

USCA (U.S. Conference on AIDS) workshop presentation abstract

Supervising HIV-positive peers in a health care setting

Session 3: Tuesday, September 14, 9:30 am - 11:30 am.

Track: Building Healthy Organizations

Title: Supervising HIV positive peers in a health care setting

Type of presentation: Workshop 2 hours

Topic: The Peer Education Training Initiative funded by the Health Resources & Service Administration (HRSA) provides capacity building to partner organizations interested in expanding their existing peer program or developing a new peer program. In the process of working with these partners--clinics, CBOs and hospitals--it has become apparent that there are fundamental systems that need to be in place, both in operations and management structure for a peer program to be successful. One key fundamental area that helps ensure the success of peer programs is a clearly articulated supervisory system. Such a system includes 1) administrative and 2) either clinical or supportive supervision. Having a well developed supervision process increases the likelihood that organizations and clients will use the peer worker to support client retention and adherence and increase peer worker satisfaction and development. Three centers located in California, Missouri, and New York have developed capacity-building strategies to support the partner organizations with whom they work, assisting them in reviewing their existing organizational resources and guiding them to adapt good supervision practices.

Issues: The HIV/AIDS epidemic is growing among communities of color, yet these communities still face challenges to gaining access to high quality HIV care and treatment. Since 1999, HRSA has supported initiatives to train and support peer educators to assist people who are infected or at high risk for acquiring HIV to access and remain in care, through outreach, education and advocacy services. This current initiative builds upon the evidence that peer educators have a positive influence on reducing HIV risk behaviors and facilitating entry to care and improving health outcomes for other chronic conditions. In addition to training, HRSA has added the capacity-building component so that organizations have the opportunity to enhance or develop a sustainable peer program. Given the complexity of HIV treatment and the fragmentation of the HIV care system, it is essential that organizations are equipped with the understanding of organizational structure and management that will serve to support a sustainable peer program. This workshop will demonstrate the need for a strong supervisory system as well as address some of the challenges supervisors face in managing peers.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this panel presentation, the audience will:

- 1) Understand the importance of good management practices in designing, implementing, and sustaining strong peer supervision.

- 2) Identify core principles of administrative, clinical and supportive supervision with an emphasis on supportive supervision as an important model
- 3) Identify challenges and strategies to address issues such as confidentiality and boundaries
- 4) Develop ways to incorporate core principles of supervision in own peer program

Strategy/Methods: This will be an interactive session with the audience. Panelists will share their experience being peer worker supervisors and demonstrate how to build peer skills through a supportive supervisory mechanism of empathy that allows peer workers to share their experiences and work toward securing client retention in the healthcare system. Peer worker supervisors will reflect on the successes and challenges encountered in supervising peer workers and their strategies for supporting peer worker development. The panel will share their own experiences, provide case and role-play examples and address audience concerns in developing their own supervisory system.