Ensuring a Place at the Table for Every Family

April 10, 2023

The National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy and Community Empowerment (National PLACE) is a national organization of 70 parent-led, family-serving organizations including Parent Centers, Family to Family Health Information Centers, Statewide Family Networks, National Federation of Families members, and Parent to Parent USA affiliates, among others. Many of our members provide peer support for parents/families. It is based on their experience that we submit these comments.

Model Standard #1: National PLACE supports most of Model Standard #1 focused on the importance of authenticity and lived experience. However, there should be separate components of this standard for peer support to parents/ families, and peer support to youth or self-advocates.

Model Standard #2: National PLACE in general supports the recommendations regarding amount of training and content of training (including cross-cutting training components and specific area training components). However, by lumping parent/family peers in with youth/self-advocate peers, the recommendations miss important topics for inclusion. For example, in the parent/family peer arena, we would recommend the addition of training on how parents can and should work with their youth/young adult to build their capacity.

Model Standard #3: National PLACE in general supports the recommendations regarding examinations including content, accommodations, engagement of peers in development, and availability of multiple formats. We would add ensuring that exams only measure knowledge and skills in those areas that are essential to the job of peer support, as well as tailoring examinations for family/parent peer support vs. youth/self-advocate peer support.

Model Standard #4: National PLACE strongly supports the recommendation regarding experience in lieu of formal education. Some of the most effective peer supporters in our network have no formal education. For many parents, having someone from their racial, ethnic, socio-economic background with shared lived experience is far more important than someone who can demonstrate literacy.

Model Standard #5: National PLACE supports the heart of the recommendations regarding work experience, especially that related to providing prospective peer support peers with information on where they can obtain the required work experience. Again, we would recommend differentiating between parent peers and youth/self-advocate peers.

Model Standard #6: National PLACE generally supports the gist of the recommendations regarding background checks; however, we would suggest providing information on "offenses" that should NOT be disqualifying; for example, for parent peer support in the child welfare system, having lost your children to the child welfare system should not disqualify a parent peer support specialist from providing peer support to this population.

Model Standard #7: National PLACE supports the recommendations regarding recovery pathway-specific requirements. We would also add language regarding parent peers in the recovery space. This is an area where standards could be tailored for parent peers and for youth/self-advocate peers.

Model Standard #8: National PLACE strongly supports most of the recommendations regarding diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Training and exams MUST include content on cultural and structural competency and DEIA practice including anti-racism, discrimination, privilege, implicit bias, etc., designed and facilitated by individuals from diverse and underrepresented populations, as well as that regarding scholarships where certification costs are a barrier.

Model Standard #9: National PLACE agrees that ethical standards and training must be a part of peer support practice. Again, there may be different priorities and issues in parent peers vs. youth/self-advocate peers which should be explicitly addressed.

Model Standard #10: National PLACE believes that the recommendation for costs and fees should include a specific recommendation that NO peer is excluded simply because they cannot afford the costs associated with any aspect of becoming or remaining a peer support specialist, either for families or for youth/self-advocates. This language should be stronger than the current language.

Model Standard #11: Peer supervision is critical to both parent peers and youth/self-advocate peers. Further, the recommendations should prioritize peer supervisors who themselves have lived experience and not just a deep understanding of the nature of peer practice, knowledge of the peer worker’s role and of the principles and philosophy of recovery, and familiarity with the code of ethics for peer workers in the state. This is also an area where there are differences for parents vs. youth/self-advocates.