

# Managing the Day to Day Operations of a Safe Haven

Balancing Low Demand, Safety and  
your Sanity!

# Safe Haven

- A safe haven is a form of supportive housing that **serves hard to reach homeless persons** with severe mental illness who are on the street and **have been unable or unwilling to participate in services.**
- Low demand services: safe, sanitary, **flexible**, stable and **no treatment participation requirements on consumers.**
- Time to earn their trust, adjust to having their basic needs met, be an **example** for the next human service providers they will encounter in the community.

# Day to Day Operations

- Program Philosophy
- Staffing
- Program Rules and Expectations
- Program Issues
- Crisis Management
- Evidence Based Practices
- NIMBY

# Program Philosophy

- Do you believe in the philosophy?
- Do you believe low demand works for consumers?
- Can you define consumer success in different ways?
- Do you have a sense of humor?
- Can you be patient, flexible, admit you were wrong, change your mind, understand the perspective of a homeless individual, understand negative symptoms of mental illness, addiction and withdrawal and that you really have very little control?
- Do you know you can not save the world?
- Can you accept it takes 3-5 years for recovery?



# Staffing

- The most important factor in the success of a program
- Interview very carefully, specific example questions, co-occurring opinions, entitlement opinions, save the world?, control issues, transference issues
- Remember they still won't probably tell you the truth
- Case Managers, Therapist, Cook, MHT, RN, ARNP
- On call for ARNP and Manager
- Supervision and the cure for insomnia for management
- Training in evidence based practices to help their control issues
- Reminders you will not fire them if the consumer does not get better

# Program Rules and Expectations

- Less rules, Less problems
- Damp Shelter
- Not required to attend groups? What?
- Most rules can be broken based on individual? What!
- This is the most difficult area for staff
- 3 main reasons for discharge:
  - Drug seeking behavior with neighbors
  - Behavior is a safety issue for consumers
  - Repeated drug usage in facility

# Program Rules and Expectations

- Staff need to understand consumers in these programs may not be nice, friendly, respectful, patient or grateful and that does not mean they do not deserve the opportunity or service. Staff chose to work in this setting.
- Helpful to have specific answers all staff use for personality d/o issues and other consumer concerns
  - He is using and it will make me relapse
  - Why does she get to be late for curfew and I don't
  - My case manager is mean to me, night shift is sleeping



# Program Rules and Expectations

- Where is the boundary? Program Philosophy form.
- What does the consumer expect? Staff expect? Did anyone tell each other?
- Not any rules! Damp shelter! We have no control!



# Program Issues

- Weekly or monthly room checks in a positive way
- Drug testing with the understanding no discharge but for safety
- Searches on entry into facility
- Depressed individuals just placed on medication
- Rounds, meals (flexible)
- Staff training on de-escalization, TEAM
- Narcotics counts at shift change
- Locks, doors, kitchen drawers, meds,

# Crisis Management

- Prevention is key
- Interventions are always client centered
- Interventions balance consistency with flexibility
- Safe havens are committed to consumers for the “long haul”
- Staff need to know when and how to get help
- How to interact with someone under the influence
- When are the police required?
- Front lobbies as quiet rooms

# Evidence Based Practices

- Effective for staff and consumer
- Stages of Change
- Harm Reduction
- Motivational Interviewing

# My Favorite Subject: NIMBY

- Not in my backyard!
- How to be an advocate and also a good neighbor
- How to deal when the fighting gets dirty, and it will.
- Remember, you do this for a living! You are the expert!
- Neighborhood Associations do not have the personal cell number of the President of the United States.
- Get to know who is your advocate on city council
- Become a member of the association
- Remember as soon as you offer a solution to their complaint, they will slow down. They do not want a solution, they want you gone.

# Lessons Learned in 15 years

- A sense of humor is a must and a fun work environment necessary.
- We appreciate us luncheon days
- Morale is extremely important, direct service staff need to know they have power and control and you need to stay in the trenches with the staff at times
- Some people do not get better
- Sometimes you make the wrong decision
- Some days you want to quit and work at starbucks so you still have health insurance, it will pass.
- 2 vacations a year and a few mental health days
- Staff always seem to think they will get fired with their consumers do not get better
- The staff with control issues and less empathy tend to have family members with an illness.

# Success Stories

- My work with a safe haven has and will always be the most rewarding area
- Joseph – 10 yrs
- Pat- the woman no one cared about
- William- suicide attempt, SRT, Apt/employed with health dept.
- It can take many chances sometimes!