

*Mental Health  
Peer Run Programs*

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# History of Peer Services

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Peer services would not exist today without the efforts of Judi Chamberlain, who in 1971 began working for the rights of mental health consumers, or, as we were known back then “ex-patients”.

When hospitalized, Judi witnessed first hand some of the systemic abuses of that time. Based on this experience, she published her first book, *On Our Own: Patient Controlled Alternatives to the Mental Health System*. This book became the text for the psychiatric survivor movement.

# History of Peer Services

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In the 1970's, Judi and others coming out of psychiatric institutions and abusive mental health services began to form their own organizations.

People with lived experience with mental illness began to provide services and supports to their peers.

Judi espoused self-sufficiency and self-reliance of mental health consumers. She is considered one of the pioneers of the Recovery Movement and is often credited with starting what we call Drop-In Centers.

Drop-In Centers are often defined as “a safe place to go when you have no place to go”.

# The Emergence of Recovery Centers

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*After traditional Drop-in Centers existed across the country for approximately 30 years, there was a national movement to increase recovery activities in the drop-ins.*

*Virginia became part of that movement and though our Centers started as Drop-in Centers with recovery activities they have evolved into Recovery Centers with drop-in activities.*

# What is a Recovery Center?

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Recovery Centers  
are a safe, stigma-free place  
for people living  
with mental health,  
substance abuse,  
and homelessness challenges.

# Values are based on Mutual Peer Support

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Our Goal: To help people overcome challenges in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Our Services: Completely confidential and free of all charges.

Our Requirements: No referrals are needed to participate in our program and no requirements need to be met.

Our Understanding: We understand one another. Having gone through similar trials, we reach out with empathy to provide support in a number of ways.

# Mentoring and Group Support

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## Strategies:

- Trauma Informed Care
- Peer Support Groups
- Crisis Support
- WRAP
- DRA/AA/NA
- One-on-One Peer Counseling

## Results:

- Environment of trust
- Participants know they are not alone
- Participants benefit from staff's lived experience and skills

# Employment Support

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## Strategies:

- Computer Training
- Volunteer and Internship Program
- Recovery Academy
- Employment Placement

## Results:

- Increased sense of courage
- Self-esteem and confidence is boosted.
- New skills are learned
- More Peers contributing members of society



# Essential Links to Services

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## Strategies:

- Application Assistance for Housing and Affordable Healthcare Act
- Referrals to CSB MH or Detox and other county services

## Results:

- More peers have hope
- More peers engaged in their own recovery

# Basic Needs

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## Strategies:

- Meals offered each day
- Food Giveaways
- Day Shelter: Safe, stigma-free place to “hang-out”
- Clothing
- Coat Giveaways
- Showers
- Laundry
- Participant Phone

## Results:

- Nourishment
- Safety and protection
- Dignity

# Core Peer Needs: Human Contact & Sense of Belonging

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## Strategies:

- Recreational Events
- Resource Room & Internet Access

## Results:

- Happiness
- Daily access to the larger world

# Role of a Peer Support Specialist

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The Peer Support Specialist provides, through their own lived experience:

- A welcoming and supportive atmosphere
- Outreach and support to peers
- Information on the recovery process, while promoting opportunities to enhance the ability of recovery
- A variety of limited paraprofessional duties in support of wellness and recovery by assisting individuals in articulating their goals for recovery, helping them monitor their progress, modeling effective coping techniques and self-help strategies based on the specialist's own recovery experience

# Role of a Peer Support Specialist (continued)

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- Trauma-sensitive peer support to peers and will support each other as a team to keep this approach a priority
- Information, advocacy and peer support services to consumers of services
- Recovery oriented groups
- Resources to get an individual's basic needs met
- Information on community supports
- Individual peer support
- Navigation assistance of the physical and mental health system

# Role of the Peer Support Specialist (continued)

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- Help for peers to self-advocate with clinical staff and for services in the manner of their choosing
- Crisis intervention
- Job training skills and job placement options
- Referrals
- Workshops

# Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP)

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The Wellness Recovery Action Plan<sup>®</sup> or WRAP<sup>®</sup> is a self-designed prevention and wellness process that anyone can use to manage their recovery. It was established by a group of people who were searching for ways to overcome their mental health challenges and move on to a life where they could focus on their dreams and goals. Though the development of WRAP<sup>®</sup> was a group effort, the face of the movement is **Mary Ellen Copeland**, an author, educator and mental health recovery advocate. Her focus is that the person with mental health challenges can take ownership of their recovery and live a fulfilling and empowered life.

WRAP<sup>®</sup> classes are led by peers, who struggle with mental health or addiction challenges. These peers are consumers that have developed and utilized their own WRAP<sup>®</sup> plans to recover enough to facilitate WRAP<sup>®</sup> groups and empower their peers by example.

# WRAP

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The key concepts of WRAP<sup>®</sup> are:

- Hope
- Personal Responsibility
- Education
- Self-Advocacy
- Support



# WRAP

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The components of WRAP® are:

- Wellness Toolbox
- Daily Maintenance Plan
- Identifying Triggers and Action Plan
- Identifying Early Warning Signs and Action Plan
- Identifying signs that Things Are Breaking Down and Action Plan
- Crisis Plan
- Post Crisis Plan

# Recovery Academy

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PRS, established over 50 years ago, has a long history of providing recovery services to consumers in the community and of hiring peer specialists to bring their experience, strength and hope to further their altruistic mission to show every one of their clients that recovery is possible. In the late 2000's, under the leadership of Wendy Gradison CEO, the PRS' Recovery Academy was launched. PRS went from following a Drop In Center model to becoming an instructional center that offered psycho-social courses such as Money Management, Stress Management, Assertiveness, Expressive art, and Smoking Cessation. Peers and Clinicians together facilitate courses that provide their clients with skills for a lifetime recovery journey. The most amazing aspect of the Recovery Academy is that many of the clients facilitate their own courses, which builds not only their self-esteem, but reinforces the belief that engaging in work, volunteering or school is possible.

# Crisis Assessment Center

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The Peer Support Specialist will provide support to participants and will work as a member of the team who is responsible for the day to day operation of Emergency Services.

Individuals coming to Emergency Services will be experiencing a mental health crisis and may stay at the Center for up to twenty three (23) hours.

The Crisis Peer Support Specialist will provide services in the areas of direct peer support, group facilitation, data collection, medical record documentation and skills training.

# Reduced Hospitalizations

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Whether we help someone re-enter the community after a hospitalization or help someone stay out of the hospital, we are saving the state of Virginia enormous amounts of money.

In 2014, the cost to stay at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute for one person for one day was \$900.

# Cost Savings

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**South County Recovery and Drop-In Center serves an average of 75 people a day.**

**Our income is \$219K a year**

**The Cost per person per day is approximately \$15 compared to the \$900 a day cost of hospitalization.**

# Summary

***Leaders don't create followers, they create more leaders. Tom Peters***

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Peer services not only enrich the lives of the consumer, but they enhance and strengthen the recovery of those peers providing those services. Peer run services demonstrate, first hand that peers can work and volunteer in meaningful ways. There is no greater moment than when a consumer rises to become a peer specialist, themselves.

From an economic perspective, peer services save lives at a fraction of the cost it takes traditional services to provide treatment.

Peer Services are unique, because they market hope, recovery and renewal of purpose to those they serve. Peer Services are not only good business, they are in the business of creating more peer leaders to provide those services. Not many businesses can make that claim and not many businesses would care to do so. Peer Services are invaluable not only to the people they serve, but to the community at large, because they don't build products, they build people.