

Mad Pride Event Facilitation Report

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CSI Network



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On July 12, 2017, the CSI Network hosted a forum during Mad Pride week to engage the consumer/survivor community in exploring the future of the consumer/survivor movement. Al Strong provided an overview of the history of the consumer/survivor movement followed by various brainstorming activities facilitated by Melissa Corcoran. The following report reflects recommendations provided by forum attendees based on the outputs of the various brainstorming activities. The captured information will be used to inform the direction of future efforts of the CSI Network.

Attendees provided feedback on challenges the consumer/survivor community presently faces, available supports to overcome these challenges, and gaps in the support systems.

Challenges the consumer/survivor community presently faces:

- Poverty
- Lack of affordable, safe, and quality long-term and short-term housing
- Isolation
- Lack of supportive job opportunities and advancement
- Lack of proper compensation for peer support, peer education, and peer research jobs
- Lack of work culture that promotes inclusivity, effectiveness and self-sufficiency
- Lack of respect from employers and prospective employers
- Fear of disclosure
- Discrimination, stigma, stereotyping, assumptions, exclusion, rejection, and labelling (external and internal)
- Lack of funding for empathetic and diverse support services (acute and ongoing)
- Inadequate Band-Aid or 1-size-fits-all solutions
- Poor quality Children's Aid Society, prison, and police services
- Demoralizing processes required to prove one's mental health status
- Lack of education and being well-informed about own health
- Misdiagnosis, erroneous treatments, and coercion

Available supports to overcome challenges:

- Consumer Survivor and Mad initiatives
- Peer support groups (unfunded and funded, grassroots and mainstream)
- Peer Support Workers
- Friends, family, community
- Drop-in centres
- Crisis and warm lines
- Family support groups and education
- Hospitals (slowly changing to include peers, variety of supports and not just mainstream medicating)
- Complementary models and supports addressing diverse populations
- Food programs
- Employment centres
- Social enterprises
- Mental health supports in the workplace i.e. Employee Assistance Programs, wellness initiatives
- Educational sessions
- Volunteer opportunities
- Outreach
- Growing awareness, tolerance and flexibility
- Availability of special funding and discounts for some services
- Research - complementary supports

Gaps in the support systems:

- Lack of funding to run peer support groups, services, and initiatives
- Insufficient availability of diverse peer support and crisis services
- Insufficient capacity for existing supports
- Organizations working in silos, lack of communication and collaboration
- Systemic inefficiency and wasting of resources
- Minimal government recognition and support
- Repetitive action plans exclusive of the consumer voice
- Problematic piecemeal approach to systemic challenges
- Not enough focus on qualitative info, too much on numbers
- Few available jobs in peer support
- No training or supports for independent peer support consultants
- Inappropriate job role expectations and compensation for peer workers
- Lack of respect and consideration for formally uneducated peers

Recommendations for future of the consumer/survivor movement:

Several themes emerged from participant recommendations, including:

- 1. Enhanced communication, greater transparency, and collaboration among consumer/survivor initiatives and support services.**
- 2. Focus on peer support employment and training.**
- 3. Enhanced support services.**
- 4. Permanent funding for peer support initiatives.**
- 5. Creation of a peer support hub (model).**

1. Enhanced communication, greater transparency, and collaboration among consumer/survivor initiatives and support services.

- a. More collective sessions among consumer/survivor initiatives to share plans, experiences, resources, referrals, networks, and networking tools.
- b. Use of past reports to inform, advocate, and act on recommendations for social change (e.g. Heseltine report 1983, Graham report 1988, Every Door is the Right Door 2009, CSI Builder 2009, Investigating the State of Peer Support in Ontario 2014, etc.).
- c. Use of media, peaceful protest, petitions, ombudsmen, and outreach to build awareness of unmet needs, challenges, resources, and initiatives.
- d. Build communication and appeal for greater transparency, openness, and compassion from the LHINs, policy makers, city councils, and other government officials.
- e. Enhance Canadian standards by connecting globally with progressive peer support and related initiatives (e.g. Patient and Family Advisory Councils).
- f. More youth involvement in building mental health awareness and prevention. Paid outreach opportunities for youth to speak about experiences and deliver peer support workshops.

2. Focus on peer support employment and training.

- a. Easier access to jobs, careers, and transitional employment supports.
- b. More paid peer support work opportunities and social enterprises.
- c. Advocacy for the value of peer support workers. Value recognition and promotion of time, expertise, individual gifts and unique contributions.
- d. More workplace support, specific worker needs being met, and accommodation accountability.
- e. Staff training and peer support education on how to treat peer workers as equals, with dignity and respect.
- f. Change towards less hierarchical management structures. Integrating flat structures, moving towards holacracy and rotating leadership.
- g. Formal peer support academia and skills training opportunities. Critical thinking and peer led research on economics, democracy, legislation, media literacy, power dynamics, and cultural paradigm shifts from hierarchical to circular/spiral models.

3. Enhanced support services.

- a. More mental health, crisis prevention, Gerstein style centres, and 24/7 one-on-one supports. Service flexibility after hours and on weekends.
- b. Free therapy for consumer/survivors and most vulnerable populations with low wait times.
- c. Free transportation and internet access for people in poverty (homeless, OW and ODSP recipients).
- d. More quality time spent with service users when needed (reduces the need for re-visits).
- e. Service providers meet and accept service users where they are at. Provide basic human needs and rights with understanding, empathy, compassion, and respect.
- f. More subsidized housing with neighbourhood watch programs.

4. Permanent funding for peer support initiatives.

- a. More funding is needed for the high demand of peer support services.
- b. Diversifying funds is important for sustainability. Creation of more social enterprises, grant proposals, fundraising events and campaigns, and advocating to politicians is needed.

5. Creation of a peer support hub (model).

- a. Creation of peer support hubs that provide a physical space for peers to get their many physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs met.
- b. Positive peer support culture open to everyone, with drop-in services including: case management, talk therapy, all-day meals and food bank, clothes exchange, grooming (for employment), laundry, and showers.
- c. Reintegration support after experiencing jail, army, abuse, neglect, etc.
- d. Gardening, baking, arts & crafts, and other hub activities provide therapeutic benefits, life skills, marketing, and products that can be used at the hub and sold (social enterprise).
- e. Hub outreach members learn public speaking and marketing skills while breaking down stigma and engaging with schools, community centers, and potential employers.
- f. Physical hub locations with various ranges of services could take place at existing community centres and coffee shops.

Recommendations for a future name for the consumer/survivor movement tended towards naming anticipated actions and outcomes of the movement rather than labeling the people involved in the movement, as has been done in the past.

Possible names include:

Balance is Key
Solutions
Creating Better Futures
Working for Hope
Celebrating Difference
Voices for Voices

Workshop Feedback:

Winner/gagnant! :)
Empowering
<3
Gratitude
Aware
Hope
Building a sense of
community
Enlightened
Valued

Amazing
Rejuvenated
Mad-exhausted :)
Inspired
Well organized
Inspiring
Positive
Informative
Encouraged
Happy

Most encouraging
Thoughtful
Productive
Very worthwhile, lots of
good vibes, Thanks!
Inspired
So interested! Nice
experience!
Super Green
Rushed!