

# Peer Mentors to Promote Smoking Cessation in Persons with Serious Mental Illness

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# Why peer mentors for smoking cessation?



- Interventions for quitting smoking for persons with mental illness have only limited success
  - Smoking remains very prevalent among persons with serious mental illness
- People who have endured and overcome adversity can offer support, encouragement, hope, and mentorship to others facing similar situations

# Why peer mentors for smoking cessation? *Cont'd*



- Strong connection in the general population between quitting smoking and interpersonal associations with non-smokers
  - Persons with serious mental illness often in settings where many of their peers smoke
- Myths about smoking and mental illness still dominant

# Peer Mentors to Improve Smoking Cessation in Persons with Serious Mental Illness

## What is a Peer Mentor?

A person with serious mental illness who has successfully quit smoking

## Other characteristics

Has similar experiences as the individuals they serve

Has demonstrated the ability to cope with their mental illness

Trained for the counseling role

Assigned specific roles and responsibilities



# Peer Mentors to Improve Smoking Cessation in Persons with Serious Mental Illness: *Possible Roles*

Testimonials to groups or individuals with  
serious mental illness

Motivational counseling sessions

Adjunct to professionally-led intervention

May be focused on smoking cessation or  
part of broader wellness intervention

McKay, C.E., Dickerson, F. (2012) Peer supports for tobacco cessation for adults with serious mental illness. *Journal of Dual Diagnosis* (8), 104-112.



# Peer Mentor Intervention: *Structure*

- Peers enhance a professionally-led quit smoking group
  - Group meets 2x/week for 12 weeks; NRT also provided
- Peers assist in recruitment and also group sessions
  - Testimonial presentations
  - Smokerlyzer
  - Comments about own experiences
- Peers meet with participants individually
  - Between group sessions and for 3 months after group has ended
  - Activities included talking, reviewing worksheets, going to coffee shop, playing cards

# Peer Mentor Intervention:

## *Structure* *cont'd*

- Each peer mentor has 2-3 mentees in each phase
- Are paid part-time employees of Sheppard Pratt
- Maintain structured logs of all interactions
- Participate in weekly group supervision
- Collaborate with research staff in writing the peer mentor manual



# Smokerlyzer



# Peer Mentor Intervention: *Training*



- Topics
  - Smoking and serious mental illness
  - Strategies to promote quitting smoking
  - Counseling methods with role play practice
  - How to deliver a testimonial
  - How to administer the smokerlyzer
  - Professional issues – confidentiality, human subjects protection
- 28 hours of training over 4 – 5 weeks
- Assessments via written test and role play evaluation

# Peer Mentor Intervention: *Outcomes*

## Process Measures

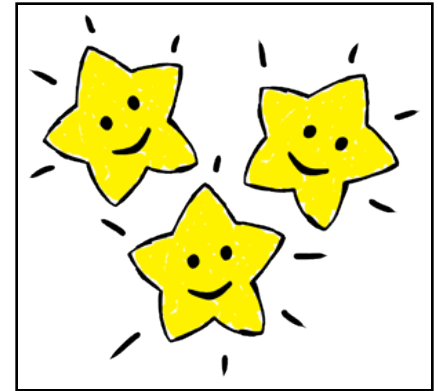
- Mean participants' attendance at group meetings: 76%
- Mean time per week in individual peer meetings with each participant: 56 minutes

## Smoking Outcomes

- Number of persons who made quit attempts: 22/29
- Number of persons who quit: 5/29
- Number of persons with sustained abstinence: 3/29
- Mean number cigs smoked at baseline =14.9/day, at follow-up = 9.6/day. 35% reduction

# Peer Mentor Intervention: *Participants' Feedback about Peer Mentors*

- Overwhelmingly positive responses
  - Attitude and relationship
  - Gifts
  - Activities
- Help with smoking goals
  - Worksheets
  - Activities as alternatives to smoking
  - Tools and suggestions, e.g. delay smoking
  - Confidence and optimism conveyed by peer mentors
- Dissatisfactions expressed



# Peer Mentor Intervention: *Issues Raised*

## **Who is a peer?**

- In our study, 2 aspects of “peer-ness”

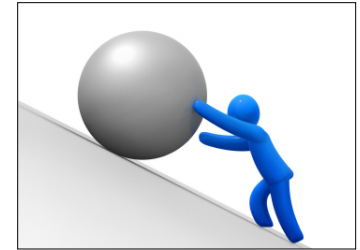
## **How to define peer mentor roles and boundaries?**

- Focus on smoking versus everything else
- Peer versus professional stance
- Structure of interactions and their time duration

## **How to promote behavior change?**

- Challenges of quitting smoking
- Peer support but with an agenda

# Peer Mentors' Experiences: *Challenges*



- Pressure to promote behavior change
  - How hard it is to quit smoking
- Frustration in working with people not motivated to quit
- Challenge of confronting intense ambivalence about smoking
- Frustration of seeing people whose health is severely compromised by smoking and who continue to smoke
- Barriers related to enabling of smoking, distribution of cigarettes

# Peer Mentors' Experiences:

## *Rewards*

- Felt they could connect with participants
  - Gratified that participants valued their role
  - Satisfied that helped some reduce or quit smoking
- Learned a lot about mental illness
  - Noted that all participants are so different
- Learned a lot about being in counselor role
- Reinforced own not smoking
- Facilitated career development





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# Quit Smoking Group for Persons with SMI

- Motivational Enhancement
  - Positive and negative aspects of smoking
  - Personal reasons for quitting
- Goal Setting
- Skills Training
  - Strategies for quitting
  - Strategies for coping with negative mood states
  - How to avoid triggers and high risk situations
- Education including about smoking cessation medications
- Contingency management



# Peer Mentor Intervention: *Measures*



- **Peers' knowledge and skills after peer mentor training**
- **Fidelity of peer mentors' performance of the peer program**
- **Feasibility and acceptability of the program to group participants**
- **Effect of peers on group participants**
- **Impact of program on the peers, themselves**
- Smoking outcomes of the participants
  - Self report of smoking severity
  - Attitudes about smoking
  - Biological measure of abstinence, salivary cotinine