Focus 2.0

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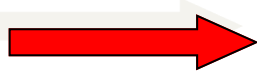
CAFÉ TA CENTER
A Program of The Family Café

New Year, New Resources

While CAFÉ TAC does its best to connect you with mental health recovery information and resources, we can't do it all! Fortunately, we're part of a network of SAMHSA-funded projects that share a belief in the power of lived experience and recovery that includes our four partner National Technical Assistance Centers (NTACs): the Doors to Wellbeing National Consumer TA Center, the National Empowerment Center, the Peer Support Coalition of Florida Peer Experience NTAC, and the YouthMOVE National Peer Center; as well as a number of Statewide Consumer Network grantees (SCNs) located in states across the nation. Collectively, these projects create all manner of recovery-focused resources and support the mental health consumer voice nationwide.

The work that these NTACs and SCNs do is essential, innovative, and transformative, but it can be a challenge for any one person looking to find out what's available from them to find all the resources in one place. Fortunately, a newly available Resource Kit brings much of it together in a single document for the first time. The **Statewide Consumer Network Grants and National TA Centers Resource Kit** is billed as "a comprehensive guide for accessing a wide array of recovery-oriented resources" featuring "a diverse collection of trainings, workshops, webi-

Statewide Consumer Network Grants and National TA Centers

Resource Kit

Trainings, workshops and other peer-developed resources

nars, and other valuable key deliverables." You can find it on our website at cafetacenter.net/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/SAMHSA-RESOURCE-KIT.pdf.

What does that mean to you? Whether you're an individual looking for recovery-based resources, or a peer-operated organization wondering what other entities working in mental health recovery are up to, now you can find a wealth of information in a single place! There are hundreds of people with lived experience working to bring innovative, recovery-centered attitudes and approaches to the world of mental health through NTACs and SCNs, and they've created dozens of fantastic programs and resources. Take a look. Maybe something in this new resource kit will make a difference for you in your own recovery journey. Or maybe you'll find an approach you want to emulate in your own community. Or you might even learn about a new organization that you can connect with to build solidarity in transforming the system and bringing hope and recovery to more people where you live.

Wherever you are geographically or in your recovery journey, checking out this new Resource Kit and seeing what in it speaks to you is well worth your time!

A National View of the Certified Peer Specialist Workforce

With more than 100,000 certified peer specialists nationwide, it's safe to say that the lived experience and peer specialist workforce in the US is significant and growing. However, the details of how that national peer workforce is composed are sometimes difficult to see. Because certified peer specialist training and certification is done at the state level, the full national picture can be unclear, and comparing the peer workforce across states is a challenge.

Now, thanks to the Center on Integrated Health Care & Self-Directed Recovery at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Live & Learn Inc., a new interactive map makes information about how, and how many, certified peer specialists each state has trained much more accessible. The map includes data on whether each state has a statewide peer certification program, the number of trained and certified peer specialists in each, the types of peer certification available (including specialization for mental health, substance use, youth, family, and forensic CPS), and whether peer services are Medicaid-reimbursable.

Check it out at https://www.center4healthandsdc.org/map-of-national-peer-training-programs.html.

As the peer workforce grows, it will be increasingly important for peers to build connections across states and systems, so they can understand the dynamics from state to state, and advocate collectively for both the value and importance of recovery-based approaches broadly, and peer support specifically. The more peers and advocates know about what peer support looks like in the big picture, and how it differs from state to state, the better equipped they will be to build consensus around peer support and recovery both nationally and locally. This new interactive map is a great tool towards that end that peers can use to see the big picture, and to make the case for peer support being a foundational part of the mental health system of care everywhere.

