces. One student is ready for externship placement.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned:

- There is support for workforce development programs training behavioral health consumers in healthcare roles.
- Strong partnerships were essential for implementation.
- Barriers exist for many interested individuals. (e.g. past convictions, immigration status, economics).
- Peer Specialists have so far been successful in a Medical Assistant training programs.
- This project served to enhance trust between a Medical Director and the organized consumer movement.

Next Steps:

- Current pilot students are 6 months into their training. No student has yet entered the externship portion of their training program.
- Four pilot students remain in the program and remain committed to completion.
- Job placement for trainees remains the final challenge.

Mission Model Canvas

Key Partners Office of Consumer Empowerment (excitement and buy-in) Alameda Health Consortium (entry level opportunities) Office of Workforce Development (funds) Merritt College (training)	Key Activities Promote to eligible participants Identify entry level opportunities Identify training opportunities Identify funding Key Resources Money (Workforce Education and Training Funds) Staff / faculty available to do training	Value Propositions Peer Specialists will have improved employment prospects in healthcare environments Primary Care FQHCs will have a workforce stream of Medical Assistants with Behavioral Health expertise	Buy-in & Support Identified and deployed consumer champions for this project Engaged Behavioral Health Executive Leadership along with the Director, Office Workforce Development Deployment Promote during organized consumer meetings (e.g. Pool of Consumer Champions) Social media and websites to engage Peer Specialists	Beneficiaries Primary: Consumers / Peer Specialists Secondary: Primary Care Providers Secondary: Director of Workforce Development
Mission Budget/Cost Cost of training (\$ amount) Coverage of certain expenses for participants (\$ amount) Salary support in early (first year) employment (\$ amount)		Mission Achievement/Impact Factors Department Mission Value regarding consumer recovery and employment Opportunity to appropriately spend down MHA funding targeting Workforce Education and Training		