Consumer Integration Part II Webcast

Kristen:

Welcome to today's Homelessness Resource Center webcast: Consumer Integration – Everyone is Talking About it, But How Do We Get It Done? Next Steps to Creating Recovery-Oriented Environments. My name is Kristen Paquette and I am the Project Director of the Homelessness Resource Center. On behalf of the HRC, I would like to thank all of you for joining us.

Today's webcast is the second half of a two-part webcast series on consumer integration. It will feature Laura Prescott, Founder and President, Sister Witness International, Inc.; Leah Harris, Author and National Consultant; and Steven Samra, Veterans Services Coordinator, Operation Standdown. Part one of the webcast series took place on July 9th, and highlighted principles of recovery, benefits and common barriers to participation, and potential roles for people who have experienced homelessness. Part two picks up where we left off, focusing on next steps to creating recovery-oriented environments that support integration. Participants in part two will discuss how to set the stage for integration, create an agency plan, and take concrete steps toward implementation.

The Homelessness Resource Center is funded through the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The HRC seeks to improve the daily lives of people affected by homelessness and who have mental health and substance use problems and trauma histories. We seek to achieve this mission by increasing awareness, knowledge of resources, and capacity to help people experiencing homelessness. Our work includes training, technical assistance, publications, online learning opportunities, and networking.

Before we get started, I would like to take a moment to show you our interactive HRC website: http://www.homeless.samhsa.gov.

As you can see, you will find frequently refreshed content on our homepage. This content includes tips, best practices, program profiles, and personal perspectives. These features lead you to additional resources to help you do your work everyday.

You can also search our digital library to find helpful resources including manuals, research articles, reports and tips. Currently, our library houses over 8,000 resources related to homeless services.

An important goal of the HRC is to connect providers, researchers, consumers, and policy makers. As a registered HRC member, you can create a personal profile that will allow you to connect with other users, participate in forum discussions, and rate HRC resources.

You can register to become an HRC member at any time by visiting our homepage, and clicking on "Register" at the top of the screen. On our website, you can also find information about upcoming conferences, trainings, and webcasts hosted by HRC and our partners. Materials from today's webcast will be available on our "HRC Webcast Resources" topic page on the HRC website, accessible through the "Topics" tab as shown here, within the next two weeks. The

audio file and written transcript of Part I of this webcast series, is now available as part of our website, for those of you who are interested in listening.

The HRC will be able to provide a limited amount of onsite or virtual technical assistance beginning this Fall. You may be interested in follow up training after today's Consumer Integration webcast, or you may have other training needs related to homeless services. If you are interested in talking with and HRC Technical Assistance Specialist, please email generalinquiry@center4si.com.

I would also like to share with you another helpful SAMHSA resource: SAMHSA's Health Information Network, or SHIN. By joining the SAMHSA e-network, you will receive up-to-the-minute information about grant opportunities, new resources, and SAMHSA campaigns and initiatives. You can also order free reports, brochures, and training resources by visiting the SHIN website at http://www.samhsa.gov/SHIN.

SHIN also maintains a mental health and substance abuse treatment locator. Make sure your program is included by calling 1-877-SAMHSA-7, or emailing SHIN@samhsa.hhs.gov.

I would like to make a couple of logistical announcements:

All attendees will remain on mute for the duration of the webcast. The presenters will take questions at the end of the presentation. To submit a question, write it in the Q&A box to the right of your WebEx screen. We will try our best to address as many questions as we can.

As I mentioned earlier, within the next two weeks, you will be able to access an audio recording and written transcript of today's webcast. In the meantime, to request a copy of today's slides email generalinquiry@center4si.com.

Now I would like to introduce our presenters. During today's webcast, our presenters will be sharing information with you in an interactive format. You will hear multiple voices throughout the webcast.