Certified Peer Specialist Programs by State
Does State Have a Certification Program?
No   Yes
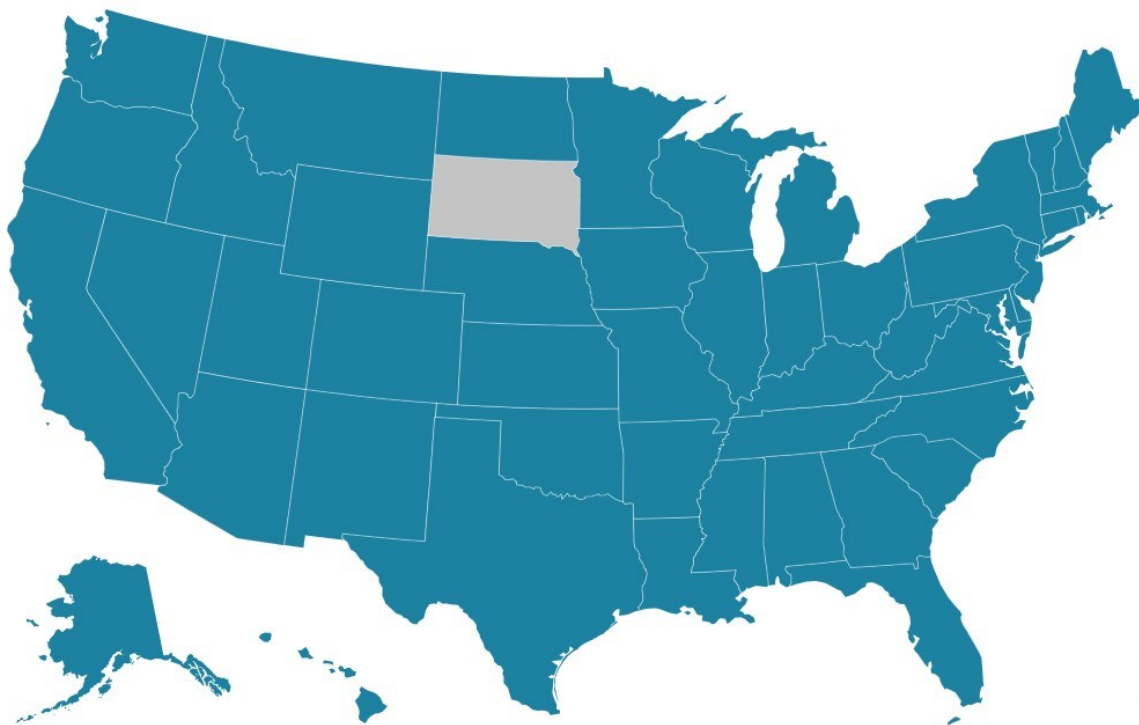
Join a Conversation on Mental Health and Higher Education

With the growing prevalence of mental health conditions among youth and young adults, today's college students come to higher education with very different needs and experiences than their predecessors. Colleges and universities have made efforts to accommodate the unique mental health needs of students, with some just beginning to address the issue, and others with full-fledged supported education programs. Additionally, students and families are often unaware of the supports available, or unfamiliar with how to find the supported education environment they need to succeed.

There's work to be done on all sides, with a need to inspire colleges to develop and/or expand innovative approaches to help students with mental health challenges, and a need to encourage students and families to understand those supports and learn how to seek them out.

CAFÉ TAC invites you to join a panel discussion on these issues, **Higher Ed Retention for Students with Mental Health Conditions,** at **2:00 PM ET** on **Wednesday, January 29th**. Join our panel of student support and engagement experts, who are both professionals in higher education and people with lived experience as college students or family members, as they share their insights as to what works and lead an interactive discussion about mental health and student success in higher ed.

Join us to:

- Understand the types of mental health challenges that would benefit from receiving supports.
- Understand what is meant by Supported Education, and the many types of support available to students and families.
- Understand how to search for, inquire about, and facilitate supports on campus.
- Understand the tips and strategies for sustaining a healthy mental journey on campus.

Register here or visit cafetacenter.net/join-cafe-tac-for-higher-ed-retention-for-students-with-mental-health-conditions/ to learn more!

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 (Part Two).***

Investing in the people of your organization was the topic of Capacity Corner two years ago, in Issue 8, which you can read by clicking [here](). It's been a while since we've talked about this important organizational development topic, so let's look at some additional ways you can invest in your people to strengthen your organization's culture, elevate morale, and sustain your staffing model for the long term.

Let's first take a moment to define those concepts. Your organization's culture means the overall atmosphere in the workplace. Are team members often on edge, or are they calm and focused? Do the staff smile and is there pleasant interaction among them, or are people unfriendly and the general feeling negative? Is there humor, or does the space feel stoic? You could create a long list of this or thats, and the point is simply to help you think about your culture so you can effectively ask, "Is this the culture I want for my organization? If yes, how do I sustain it, and if not, how do I change it?" Investing in your people helps create and sustain the culture you desire.

