Spring has sprung!
For many of us this spring looks like this:

Several iNAPS Board members met with representatives from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in Washington, DC. GAO is an independent, nonpartisan agency that investigates federal spending and performance for Congress. The GAO is working on a project to identify best practices related to training and credential requirements for peer support specialist programs that receive SAMHSA funding. iNAPS was consulted as a key stakeholder group.

One question we were asked was about professionalization of the peer workforce and if that presents a conflict in the peer relationship. Our response described professionalization of peer support
specialists will enhance the peer support relationship, when peer specialist are properly trained, by making their role more focused, effective and intentional to improving one’s life, in particular the sense of hope and wellbeing. Further the professionalization of Peer Specialist has increased the access to peer support relationship and the evidence based outcomes for people receiving services by moving peer support from the fringes of volunteers into an accountable, reliable and funded workforce of mental health services. We also shared our ideas about the best length and content of training and the need for continuing education.

We also had the opportunity to describe the development of the National Practice Guidelines and how we envision these guidelines be used in developing training and certification. The National Practice Guidelines are a living document that will be reviewed as new ideas, concepts, and practices emerge and may be refined on an ongoing basis. This will be central to the theme of our annual conference in December.

National Ethical Guidelines and Practice Standards

National Practice Guidelines for Peer Supporters

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

~~SAMHSA Working Definition of Recovery (Last updated in 2011).

iNAPS also participated in a discussion on issues and policies that affect mental and substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery hosted by Assistant Secretary Elinore McCance-Katz. She summarized topics that are a priority for SAMHSA and this Administration and took questions from a few participants. She did emphasize that peer support was a necessary and important part of the health-care landscape, although most of her discussion about SAMHSA priorities was related clinical care. We hope there will be more of these discussions in the future that will directly respond to the peer support workforce.

We will also be participating as subject matter experts in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) contract with Social Solutions International, Inc. (Social Solutions) to inform the development an interactive on-line toolkit about peer providers. The main foci of the toolkit are: 1) awareness and outreach on peer providers and their roles in mental health treatment, 2) a peer provider needs assessment tool, and 3) an evidence-based approach for elevating the work and value of peer providers.
From the Executive Director

Beth Filson left her position with iNAPS in February. We wish her the best in all future endeavors. A committee has formed to update the Executive Director job description and to develop the search process. Information will be posted on the website. Martha Barbone is filling in as Interim Executive Director.

In addition to the meetings described above, Martha has continued to develop the new website which went online on April 15. There is a redirection from the current website. Most content will be available to all, but members will receive an email detailing how to login to the new website. There will be the opportunity for members to create profiles and participate in discussion boards and a wider social community. The new site will be continually updated to provide a unique and comprehensive way for members to connect and participate in the community.

Conference Planning is in full swing!

Reinforcing Our Roots: Designing Our Future
Orlando, FL
December 3-5, 2018

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotels at the Entrance to Universal Studios

With the roll out of our new website we also have published the call for conference proposals. We will be accepting proposal submissions until August 10th. The registration link is also now active.

We are very pleased to announce that Keris Myrick will be a keynote speaker at the conference in Orlando December 3-5, 2018.

Keris Jän Myrick is the Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs for the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Ms. Myrick is a leading mental health advocate and executive, known for her innovative and inclusive approach to mental health reform and the public disclosure of her personal story.
Previously, Ms. Myrick was President and CEO of Project Return Peer Support Network, a Los Angeles-based, peer-run nonprofit, which manages over 150 self-help groups in Los Angeles County, a peer-staffed Warm Line, a Spanish language community resource center (El Centrito de Apoyo), and peer run crisis respite house. She was the President of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and served as a consultant to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Office of Minority and National Affairs (OMNA). She has been an advisor providing assistance with the psychiatry component of the Recovery to Practice project, a SAMHSA-funded collaboration between the APA and the American Association of Community Psychiatrists (AACP).

Ms. Myrick’s is featured in the CalMHSA documentary A New State of Mind: Ending the Stigma of Mental Illness and her personal story was featured in the New York Times series: Lives Restored, which told the personal narratives of several professionals living with mental health issues. Ms. Myrick’s belief in the strength of relationships to aid in recovery was featured in an interview in the Psychiatric Times: Advocate Attributes Recovery to Strength of Therapeutic Alliance and in the Los Angeles Times. With her unique combination of executive skills and personal lived experience in the mental health system, Ms. Myrick is an in-demand national trainer and keynote speaker. She is known for her collaborative style and innovative “whole person” approach to mental health care.

Ms. Myrick has a Master of Science degree in organizational psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology of Alliant International University. Her Master of Business Administration degree, with an emphasis on marketing, is from Case Western Reserve University.