Laura Prescott, Founder and President, Sister Witness International, consults and lectures nationally and internationally, addressing gender-specific policies and practices in mental health, substance abuse, and criminal justice settings. She has written a number of publications covering such topics as: approaches to integrating people who have used services (consumer/survivors) into program design, service delivery, and research/evaluation; understanding and addressing the impact of violence and re-trauma in the lives of women and girls through policy and practice; creating cultural changes in closed behavioral systems with the goal of eliminating coercive practices and creating healing environments. Laura is a formerly homeless woman who is a survivor of childhood trauma, an ex-patient of the psychiatric system, and in recovery from substance use.

Leah Harris is a psychiatric survivor, and has spoken and written widely to promote human rights, dignity, healing, and self-determination for people with lived experiences of psychiatric distress and homelessness. She has presented at conferences including NARPA, Alternatives, and the National Conference on Organized Resistance (NCOR), and has been a guest on Madness Radio. Her writing has appeared in publications including *Off Our Backs: A Women's*

Newsjournal, Adbusters.org, CounterPunch, and Street Spirit. With Laura Prescott, she co-authored *Moving Forward, Together: Integrating Consumers as Colleagues in Homeless Service Design, Delivery and Evaluation*.

Steven Samra, Veterans Services Coordinator, Operation Standdown, spent 30+ years in and out of homelessness while battling addictions. He "got it together" in 2000, and received his BA and MPA at Cal State University Chico. Since then, he has dedicated his life to serving those who are still on the street. For the past three years, Steve has worked as a street outreach worker and you can currently find him assisting homeless veterans in and around Nashville, Tennessee. Steve co-founded and writes for *The Contributor*, a street newspaper produced and sold by people who are homeless, trains outreach workers for the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, and blogs at Stone Soup Station.

At this time, I will turn it over to Laura, Leah, and Steven for today's presentation.

Laura:

Thanks Kristen. I thought we would start by going over just briefly what we covered last time in the outline. So for folks that weren't able to join us on July 9th, these are the things that we covered in brief. Consumer integration, why it matters, how it works and in a general way we talked about the historical context for staff integration that integration as a concept itself is not new, it's grounded in a historical context in many other movements in this country. We talked about the value, in brief, of recovery itself in relation to integration, followed up by, why integrate people with experiences of homelessness and talking a little bit about what those benefits are from different perspectives, as well as the challenges. We briefly went over a range of opportunities. Some of the things that people said they were doing in various PATH programs and finished with what's next and first steps. We didn't have a lot of time for discussion last time and we are hoping that this time we will be able to provide as much material as possible balanced with enough time at the end for questions. So, if you feel like some of the material that you were hoping to hear about today isn't covered in what we are going to review, please feel free to type in a question and we're hoping that we'll cover some of it at the end.

Today, these are some of the things that we are going to be talking about. I was thinking before we start, I wanted to lay a context for some of the things that we will be discussing and some of the recommendations that we are going to be making.

To encourage consumer integration in the field of homelessness, the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) developed a workgroup a number of years ago that surveyed 41 states that gathered information about employing consumers and service delivery. In a 2006 report, that workgroup recommended future follow-up and contacted PATH providers for determining the extent of consumer involvement in service delivery to talk about the areas that were encountered and the strategies that people were currently using to overcome those barriers.

In an attempt to build off of those efforts that were already started, Leah Harris and I spoke to representatives from 51 PATH provider agencies in 32 states. The information we gathered coupled with the literature from the field and experiences drawn from other federal projects attempting to integrate consumers at all levels culminated in this document that Kristen was

talking about, the *Moving Forward* document. That document is now in SAMHSA clearance and should be available in the coming months through the HRC website that Kristen referred to. So for folks that are looking for that, please revisit the HRC website often and it should be coming in the next few months.

