Turning an idea into reality…the formation of a Suicide Attempt Survivor Support Group

Presented By:
• Gabriella Guerra – Magellan Health Services of Arizona
• Katie Ayotte – TERROS, Inc.
• Larry Villano – TERROS, Inc
• Patti Ritchie-Williams – Crisis Response Network, Inc.
Session Objectives

• Identify the components of a safe and effective suicide attempt survivor support group for persons diagnosed with an SMI.

• Describe the research and philosophy surrounding the promotion of a suicide attempt survivor support group.

• Recognize the important role that peers play in psychiatric recovery.

• Explain the importance of suicide attempt survivors in reducing stigma and preventing suicide.
Agenda

• Identifying the need for a Suicide Attempt Survivor Support Group
• Working out the concept and identifying key players
• Acquiring funding for the new initiative
• Lessons learned
• Implementing the program
• Future Plans
Who We Are

[Map of Arizona with regions labeled and stars indicating specific areas.]
Identify Need for Support Group

- Suicide rate amongst people registered in the behavioral health system: 6 – 12 times higher than other high risk groups
- Though high rate of suicide, few support group options exist even nationally
- Determined need to review service options for this population
Getting Support

• Suicide Attempt Survivors Support task group identified needs
• Most support groups are family members and people left behind after someone commits suicide
• Suicide survivors who have a failed suicide attempt are often left out of support groups
Potential Roadblocks

Fear that bringing suicide survivors together will result in them making another attempt

The stigma of suicide attempts can limit options for funding and support
Understanding Key Concepts

• Research shows little research and few existing groups
• Must engage suicide survivors and de-stigmatize the suicide attempt
• Research confirmed that suicide survivors is a VERY underserved group nationwide
• Program must focus on recovery
Involving Key Players

- Peer involvement is REQUIRED to reduce stigma of suicide attempt
- Support team must give the group the heartfelt care and acceptance to have a positive impact
Involving Key Players

• Giving peers the power to run the program lets them reach out more effectively

• Consider using 2 peers to run each support group with clinician support
Not Assigning Blame

Treat suicide as a disease to help members move on
Reducing Stigma

• Understanding that a suicide attempt can be viewed as a malfunction of the brain muscle

• Open communication with peers, others who have attempted suicide, can help the group to reconcile the attempt

• Managing the group must be conducted by peers to reduce stigma
Gaining Funding for Your Group

• Tips for getting funding for your support group
  • Medicaid Reimbursable?
  • Donations to a non-profit
    • Space, refreshments
    • Clinical support
Lessons Learned

- Peer involvement is key to success
- Participants need the peer interaction to reduce the stigma and lower the suicide rate
- Feeling heard is crucial to reducing another suicide attempt
Keys to Implementing

- Identify the need for the program in your area
- Secure funding
- Find and train peer facilitators
- Reach out to potential group members
- Begin meetings
Next Steps

• Continue serving this underserved group
• Raise awareness for Suicide Survivor awareness
• Reinforce training for peer facilitators
Questions?
Thank you, from the

Crisis Response Network, Inc.
Inspiring Hope During Life’s Most Challenging Times

For more information, please contact us at:

Crisis Response Network, Inc.
Administration: 602-427-4600
e-mail: communityvoice@crisisnetwork.org
www.crisisnetwork.org