Parent Peer Support – Strengthening families, enhancing services, and improving outcomes

Millie Sweeney, M.S.

**FREDLA** 

February 26, 2025



- > The *only* national association of family-run organizations dedicated solely to all children, youth, and young adults with social, emotional, substance use, and multi-systems challenges, their families, and the agencies serving them
- > Represent over 120 family-run organizations across the country
- > Partner in national technical assistance centers, goal specific initiatives, and research collaborations
- > Provide support, consultation, and training within five primary areas:

Strategic Solutions Workforce Readiness

Research & Outcomes Training & Resources

Family-Run Organizations



### Parents & Caregivers

#### Youth

6			* 17
Accessi	20	COL	MAAA
HUCGOOI	UIC	201	AICES

Provider collaboration

Consistent & continuous care

Personal Fulfillment

Well-trained providers

Cultural responsiveness

Accountable service systems

Knowledge, resources & tools

Effective communication

Less judgment & stigma

Individualized care

Support & encouragement

Feeling respected

Improved functioning

Being understood

Improved relationships

Being heard

Improved self-control

Ability to trust

Positive rapport with providers

## Partnership occurs on a continuum – families want to be partnered with at all levels



**Family Driven** 

{organizational level}

#### **Engaging & Partnering with Families**

#### Research Shows Positive Outcomes!

- ✓ More effective and efficient use of state and federal resources among systems
- ✓ Reduced out of home placements
- ✓ Shorter LOS in residential care
- ✓ Self-efficacy reduces over-reliance on services
- ✓ Improves data for decision making

System Child/Youth

- ✓ Earlier access to care
- ✓ Improves child and youth adjustment, functioning and quality
- ✓ Faster recovery process for mental health & addiction issues
- ✓ Decreased isolation
- ✓ Reduces risk of mortality
- ✓ Improves skills & functioning
- ✓ Reduces rates of relapse, recidivism, and deeperengagement with CW & JJ
- ✓ Improved achievement in school
- ✓ Better overall social/emotional wellbeing
- ✓ Reduced likelihood of maltreatment
- ✓ Less likely for teen pregnancy
- ✓ Less likely for incarceration as juveniles
- ✓ Reduced infant mortality

- ✓ Improves community tenure
- ✓ Citizens exercise participation/voice ✓ Reduces disconnection from culture
- ✓ Increases community awareness of children's mental health issues
- ✓ Improves ability to respond to community needs

Community

Engaging **Families Yields Positive** Outcomes

Family

- ✓ Improves stable living situation
- ✓ Decreases parenting stress
- ✓ Improves parent confidence
- √ Improves access to social supports
- ✓ Increases ability to navigate confusing systems/services
- ✓ Facilitates access to insurance
- ✓ Reduced parenting stress for partners
- ✓ Teen males who live with fathers are less likely to carry auns & deal druas
- ✓ Reduced sibling discord

- ✓ Increases enrolment
- ✓ Improves coordination of care
- ✓ Strengthens engagement in treatment
- ✓ Permits better stewardship of resources
- ✓ Produces return on investment
- ✓ Provides for reinvestment
- ✓ Yields better clinical outcomes
- ✓ Improves quality of care

Managed Care

Agency **Facility** 

- ✓ Farlier access to services.
- ✓ Improves quality of care
- ✓ Improves clinical outcomes
- ✓ Increases satisfaction of staff in their careers
- ✓ Improves data collection (quantity & quality)
- ✓ Improves client satisfaction with care
- ✓ More successful involvement in care



#### Value of Family Partnership

#### Changes

- Institutional culture
- Institutional practice

#### Builds

- Awareness, understanding, and self-efficacy
- Sense of community
- New practices and policy for better servicing youth and families

#### Improves

- Individual outcomes
- Organizational outcomes

#### Informs

- Resource realignment and service development
- Research and evaluation
- Public policy

# One of the most effective ways to engage families?

#### Translating the Outcomes to the Roles & Functions of Parent Peer Support & Family Organizations

- Inform system decision makers re service needs and access to care experiences
- Provide lived-expertise on policy committees
- Gather & provide data to inform procurement efforts, state planning, and the insurance industry

 Collective experience informs legislative & appropriations decisions

- Link others to community resources
- Coordinate community & cultural discovery events
- Engage the community in mental health
- Resource development
- Welcome back to community

System Child/Youth

- Participate on planning teams
- Establish connection to community resources
- Link youth & families to skill & resiliency building activities
- Identify or offer opportunities for social connections
- Support the development of Life skills

- Impact community culture & biases

- **Engaging Families** 
  - **Yields Positive** Outcomes

Family

- Linkage to housing, employment and other necessities
- Information re insurance & waiver applications
- Skills development
- Educational & social supports
- Navigation through confusing systems/services
- Knowledge about education and court processes

