

Recovery Innovations Peer Employment Training



In Peer Support, mind and heart matter. Since 2000, we have successfully recruited and trained Peer Support Specialists at Recovery Innovations - and all of what we've learned over the years is reflected in our Peer Employment Training Program. Our program is successful because it engages both the mind and the heart – and that is how we would like to share our story with you.

Some Facts and Figures

- Recovery Innovations has one of the largest peer workforces in the world with **63%** of its workforce, over 250 individuals employed as Peer Support Specialists working in dedicated peer support roles in clinics, community, and in peer-run programs.
- Over **\$7,000,000** of Medicaid reimbursable peer support services are provided annually the peer staff of Recovery Innovations of Arizona
- PET graduates have long-term career success.
 - 72% of graduates obtain employment as Peer Support Specialists.
 - 89% job retention for a minimum of 12 months.
 - 60% move to full time employment within 12 months.
 - 14% have moved into supervisory and leadership positions.
- In Phoenix, over 800 people have graduated from our Peer Employment Training since August 2000. 76% of the graduates successfully joined the peer workforce.
- In 17 states in the US and New Zealand, Scotland and England, over 2,000 individuals have graduated from our training. Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Louisiana, North Carolina and Scotland have adopted the Recovery Innovations Peer Employment Training as their certification program for Peer Support Specialists.

Thoughts from graduates

“I learned more about how to strengthen my own recovery so that I could be there for another. I learned the necessary skills – listening, validating, reflecting, conflict resolution and sharing these tools with other.” Ted

“This learning experience was exciting, challenging, uplifting, encouraging, motivating and positive.” Sally

“It was a very positive experience in every way. It gave me “real world” knowledge and skills that I’ll be using in my job, and that I’ve already started to use in my peer relationships.” Tom



Background and History. Truth be told, the heart of all we do at Recovery Innovations lives in the Peer Employment Training Program. Within the curriculum – and its delivery - are all the tools needed to support people on their path to recovery. But as we all know, training can provide tools, but not necessarily inspire action. This is where PET shines. PET graduates take with them, hope, an intense belief in the reality of recovery, and more importantly, the inspiration to do this work.

PET inspires students because it communicates the vision that Gene Johnson and Lori Ashcraft put into practice when they developed the program 8 years ago. At the first stage of development, Gene and Lori utilized an Advisory Board and included the ideas of the recovery pioneers, like Mary Ellen Copeland, Shery Mead, Pat Deegan, and Bill Anthony. They provided the foundation that enabled us to build our own knowledge base. The first class graduated in October 2000, and the content was revised using the information learned from the first students to enrich and broaden the information in the program. Since then, each revision of the materials has refined the curriculum so it reflects what we know peer support specialists need to be. In essence, the program reflects everything we've learned from our own peer support specialists and their work with others in recovery.



PET: Structure and Content. The PET curriculum is highly interactive, skill based, and incorporates adult learning principles. It includes a copyrighted 237 page text, *Peer Employment Training Workbook*, 4th edition, 2008. In addition to the text, the curriculum includes a Peer Support Skill Competency Manual. This contains exercises, and role plays designed to ensure that participants take away both knowledge and hands-on skills. The program consists of 17 modules that can be delivered as an 80-hour two-week intensive, or a 7 week course for which college credit is available. The curriculum includes tests that establish competency in the required knowledge and skills. An 80% score is required on a comprehensive final exam and participants are further evaluated on acquired skills through role-plays.

Curriculum content includes:

Part I: Personal Development: Knowing Yourself

- Recovery
- The Power of Peer Support
- Developing Self-Esteem and Managing Self Talk
- Community, Culture, and Environment
- Meaning and Purpose
- Emotional Intelligence

Part II: Turning Point: Preparing Yourself for Work

- Telling Your Personal Story
- Employment as a Path to Recovery

Part III: Skill Development

- Communication Skills
- Conflict resolution
- Recovery from Trauma and Developing Resilience
- Recovery from Substance Abuse
- Being with People in Challenging Situations
- Peer Support in Action: Partnering with Professionals

“I feel more sure of myself and my ability to work with others without trying to fix people but helping them to figure things out for themselves.”