Morale is another consideration, and it is part of culture. It's sort of like a leading indicator of the overall culture. If morale is low (people are glum, unhappy, angry, testy, etc.) and it is not addressed then it can slowly become the culture. Asking staff members what they think of morale in their workplace is an important question to ask regularly.

Your staffing model is another indicator of culture. If you have high turnover, for example, it might not be because the job is too hard, but rather because the workplace culture is not life-giving. Or maybe you cannot attract the people you need. Or perhaps staff loyalty is not what you'd like it to be. If you were to write a description of what a successful staffing model would look like and how you'd characterize it (e.g., low turnover, staff have positions to aspire to or they can create new challenges, training is available for ongoing development, etc.), you can then compare your current situation to the desired staffing model you've created. Again, finding ways to invest in your staff will always help the staffing situation.

With those concepts in mind, let's review a collection of techniques and strategies that can assist your organization with respect to all three of those concepts. (You may be doing some or all of these already, and if so, maybe your next step is to ensure that everyone on the team is involved in sustaining the positive initiatives.):

1. Carve out time for each staff member to dedicate to learning and training each month. "John, starting in January, I want you to find 5 hours per month that you can dedicate to learning and/or training that is

relevant to your role in the organization. I realize that you might have to push something else off your 'to-do' list, or something may take more time, but I want to make investing in you a priority. If you need help thinking about ideas, let's make an appointment and talk about it. There's a lot of free resources to consider, and there may be funding to support formal training and certification once a year. Please give this some thought and send me a summary of what you plan to do with your 5 hours per month."

2. Talk with staff members about their role in the organization and their satisfaction levels. "Judy, I appreciate the work you do in the organization. I really value you, and I want to simply ask, 'How are things going for you, and are there things that I can change or improve, or that you would like to see improved, that would make your work experience even better?'"

3. Involve all of your staff members in the Mission and Vision discussions, regularly. "Okay, Team, it's time for our quarterly review of our Mission and our progress towards our Vision. Carl, could you please read the Mission aloud for us? (Carl reads it.) Thanks . . . now, who can share an example of our organization living up to that Mission? (People share.) Excellent! Let me review our Vision and let's talk about the status of each point, what successes we've had, and what barriers we need to overcome together."

4. Take time to celebrate—everything from accomplishments to birthdays and other personal events. "I want to announce that we were just awarded the Best Non-Profit in the Community Award for 2024! I am so happy for all of you—I know you have all worked hard to achieve this. Let's celebrate! We don't have a lot of money, so next Friday let's do a potluck luncheon and then we'll spend the afternoon playing games together. And the newspaper wants to do a story, so I'll have the reporter stop by then to get quotes from each of you." Or, "Bob, next week is Cindy's birthday, and it's your turn to organize a birthday treat and lunch hour celebration."

Address low morale head on. "I know things have been tough. It seems like no matter how much time we put in with our programs, we're just not seeing the outcomes we had hoped for. But that's exactly why our Mission is what it is. If we don't do this important work, no one else will. Let's all take a moment and think of one specific client we've supported recently. Put yourself in their shoes. See yourself not just as a service, but as the person who brought a life preserver to this person at the right time because they were overwhelmed. You did that. You changed that person's life in the moment. Now let's take a moment to go around the room and talk about each team member and the amazing things they've done—we'll all say something about everyone."

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 scenarios 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 going to need to figure out how to carve out time to attempt strategies like the ones above. If it's not your style as the leader, then perhaps you can appoint a person to be the official steward of the organization's culture. There is ample evidence that proves that the strategies and techniques mentioned above positively impact culture, morale, and the staffing model. Maybe you can start with a simple Friday Brown Bag Lunch Day, or just once a month on the First Friday, with a goal to let go of things and talk as a team about what's going on in everyone's life outside of work. Find common ground. Build on it. Just start somehow. Your organization and the people you serve will benefit tremendously if you focus on your culture, morale, and staffing in the same way you help the people you serve!

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!)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA

www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

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