The information provided by the agencies in the field, we tried to distill those into three broad areas of recommendations that you will see in front of you for programs attempting to integrate people with experiences of homelessness, psychiatric distress, substance use problems, and issues of trauma. They are broadly developing a recovery culture in the agencies, and we will talk about how to do that. There are a number of steps for how to do that, creating a range of opportunities for consumer integration and increasing the numbers and range for folks that are trying to integrate consumers and keeping changes sustainable so that your efforts in the various programs will be sustainable over time. In the end we will be opening it up for questions and wrap up with an evaluation

So how do we develop a recovery culture in the agency? The first part of that is to set the stage, and as we talked about on the webcast on July 9th, integrating people with experiences of psychiatric disability, substance use, trauma, and homelessness, is necessary to transform organizational culture. Consumer integration is best achieved and sustained within these recovery oriented environments. Setting the stage is the first step in laying that groundwork for achieving this kind of organizational change.

Some of the successful ingredients that PATH providers talked about that have been talked about in other projects as well, in order to create that change and set the stage, have to do with leadership articulating a vision and conveying those values to all the staff not just at the leadership level, but at every level of the organization. Also, meeting with people at multiple levels of the agency or operations to talk about consumer integration, what those initiatives are to get by in, assessing the environment to identify potential organizational strengths and supports as well as obstacles through the integration efforts to orient the agency itself through a recovery philosophy. Those are all some important steps that people talked about in order to actually set the stage before the work of integrating folks began.

Some of the ways they went about doing that, they were really broad, varied, and in an environment where resources are really difficult to come by. People took retreats, day long retreats, if they couldn't do that, half day retreats, at the agencies where they were. They did dialogue quorums to give everyone a chance to explore new ideas and examine functions and exchange information. They facilitated workshops as opportunities for people to begin to talk with one another across a variety of subject areas that have to do with recovery itself. Some of those topical areas are things like, cooler consumers, what are the benefits and drawbacks of talking about your personal experience or disclosing.

Everyone talks about recovery, but what does that really mean? Not just for individuals, but for whole agencies. So how can we apply what we know about the recovery process for individuals, the flexibility of that, the organicness of that, and apply it to the agency itself as a framework for becoming more recovery-oriented as a whole system. What would that look like? Not just from one or two perspectives, but from a number of perspectives.

People talked about the power of labels and the language, which is something that needs to be discussed as a cultural context. Some of the other issues were, what does it mean to be trauma-informed? We talk about being trauma-informed and yet it is really important for people to see what does that mean, what is the various understanding of being trauma-informed? And, in order to set the background for people coming in who have such tremendous histories of compounded and cumulative trauma over time.

Physical and emotional adaptations in creating reasonable accommodation, what do people think those ought to be and, having a discussion from various perspectives because many people have hidden disabilities. It is a great opportunity to engage people from across the agency about their various experiences with accommodation, or lack of accommodation and, finding out how people can feel more comfortable, and participating in a process that will improve the agency overall.

While the issues of creating this recovery culture and organizational change, could be a series of all day trainings. For the sake of brevity, we really limited ourselves to three primary areas when setting the stage for change. They are what you see in front of you, which is to engage in individual and environmental assessment, establish consumer leadership early in the process, and the importance of training and orienting staff in recovery principles.

So the first piece of this, engaging individuals in an assessment and doing an environmental assessment. What does that mean? It means when we are talking about personal assumptions, it's a great opportunity to step back and people to ask themselves some particular questions about whether they personally believe that recovery is possible for everyone. I have had the most interesting discussions with people about this particular topic. Do they really believe that recovery is possible, not just for a few, or some, or the people that they know, but for everyone. Similarly, can they identify sufficient resources in the organization and are they willing to commit those to consumer integration? These are personal kinds of questions, these are questions yet of the agency themselves. This is the time when people step back and begin to engage in some personal reflection on these particular issues in order to lay the ground work for all these other efforts to follow, including a specific review of policies and practices regarding integration or an assessment of the organization itself. It starts with these personal kinds of questions and stepping back and doing a personal kind of assessment.