The Global Need for Lived Experience

Anthony Stratford, an iNAPS board member from Mind Freedom, Australia recently co-authored an article published in the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal. Co-authors are Louise Byrne from Central Queensland University and Larry Davidson from Yale University. The article spoke to the fact that leadership positions for persons with lived experience are lacking and that these positions are critical roles that will impact social policy, systems management, planning, education, program development and evaluation. The authors conclude:

“For true system transformation to occur, we argue it is essential for more attention and resources to be allocated to cultivating leadership skills among persons with lived experience of recovery and for opportunities to be created for such individuals to take on senior-level leadership positions within their respective countries and communities.”
Spring has begun, winter is done, but Stigma is not fun. Yes, I do know it snowed in much of New York on March 21, but the calendar now has become spring. Anyway, what is Stigma? Is that something in your eye? I do not think so. What about discrimination and all of its issues? Living in the world, I definitely encounter many of these situations. Whether I am a person or a Peer Specialist person it is bound to happen. The bigger questions are how does it affect each of us and how we deal with this? What upsets me the most is how when being discriminated against, many different people with all kinds of issues, problems and diagnoses are often lumped together under one label (Stigma) instead of being the distinct people that we are.

Believing in a religion or our skin pigment is white, black or something else, has an impact on how we view people in society. Even being a Peer Specialist has its drawbacks. However, I try not to let those stereotypes negatively affect me. Most of the time when stigma and discrimination occurs is because people are being different or strange. Remember the lyrics from the song, "We Are the World" produced by USA For Africa, "We are the world, we are the children, we are the ones who make a brighter day so let's start living," This states that we are ALL people together (Peer Specialists included) and ALL of us can and do make a difference. Remember, Peer Specialists we indeed make a difference.
Wow! Peer Specialists we make a difference. Alert the newspapers, the radio and the TV, "PEER SPECIALISTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE"! Interesting concept, but it is more and more a true statement because one by one, hand in hand, we indeed make a difference in other people’s lives. Naturally, this does not say, Peer Specialists encounter stigma. Sometimes it is just around the corner, lurking and waiting for us to react. The key word is us, I do not think there really is an us, because we are all unique individuals. Now I am remembering the song, "Imagine" by John Lennon. One stanza concludes with, "Imagine all the people living for today", and this all ends with, "And the world will be as one". Most people can imagine this happening and if we strive for this, we can make this a reality.

"On a clear day you can see forever" from the movie of the same name is what we need to strive for. Of course, I mean we are to be clear of mental illness (wellness) and clear of stigma and discrimination attached to it, forever. Martin Luther King said and Joan Baez sang this the best, "I do believe we shall overcome, some day" Our role as Peer Specialists is to make some day, today for ALL people. It is for the people we assist and most importantly for ourselves. Yes, there is plenty of self-stigma to go around. Many Peer Specialists label themselves. Statements like I am a mental patient or I am crazy, do not project a good picture. Maybe people do crazy things, but we are not crazy. Doesn't that sound better? Yes, I think so. Be careful, this can create additional problems we can not handle,

The Everly Brothers sung about "Problems, problems, problems all day long". But, what can we do about all these problems. Take them one at a time. It is important as Peer Specialists to fight stigma and discrimination anyway we can. Of course, this includes me. When I encounter this type of treatment (within the mental health system or elsewhere), I try to speak out and to bring attention to the problem. All I ask is to attempt something to fight the world of stigma and discrimination, not tomorrow, today. Again, ALL of us make a difference.

Howard is a New York State Certified Peer Specialist from Long Island and Lifetime Member of iNAPS.

Howard would like to have opinions or comments about his writings and for any future suggestions, you can please send them to info@inaops.org. Your voice does matter!

All articles are the views and opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of iNAPS.
Join iNAPS!

There are several benefits of staying involved with the International Association of Peer Supporters. Many of us have become close friends and we have a great time when we get together. Of course we also have a common interest, and we hope to further our cause. The more of us there are, the stronger our voice when advocating for peer specialists.

iNAPS is a thriving community that publishes regular newsletters, develops and shares access to recovery and peer support information, conducts surveys, and reports on the current status and trends in the peer workforce.

The INAPS Conference is the longest running internationally attended conference devoted completely to peer support practices. The conference brings together members of the peer support movement to share ideas, strategies, and innovative programs and ideas. Members receive a significant discount on conference registration.

This series of free webinars is made possible through the generous technology and technical support of Optum. This health management organization has been a long-standing supporter of the peer and recovery support movement. Webinars are available to all, but only members may receive certificates of attendance.

Join Today!

http://www.inaops.org

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