

Focus 2.0

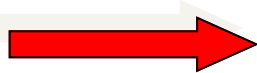
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What is the Focus 2.0?

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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Twenty-Five Years of Olmstead: Life in the Community for All

This summer marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of one of the most important Supreme Court decisions for Americans with all types of disabilities, especially those with mental health conditions: the Olmstead decision.

Despite being so important, Olmstead isn't usually the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks about disability rights, or the ability of people with mental health conditions to live in the community. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which came nine years before Olmstead, was federal legislation that's known for barring discrimination against people with disabilities. It ensured access to public spaces and services, and its signing is the event that's typically most associated with the advent of disability rights.

The reality, however, is that the Olmstead has had at least as much impact on the lives of people with all types of disabilities. Without Olmstead, the ADA wouldn't mean what it means to us today.

What's Olmstead, what did it do, and what does it mean for the mental health recovery community? Olmstead was a court case that resulted in the end of institutionalization and forced support for people with disabilities to happen in the community. While the ADA provided for equal access for people in public spaces, Olmstead mandated



that people with mental and physical disabilities be given the opportunity to live in the community, and effectively ended the legal segregation of institutional settings.

The case began with two Georgia women, Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson, who had mental illness and developmental disabilities, and were voluntarily admitted to the psychiatric unit in the State-run Georgia Regional Hospital. Despite being well enough to return to the community after a period of treatment, the institution continued to confine them, and they filed suit under the ADA to be released. (See https://archive.ada.gov/olmstead/olmstead_about.htm.)

The case made it all the way to the Supreme Court, which made two essential determinations in their ruling. One, “institutional placement of persons who can handle and benefit from community settings perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable of or unworthy of participating in

community life.” Two, “confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement, and cultur-

al enrichment.” As a result, providers had to offer support in community-based settings as a first option.

In the twenty-five years since Olmstead has become the law of the land, the integration of people with mental health conditions into their communities has been complex and uneven. The experience of the last two-plus decades has resulted in significant evidence showing that a meaningful life in the community is central to mental wellbeing, with recognition that a sense of purpose and community connection is as

central to mental health recovery as any traditional treatment, if not more so. At the same time, the vision of a life in the community for all has at times fallen short, with resources to support community living lacking, and too many individuals in institutional settings like nursing facilities, hospitals, or even prisons. At times, some policymakers have even called for a return to institutionalization.

A SAMHSA blog marking the occasion, “The Right to Live in the Community: Commemorating 25 Years of the Olmstead Decision,” looks at both the progress and shortcomings, and describes work the agency has done to realize the promise of Olmstead (<https://www.samhsa.gov/blog/right-live-community-commemorating-25-years-olmstead-decision>).

With the coming of this anniversary, there is also an opportunity for mental health advocates to take stock of how far we’ve come, and what remains to be done. It’s a core belief in the mental health recovery



Lois Curtis, Olmstead plaintiff

movement that recovery is possible for everyone, and that all people deserve to live a meaningful life in the community with the support and connection they need to thrive, whatever that might look like for them.

By bringing innovative recovery-based practices like peer support, peer respite, warmlines, and others to the mental health system of care, peers have made significant contributions to making life in the community for people with serious mental health conditions possible. At the same time, it’s essential that peers and advocates remain committed to the ideas behind the Olmstead decision, and continue to remind friends, allies, and policymakers that the recovery movement has the tools to help fully realize the vision of community integration that Olmstead represents.

Are You Registered to Vote?

2024 is an election year, with the general election set for Tuesday, November 5th. Even though that's months away, now is the time to make sure you're registered to vote, so you don't miss your chance to make your voice heard at the ballot box when the opportunity comes around this fall!

The rules and deadlines for voter registration are different in every state and territory. To find out how voter registration works where you live, visit <https://vote.gov/> and look up your state or territory. If it's easier for you to vote by mail, this is also the right time to figure out how vote-by-mail works where you live, and to sign up to receive a ballot. Remember, even if you were able to vote by mail in previous elections, you may still have to sign up for vote-by-mail again for this year's election.

With 13% of Americans having a disability, voters with disabilities make up a significant voting bloc. They're also voters whose day-to-day life is especially impacted by decisions made by elected officials and policy-makers, and have much at stake. Your voice matters, so do the work now to make sure it's heard in November!



Making the Case for Peer-Run Respite

Peer-run respites are a great alternative to psychiatric hospitalization and a central part of recovery-based alternatives to traditional approaches. While plenty of people in the recovery community are all-in on peer-run respites, making the case to skeptical audiences that are more comfortable with clinical approaches can be challenging.

A new article from Lauren Spiro, M.A., and Margaret Swarbrick, Ph.D., F.A.O.T.A. in the journal *Psychiatric Services* can help. It describes the components of peer-run respite, and concludes that "Psychiatric crisis response service providers should consider adopting some of the peer-run respite approaches outlined in this column to prevent escalation of emotional distress for people in crisis and to promote emotional health. Creating safe and supportive relationships strengthens a person's tolerance for uncertainty, and this capacity helps people reclaim their power, recognize their potential, and cocreate relationships and collective spaces for healing." Find it online at <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/epdf/10.1176/appi.ps.20230599>.

For additional conversation about peer-run respites, check out the recording of the CAFÉ TAC webinar "Peer-Operated Respite: Is It Time for National Standards?" at <https://cafetacenter.net/peer-operated-respites-is-it-time-for-national-standards/>.

