“Disclosure”
January 15, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Laysha Ostrow who has been in treatment with me since March of 2004. She is on multiple medications to manage DSM IV diagnoses of bipolar disorder and anxiety NOS. It is my psychiatric opinion that Laysha is unable currently to support herself via full time employment. She is unlikely able to do so for the foreseeable future. Please contact me if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name], MD
Suspend your disbelief...
I. Context: What is Peer Support? What is a Culture of Wellness?

II. Explore Peer Support and Wellness Culture through Example Topics

III. Discussion
The Impact of Peer Support on Choice

- **Medication Decision-Making**
  - What choices are people making about their bodies and their lives?

- **Peer Respites**
  - What choices about services do people make?

- **Self-Employment**
  - How are systems creating opportunities for choice?
Peer Support

People with lived experience creating mutual relationships based on respect, shared responsibility, and agreement of what is helpful.

*Increasing attention nationally and locally on implementing, evaluating, and regulating peer support practices*
Peer-Run Organizations (2012)

Non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations or programs in 48 states & DC

Controlled and staffed by people with lived experience (consumers/survivors/peers, service users)

Mission is to use peer support and advocacy to promote community-building and empowerment for members (service users)
Suggesting Services to Members

- Peer-Provided: 30% Weekly/Daily, 23% Monthly, 47% Never/Yearly
- Employment assistance: 29% Weekly/Daily, 24% Monthly, 47% Never/Yearly
- Housing assistance: 30% Weekly/Daily, 28% Monthly, 42% Never/Yearly
- Physical health: 31% Weekly/Daily, 29% Monthly, 40% Never/Yearly
- Disability benefits: 34% Weekly/Daily, 31% Monthly, 36% Never/Yearly
- Med mgmt: 33% Weekly/Daily, 28% Monthly, 39% Never/Yearly
- Psychotherapy: 31% Weekly/Daily, 27% Monthly, 43% Never/Yearly
- Case management: 28% Weekly/Daily, 26% Monthly, 46% Never/Yearly
- Legal assistance: 31% Weekly/Daily, 20% Monthly, 48% Never/Yearly
- Inpatient hospital: 14% Weekly/Daily, 18% Monthly, 68% Never/Yearly
- ER: 10% Weekly/Daily, 18% Monthly, 73% Never/Yearly

Legend:
- Weekly/Daily
- Monthly
- Never/Yearly
Integrated care settings ("health homes")

- Providers not understanding recovery
- Losing control over supports
- Afraid of doctors coercing members
- Conforming to medical model
- Having lower status than providers
- Changing financing structures

- Problem
- Not a problem
- Don't know
How does peer support work?

Beneficial in reducing hospitalizations, and promoting recovery outcomes such as community tenure, empowerment, and self-efficacy.

Orientation toward social justice makes peer support unique:
- 92% of peer-run organizations engage in advocacy in addition to peer support
- Less hierarchical peer-run organizations are more effective

New policies to certify and reimburse peer specialists may risk the foundation of peer support in social justice advocacy and mutuality.
The Impact of Peer Support on Choice

- **Medication Decision-Making**
- **Individual Wellbeing**
  - What choices are people making about their bodies and their lives?
- **Program & Services**
  - What choices about services do people make?
- **System & Society**
  - How are systems creating opportunities for choice?
Psychiatric Medication Discontinuation/Reduction Study

- Sometimes people who take psychiatric medications choose to stop taking it
- When people choose to stop medications, they may struggle to find the information or support they need
- Providers who want to help often lack evidence to guide people

Study team consisted of researchers, practitioners, and activists with lived experience of D/R and of supporting others in D/R
What helps or prevents people from stopping their psychiatric medications?

U.S. adults who met the following criteria:

- Lifetime psychiatric diagnosis
- Took prescribed psychiatric medications for at least nine months before trying to discontinue
- Had a goal to completely stop taking one or two medications in the past five years
The Impact of Peer Support on Choice

- Peer Respites

**Individual Wellbeing**
- What choices are people making about their bodies and their lives?

**Program & Services**
- What choices about services do people make?

**System & Society**
- How are systems creating opportunities for choice?
What are peer respites?

Voluntary, short-term, 24 hours per day in a homelike environment

Provide community-based, trauma-informed, and person-centered crisis support and prevention

Staffed and operated by people with lived experience of the mental health system (peers)

Engage in mutual support relationships in which individuals help themselves and others
Crisis diversion theory

Psychosocial Stressors

Psychiatric Crisis

Labeled/Living with Mental Health Problem

PEER RESpite

Psychiatric Emergency Services
Peer Respite Growth

"The wholesale co-optation of genuine peer support into peer-staffed positions within mainstream programs is a shining example of what we don’t want to see happen with peer-run respites."
—Survey participant
Policy on Suicide

- Other suicide policy
- Restriction on people who have a plan
- No restriction

Year | Restriction on people who have a plan | No restriction | Other suicide policy |
--- | --- | --- | --- |
2014 | 8 | 6 | 3
2016 | 16 | 3 | 3
Communal Meals

- Yes, more than once per week: 5%
- Yes, every day: 18%
- Yes, on special occasions: 54%
- Other: 23%

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The Impact of Peer Support on Choice

- Individual Wellbeing
  - What choices are people making about their bodies and their lives?

- Program & Services
  - What choices about services do people make?
  - How are systems creating opportunities for choice?

- System & Society
  - Self-Employment
Self-Employment & Psychiatric Disabilities

- Individuals with psychiatric disabilities experience high rates of unemployment.
- Recent innovations in health policy and technology can facilitate self-employment.
- Project goal: To examine self-employment and business ownership as a strategy to improve career and financial outcomes for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

Workers with Psychiatric Disabilities and Self-Employment through Microenterprise

Funded by the National Institute of Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)
Discrimination against Workers

- Jerks: 72%
- People willing to have a coworker who is labeled with a mental disorder: 28%

Safety and Security

Discrimination and traumatic stress can make wage employment unsafe.

Self-employment provides opportunities for individuals to design and enact a trauma-informed environment at work.

Self-employment is one of the few options that provide people receiving SSI benefits the opportunity to grow wealth and security.
Employment Choices

Peer support, even in peer-run organizations, should not be the only choice

Self-employment in a small business is a potentially huge force in labor market participation

Other disadvantaged groups (vets, women, racial/ethnic minorities) have increasing support from the business community
Prevalence among Entrepreneurs

No mental disorder 51%

One or more lifetime mental disorder label 49%

No recent studies on entrepreneurship among people with psychiatric histories

Project Goals

Environmental scan
- Identify and describe existing policies, practices, or products related to transition from disability to self-employment

Nationwide survey
- Understand the characteristics of individuals with psychiatric disabilities who own microenterprises

Results will provide information to aspiring entrepreneurs with psychiatric disabilities to facilitate creative and economic independence
Discussion
Peer Support: Success in Promoting a Culture of Wellness?

Increased system and support capacity
- Expansion in our approaches to recovery and human rights
- Provide service choices and access points

Professional opportunities
- Jobs created through peer specialist certification and reimbursement
- Growing number of peer-run programs and organizations

Changing perceptions of employability and self-sufficiency
- Meaningful employment and contributions of former service users to job roles and the workplace
The Impact of Peer Support

- **Individual Wellbeing**: What choices are people making about their bodies and their lives?
- **Program & Services**: What choices about services do people make?
- **System & Society**: How are systems creating opportunities for choice?
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