

Advisory Councils

Missed a meeting? Here's what we've been talking about...

Hot Topic: *Mandated Treatment - Help or Hindrance?*

The Discussion

- Many indicated they understood that mental health and/or substance abuse treatment can be very beneficial, one member stated, "Treatment taught me no matter how frustrating things are, you can get through it."
- When discussing perspectives regarding behavioral health services, members expressed sentiments concerning treatment services that were court ordered, conditions of release from jail/prison, or required in order to receive social service benefits. Members relayed stories of how, at times, the type of treatment wasn't "individualized" and did not address many of their needs at that time. One member stated, "It was cookie cutter, kinda like doing your time—counting down the days", and added, "I wasn't even ready for that type of treatment."
- Reluctance, uncertainty, and resentment were also expressed, and some made decisions NOT to attend treatment due to competing needs/obligations. One member stated, "It's frustrating to try to complete everything when you're trying to get on your feet—program, community service, get a job..." Another member expressed confusion over why he was sent to a halfway house upon release from prison where substance abuse treatment was a large part of the program although drugs and alcohol were never a part of his life.
- Members also discussed how, at times, some of treatment providers they encountered could be "just as harsh as CO's and PO's" which hindered their belief in the helping relationship.

Member Recommendations

- "Professionals and providers should look for solutions to the *individual's* process—one size does not fit all."
- Members suggested more focus and attention to be given to the relationships between treatment providers and the people they are working with rather than the "rules according to [their] PO."
- Explain the differences between the different types of programs available to foster a better understanding of what might next for them regarding re-entry.
- Base treatment on where the person is in the criminal justice system before they come in contact with the behavioral health system. "People locked up, on parole, or on probation might have different needs"

What's Being Done

- Councils, such as Next 2nd Chance Consumer Advisory Council, which seek consumer input, and the Next 2nd Chance Professional Alliance offer solution-focused platforms to help criminal justice professionals and behavioral health treatment providers identify and address the "gaps" as well as promote those interventions and strategies that have proven effective already.
- Some criminal justice entities in New Jersey have adopted a shift in focus by paying more attention to the person's needs rather than their violations.
- The "Complete Wellness" of an individual is a longstanding behavioral health assertion and many providers utilize this concept to drive policy and enhance programming.

"Plant the seed even if you're not sure you'll see the harvest."- NSC Member