Baseball Breaks Mental Health Taboos

Earlier this summer, the Boston Red Sox made the unusual move of putting a player on the injured list because of their mental health, as opposed to a physical injury. As reported in *The Boston Globe*, “He is not the first player to be placed on the injured list for anxiety, but the transparency from the organization reflects a change in how mental health is being addressed at the professional athletic level.” (Read more at <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2024/06/05/sports/red-sox-chris-martin-anxiety-injured-list/>.)

More recently, another member of the team, All-Star Jarren Duran has received attention for speaking openly about his mental health journey. Duran, who’s gained notoriety for the practice of writing mental health affirmations on his wrists when he plays, received this year’s All-Star Game MVP Award. (Read about his experience at <https://www.boston.com/sports/boston-red-sox/2024/03/17/jarren-duran-boston-red-sox-mental-health-alex-cora-mlb-baseball/>.)

While news of this kind might initially seem insignificant, it shows that the stigma around mental health is eroding. Whereas athletes and professional sports teams once rejected the idea of mental health as important to performance, or actively ostracized athletes that disclosed mental health challenges, things have shifted to acknowledge that mental health is part of life for every athlete, and something that must be addressed as part of creating a supportive, functional culture. While public conversations about mental health can be less than perfect, this is still a moment to celebrate, and a positive sign for mental health advocacy.



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 **Making Your Mission and Vision Meaningful.***

Most people and most organizations are familiar with Mission Statements and Vision Statements. There is often a lot of confusion regarding these concepts, though. For example, people often use the words Mission and Vision interchangeably when they are very different from one another. Before discussing how to make them meaningful in your organization, let’s take a moment to define them. You may accept these definitions, or you may define them differently for yourself – either way, they should play an active role in the leadership and management of your Peer-Run Organization (PRO).

Mission Statement: A succinct statement of the organization's core purpose. Your Mission should rarely ever change, if ever. It is your purpose, and your purpose rarely changes, although *how* you accomplish your purpose will evolve based on many variables. The *how*, by the way, is usually articulated into Strategic and Operational Plans that bridge the gap between the Mission you're fulfilling, and how you're actually going to do it, including goals, initiatives, measurements, project plans, communication plans, etc. Too often an organization places elements of its "how" inside its Mission Statement, and then when it's time to change how things get done, the Mission Statement suddenly seems irrelevant, or in need of fixing – which is why the *how* should not be included in the Mission statement.

Vision Statement: A longer narrative statement that characterizes the future (short, medium, and/or long term) if the organization lives up to and/or accomplishes its Mission. The most important word in that definition is "if." It implies the causal relationship between the Mission and the future. If you achieve your Mission as an organization, the impacts will be many and will be far-reaching. A Vision Statement is a summary of the impacts you hope to deliver over time. If you spend the necessary time thinking about the effect you intend to achieve and articulate it into a Vision Statement, that Statement will often be 1-2 pages of narrative, sometimes longer. The Vision Statement provides guidance and boundaries for decision-making.



As you can see, the Mission and Vision go hand in hand. The Mission is your core purpose, and the Vision is a description of the future if you achieve that purpose or Mission.

Once you have identified your exact purpose in the form of a Mission Statement, and you have documented a Vision of the future impacts your organization will have if you achieve that Mission, then you are

ready to make the two concepts meaningful within your organization. By "meaningful" we mean active and relevant, rather than sitting on a shelf untouched and forgotten.

Here are several ways to make the Mission and Vision meaningful in your PRO:

Marketing: Do you have your Mission and Vision available on your website, in your brochures, within internal documents, etc. such that everyone is consistently reminded of them? Keeping the Mission and Vision in view is the easiest way to build your brand and to sustain your commitment to your purpose.

Budgeting: When you are reviewing your budget and funding, do you have your Vision in hand so that you can ask, "How does this budget help us achieve the Vision we defined and that we are striving to achieve?" The same is true for the Mission – if you are on the verge of allocating funding that detracts from your Mission, then you have to ask yourself if that's an appropriate expenditure. If it is, maybe your Mission still needs refining. If it isn't, then maybe don't incur the expense.

Programs: As you develop new programs, or enhance or grow existing ones, are they helping to further your Mission and achieve your Vision? How often have you asked, “What part of our Vision needs attention, and what programs might we offer to ensure that we achieve that part of the Vision?”

Fundraising: Did you know that your ability to clearly state your Mission and a Vision of the future if you live up to that Mission is the first and most important piece of information that you can share with a potential donor? It’s not just about what you’re planning to do as an organization, but being able to do this demonstrates that you know how to think, prioritize and communicate as leaders – and donors are investing in the people and capacity of an organization as much as they are investing in the purpose.

Team Dynamics: Did your entire team help create the Mission and Vision? If not, maybe it’s time to re-view the Mission and Vision and have the team be part of it. Why? If your team is involved in deciding or reviewing the purpose and the future, then they are more committed to doing their best to achieve it. Additionally, the Mission and Vision are good screening tools to help identify possible employees or volunteers. Asking someone what they think of your Mission and Vision is an excellent way to gauge their understanding of and interest in the organization, and whether or not they might be a good fit for your team.

Board Meetings: Does your Board of Directors have the Mission and Vision handy in the Board meetings such that they can ask questions like “How is our progress towards achieving the Vision?” “What barriers exist that we can help overcome to achieve the Vision?” “Can you review how this proposed budget and programs helps us move closer to achieving our Vision?” These might be scary questions for an Executive Director, but the truth is that if these questions are scary, then there may be a misalignment between reality and the direction the organization is supposed to be going.

There are other ways to make the Mission and Vision meaningful and relevant in your organization, but the ones listed above are a good start. Once you begin including the Mission and Vision, your culture will begin to shift towards being Mission and Vision-driven, which is not only what donors want to hear, but is what provides the foundation for positive morale and commitment!

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 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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