- Inform medical necessity criteria
- Outreach & enrollment
- Care coordination team
- Ambulatory follow up
- Support engagement in treatment
- Coordinate discharge planning & influence continuity of carePerform QA/QI functions
- Advise MCO re. experience of care

Managed Care

Community

Agency Facility

- Agency greeter, guide and perform intake functions
- Partners in care coordination dyad including ICC
- Gathers client satisfaction with care data
- Gathers info through focus groups, surveys, etc.
- Supports follow up & engagement
- Engagement pre, during & post OOH
- Performs ambulatory follow up functions
- Members of crisis response teams



#### PPS is a growing profession nationally

- Caregivers hired to work with other families across systems, based on life experience, not degree
- Peer to peer support that facilitates effective service connection and delivery
- Modeling of advocacy and collaboration skills
- Fulfilling variety of roles, infusing family voice at all levels of service delivery and addressing gaps in access

PPS is not clinical but a complementary service that enhances the work of the family and other providers on the family's team

# The PPSP's lived experience is expertise, has value, and is an asset in children's mental health

#### Their experience as a parent/family member

- > They have lived it, 24/7
- > Something that cannot be learned in a class

#### Their experience navigating the system

> Have learned how to work through the procedures/processes and made contacts within the system

#### Their experience as a consumer of the services of the system

> Can provide a customer's view that is valuable to system administrators - they *need* family feedback for continued funding, program improvement and development, etc.

#### Their passion to make a change

> This is more than a job for them, so the commitment level is different - PPSPs tend to be more consistent and persistent to make things better for other families and youth

#### States vary in implementation...

- Competency areas vary although there is national set of core competencies
- Variety of certifications (state, national) and curricula (state, organization, individual developer)
- Diverse models for implementation and types of roles for PPS continues to grow

The definition of PPS Provider may be defined through statute, certification or credentialing, Medicaid reimbursement language, by the state or county, or by an organization.



#### **Parent Peer Support Provider Activities**



Connect

Connect with the family through shared lived experience



#### Engage

Engage in policy-making & advisory groups



#### Support

Reduce isolation, provide validation and foster resiliency



#### **Educate**

Provide education, information, problemsolving and skill-building



#### Navigate

Facilitate access to services and supports for the child and family



#### **Evaluate**

Participate in evaluation, research, & CQI activities



Train

Provide training for families, providers and communities



#### Advocate

Model effective advocacy and collaboration skills

#### Parent Peer Support Provider Roles

PPS Providers have roles at all levels of service intensity, from community outreach to inpatient hospitalization, infusing family voice and family support at all levels.

#### Least Intensity Level Services

- Education, information and referral
- Peer supervision and program management
- Policy-making and advocacy
- Data collection and evaluation

#### Low Intensity Level Services

- Training
- Support groups
- · Information and referral
- Intake
- Peer supervision and program management
- Data collection and evaluation
- Policy-making and advocacy

#### Medium Intensity Level Services

- Individual advocacy, information and system navigation, intake and assessment
- Parent peer support (individual and/or team)
- · Care coordination
- Training
- Support groups
- Respite and crisis planning
- Peer supervision and program management
- Policy-making and advocacy
- Data collection and evaluation

#### High Intensity Level Services

- Partner in intensive in home services (such as High Fidelity Wraparound, HomeBuilders, etc.)
- Parent peer support (part of a treatment team or additional service) in hospitals, residential treatment programs and emergency rooms
- Respite and crisis planning
- Training
- Support groups
- Peer supervision and program management
- Policy-making and advocacy
- Data collection and evaluation



# Challenges (and solutions!)

#### **Parent Peer Support Providers**

- Face situations with families that can be activating based on own experience
- Situations with own child(ren) will still arise
- May have been out of the workforce due to caregiving for child with complex needs
- Maintaining identity and role in workplace that does not understand PPS
- Stigma and historically negative views of parents
- Lack of workplace support, including policies

#### **Organizational**

- Organizational readiness for lived experience workforce
- Inadequate compensation and lack of career ladder
- Lack of appropriate supervision (and training for supervisors)
- Misunderstanding of the role and activities
- Consistent funding need to diversify, fund what you value

#### **Systemic**

- Reimbursement rates
- "lumping" of all types of peer support
- Lack of understanding of the role
- Resistance to parents in professional role
- Hiring practices



#### Contact Information

#### Millie Sweeney

Director, Learning & Workforce Development

Email: msweeney@fredla.org

Website: www.fredla.org



# REGISTRATION NOW OPEN 2025 PARENT PEER SUPPORT INSTITUTE!



**April 1-3, 2025** 

1:00 - 4:00 pm Eastern Time Information, tools, networking and more!

This virtual annual event is part of FREDLA's dedication to the parent peer workforce, the people who supervise them, and the policy and funding agencies that support their programs.

**REGISTRATION FEE \$200** 



