

# Focus 2.0

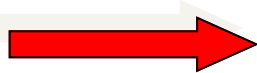
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Issue 8

## What is the Focus 2.0?

The *Focus 2.0* newsletter highlights important issues in mental health, providing timely information on recovery, peer support, and the value of including people with lived experience in the mental health system of care.

Have a suggestion for a topic? Let us know!



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## Mental Health and Natural Disasters: Including Your Disaster Plan in Your Recovery Plan

A recent Associated Press article (available here <https://apnews.com/article/hurricanes-health-mental-fort-myers-natural-disasters-434f72c8db042bf074fb10b313b553b6>) that examined Hurricane Ian's toll on residents of Southwest Florida brought attention to the unfortunate reality that natural disasters are not only destructive events, but also traumatic ones. While the need for immediate rescue, first aid, food, and shelter might be the most pressing short-term concerns, the trauma of surviving a natural disaster can linger for weeks, months, and even years, straining communities' ability to cope. Counseling and mental health services, which may already be in short supply, are forced to deal with a new group of disaster survivors, with between a third and a half of people living through a disaster experiencing mental distress.

While the effect of natural disasters on previously well people drives new demand for mental health services, the impact for individuals already living with a serious mental health condition can also be profound. According to research from the University of Delaware cited in the AP article, "Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety rise along with substance abuse. Those with existing mental disorders are at greater risk of having those conditions exacerbated by the trauma." Effec-



tively, a significant natural disaster can traumatize the well, and re-traumatize those already living with serious mental health conditions.

The good news for people in the mental health community is that while disasters can be disruptive, sudden, and unpredictable, there is something you can do: prepare!

The idea of disaster preparedness is probably a familiar one, especially for people living in areas that are prone to certain types of natural disasters, like hurricanes in the Southeast, tornados in the Great Plains, or earthquakes in California and the Pacific Northwest. If not, there are great resources like <https://www.ready.gov/plan> to help you think ahead, develop a plan, and build a disaster supply kit.

Beyond the practical issues of emergency supplies and evacuation plans, there are additional recovery and wellness considerations to think about for people with serious mental health conditions. A great way to account for them is to add a recovery and wellness piece to the disaster plan, or, coming at it from the other direction, add a disaster preparedness component to an existing recovery plan.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Who is in your support network? The time before, during, and after a disaster can be hard. Who can you turn to for support, and how can you support them too?
- How will your peer support network communicate when a disaster happens?
- If you have to evacuate, where will you go? Are there people in your network that live in other regions that can support your recovery and help you stay well while you figure things out?
- Do you take medication? If you know a disaster is approaching, ask your provider about obtaining an additional supply, as pharmacy access can be limited during disaster recovery.
- Do you rely on regular counselling, therapy, or other professional mental health services? What is your plan if you can't access them? Does your provider have a plan for disruptions to their services?

There is no doubt that a natural disaster can be scary, and can lead to additional trauma for people with mental health conditions. That said, people in the mental health recovery community understand the power of recovery plans, peer networks, and mutual support. By weaving disaster planning and readiness for potential disruption in our wellness practices into our recovery plans, we can get ahead of the trauma that a natural disaster can bring.



# So You're Ready to Work, Now What?

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For people living with serious mental health conditions, job-seeking and employment can be complicated. Finding and maintaining employment is an essential part of recovery and life in the community, but they face unique challenges in getting the right job and succeeding in the workplace.

To help peers navigate the process, **CAFÉ TAC has developed a 12-part interactive employment training series.** It examines the process of finding, applying for, and succeeding in a job through the lens of recovery, helping peers to identify strengths and skills, aligning the job-seeking and employment experience with their personal recovery path, and providing opportunity for discussion in a peer-centered space.

## A 12-Part Series on Employment

### So You're Ready to Work, Now What?

- Resume Writing, Cover Letters
- Skill Identification
- Self-Care while Seeking Employment
- The Job Search Process
- Explaining Lived Experience
- Interviewing

### You Got the Job, Now What?

- Professionalism
- Communicating Effectively
- Conflict Resolution
- Mental Health Check-Ins
- Self-Care while Working
- It's Not Working Out-How to Leave a Job Gracefully

The series began in October and runs through March, addressing topics from resume writing and cover letters to how to leave a job that's not the right fit. You can register for the series, view recordings of previous sessions, and check out the tools and templates we've shared at <https://cafetacenter.net/cafetac-presents-so-youre-ready-to-work-now-what/>.