“The greatest growth I see is preparing me for re-entry to work. And, learning to talk with others in a relational way.”

At Recovery Innovations, we have known for a long time that transformation occurs in each PET class. Lori called it “the magic.” And it is that element that is hardest to describe and communicate. It’s the change that takes place in the students – and sometimes in the facilitator – as they learn more about themselves and each other. Through their interactions, participants experience a deeper awareness of their own and others’ strengths and resilience. As students explore meaning and purpose, the dream of having meaningful work becomes a real possibility. And as students practice skills in helping and supporting others, the seed of transformation from patient to helper is planted.



Program Evaluation

Studies conducted by Boston University continue to guide the development of our Peer Employment Training.

The first study, published in 2006, was “one of the only evaluations to test a structured and formal peer support training program.” The purpose of this study was to determine the personal and vocational impact of a peer support training intervention on individuals with serious psychiatric disabilities.¹

Methods: Sixty-six individuals participated in an evaluation of the program. Participants were assessed prior to and after the training on measures of recovery, empowerment and self-concept. Job acquisition and retention data were also examined at posttest.

¹ From Hutchinson, Anthony, Ashcraft, Johnson, Dunn, Lyass & Rogers, “The Personal and Vocational Impact of Training and Employing People with Psychiatric Disabilities as Providers,” *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, Winter 2006, Volume 29, Number 3.

Results: The standardized peer support training program was successful in increasing participants' knowledge and attitudes toward recovery and their sense of empowerment. Gains were also observed in the measure of personal self-worth. These data suggest that peers experience positive changes on these subjective psychological measures after participating in peer provider training. Trainees went on to obtain peer provider positions within the agency in which they received training and 89% of those trained retained employment at 12 months.

Conclusions: Findings suggest that a standardized program designed to provide peer training was used successfully and participants' recovery and employability were improved.

In a formal Review of Peer Support Specialist curriculum conducted by Hutchinson and Rogers at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University, (Unpublished report, July 2007), the following impressions and observations were made:

“...extremely comprehensive workbook ...achieves its purpose in providing inspiration, understanding and awareness about recovery and the role that peer support can play in that process. It presents a wonderful blend of perspectives within the recovery framework: theoretical, personal/lived experiences and behavioral approaches.”

In *Program Evaluation Results Peer Employment Training* (Unpublished Report, October 2007), senior staff at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University provided support in the development of a pre and post training test of peer support competencies. After careful development and review, the test was administered before and after training to 15 trainees in the summer of 2007. Tests were sent to the Center for data entry and analysis. Results indicated there was a highly significant gain in correct answers of all items in the test from pre to post test, suggesting that the trainees mastered the material in the training to a high degree.



What Happens in the Classroom? PET students learn **a way of being**; as well as a **way of partnering** with people. That requires that they become increasingly comfortable with themselves (being authentic), and also cultivate skills in communicating and connecting with others.

Whether attending the 2 week program or the 7 week program, the pre and post testing tells us that students master the information. What the paper and pencil tests can't capture is the depth of skills participants develop as they practice in the classroom. Rather than following a routine lecture format, the instructors use a facilitative approach that is based on adult learning principles. The classroom is learning centered and builds peer support competencies from simple to complex. For example,

- students begin to apply skills in recovery language in Module 1;
- in Module 2 they learn what empowering interactions are, and use them in role play.
- In Module 3, the students are actually performing a basic peer support interaction by using a role play. First, the instructor models the skills for the class, and then each student uses those modeled skills with a partner.
- By Module 12, the students actually bring the skills together and perform the peer support approach in a role play before the class. It is this role-play that becomes part of their score on their Final Exam.

And all of the materials have been developed, refined and are contained in the Peer Support Skill Competency Packet – A Classroom Learning Kit – the companion volume to the Peer Employment Training Workbook, 4th edition.