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## SAMHSA Launches Office of Recovery

Did you know that SAMHSA has launched a new "Office of Recovery"? The announcement about this new office was made in September, with a promise to "advance the agency's commitment to, and support of, recovery for all Americans." While recovery has been an aspect of many of the nation's lead agency for mental health and substance use's programs going back decades, the introduction of an office specifically designated to promote recovery signifies a recognition that recovery is a foundational cross-cutting priority for SAMHSA, and for the nation.

You can read the full announcement at <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202109300228>, and visit their website at <https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/offices-centers/or>.

# Capacity Corner: A Column about Capacity-Building for Your Peer-Run Organization

CAFÉ TAC is pleased to share this feature, a column from CAFÉ TAC Training Coordinator John Ferrone on leadership challenges within peer-run organizations, where many advocates with lived experience direct their efforts to promote recovery and inspire change.

This column's topic is **Your People are Your Future: Invest in Them**

Your organization's future success is entirely dependent upon one thing: your people. It's not money. It's not marketing. It's not policies. It's your people.

In other words, the talent (in the form of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, or "KSA's") that your people bring to the table is what determines whether or not your organization will bring in funding, or how well it will conduct marketing, or how well it can either shape or adapt to polices, etc.

Beyond this obvious statement, **what is your role as a leader with respect to building the human capital capacity of your organization** such that you are giving your organization the best chance at being successful and sustainable?

Here are some questions that will help you begin thinking in that direction:

1. How often do you help your people assess their current skills and knowledge? And when you do, do you work with them to identify needs and gaps, as well as a plan to address those needs and gaps in skills and knowledge?
2. When you consider your Vision for the organization, have you identified the skills and knowledge needed in order to achieve that Vision? And, did you map your team's collective skills and knowledge back to that Vision and identify any gaps that need to be bridged?
3. What is your annual budget for professional development? In other words, how much money do you set aside each year for your people to make themselves better via training and other professional development opportunities, including conferences? Don't forget the cost of travel, if necessary.
4. Does the Board of Directors value the need to build your human capital capacity? And, do they do it themselves, as a Board?



5. Do you promote a culture of learning and professional development? With so many free resources available via the internet (especially from sources such as The Café TA Center), what type of learning culture could you develop?

After reading through that list, you're probably thinking one of three things: 1) Yes, we're doing those things; 2) We're doing some of that, but these questions give us more ideas; or 3) We're busy putting out fires and have no time or money to do this.

If your status is #3, you're in a tough catch-22—it is quite possible that additional skills and knowledge could be what helps you make it over the hump and attract additional revenue, and/or manage the current situation more effectively. That's a broad generalization, and it's impossible to guess what's going on in your organization, but **there is ample evidence that proves that professional development including skill building and knowledge acquisition results in a positive return on the investment that was made to achieve it.** In other words, spending money on skill building and knowledge acquisition results in more money in various forms, such as winning more grants, forming new relationships that lead to donations, creating new partnerships that result in in-kind contributions, etc.

How do you make this investment in your people if you don't have funding to do it? (By the way, no one is suggesting a 5-day conference on a cruise in the Mediterranean!) The simple answer to this question is: start with free stuff. The only thing that you need to figure out as a leader is how to create a little bit of time, even just 30 minutes a week, where you can say to your team members something like, "I want you to find 30 minutes per week during your work day and make it your learning time. Please send me an email with the day and time that you plan to do this regularly so that I can be aware of it—and maybe we can all find the same time to do it. Also, at the end of each session, just send me a two-sentence summary of what you did with your time and what your main takeaway was. If you need ideas about how to use your time, let's use the first couple of sessions to search for things we can watch on the internet and share those with each other. If you need more time for something that is more intensive, come and talk with me and we'll try to figure out how to create that time. The more we do this together, the sharper our team becomes—so let's support each other's learning and take our organization to the next level together."

Maybe you can only do it once a month for an hour. That's okay. **Just start somehow. Your organization and the people you serve will benefit tremendously if you make active learning part of your culture!**

*Is there a leadership challenge you're facing in your peer-run organization or advocacy efforts? We want to hear about it! Reach out to us at [cafetacenter@gmail.com](mailto:cafetacenter@gmail.com) with your question or comment. We will be happy to help, and your challenge might just be the subject of our next Capacity Corner column! (Anonymously and with your consent, of course!)*

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