The second piece of it is an overall agency assessment of the atmosphere and what do we mean by that? We mean by that assessing the tenor of the organizational environment, the atmosphere, where people do business, where they deliver services, where they congregate. When you walk into a building or a shelter, drop-in center, food pantry, or meet people on the street, how do you know that that environment, and that interaction in that environment is recovery-oriented or person-centered? So those are the kinds of questions that would be important thinking through this assessing the overall agency and the atmosphere.

There are a couple of instruments that have been developed that organizations may want to consider tailoring to accommodate folks that are homeless. They are the recovery to self-assessment, it is a 36 item self-reflective tool used in mental health and addiction agencies that measures the degree to which practices facilitate or impede recovery. There are four versions, one for people in recovery, one for families and advocates, providers, and CEOs and directors. A

copy of this also can be found online, you can download a copy of it. The other is the ROSI (Recovery-oriented services indicators measure), which provides agencies with a tool for bridging the gap between the principles of recovery and the application of these principles in the work environment. Again, you can download a copy of the ROSI at http://www.power2u.org. I would encourage folks to take a look at some of those instruments, to take a look at what is working about them and those questions, to adapt those questions to your particular environment to make them culturally sensitive and culturally relevant for folks receiving homeless services. I know Leah wanted to jump in here with a couple of comments of her own.

Leah:

Just getting back to the practical day to day lives of people who are delivering services, it's hectic, it's never ending, but just really taking that time to step back and be intentional and really develop a vision about what integration is going to look like for your organization. Your agency is so critical. Some of the other questions that people have taken the time to ask themselves as a part of this process of system change is, am I personally ready and able to do what it takes to create this recovery-oriented environment, to really put these principles and values into action. As a part of that, to really thing about, what is our collective vision for involving people who are currently or formerly homeless in the work of our agency and really changing and creating this recovery environment?

It's hard when you are sort of in the middle of it, but when I am thinking about the agency atmosphere, other questions that we can be asking ourselves is how are people interacting with each other? Is it always rush rush, and short to the point, let's get stuff done, or is that relationship really being nurtured and valued. Are people interacting in a way that is respectful? So I think these are just some of the ways that we can really assess what is going on in our organizations and our agencies.

Laura:

That's great Leah, thank you. It takes some time to do those assessments, but also, it opens up a whole, as Leah was talking about the importance of vision, it opens up a whole conversation and dialogue, which can lead to lots of other conversations and dialogues about other relevant topics regarding integration.

The second piece I want to talk about is establishing consumer leadership early in the process. Part of what is important about this is being proactive. Agencies that engage consumer leadership early in the process save time and resources because the benefit of involving people early regarding budgets and strategic plans in hiring practices and policies, you don't have to revisit it at the back end after the fact. You can have the benefit of including people and hearing their perspective at the front end and in that way, anticipate things that you may have not been able to anticipate otherwise, such as, what are the increased costs, and what are some of the increased resources that might be necessary to do this integration effort.

In addition, what are the resources that consumer survivors bring and can bring to the effort itself in terms of connections to the community that they have ideas for bringing others along? So, it's a very important thing to engage people as soon as possible in your efforts. It also makes a strong

statement about your agency commitment. It lets others in the community know other consumers and lets the community know that you are serious about this commitment. It gives them a visual model of some of the things that you're attempting to achieve, and it creates a visible and accountable presence for the integration process, so that it isn't something that the entire agency, it is sort of spread over the entire agency, even though people across the agency are involved. It creates a visible person that will be accountable for helping you track how the agency is doing regarding these particular efforts. Doing these things early and talking to people, doing the self-assessment, doing the agency assessment, bringing consumer survivors on board to have that dialogue with you, to engage and leadership proactively, will be really key to how sustainable things will be over time.

Leah:

I really see that that is moving from vision to action, and it is really establishing that kind of partnership model between consumers and survivors at the agency level. We are currently in tough financial times with cutbacks and resources are scarce, and I think it's important to remember that involving the consumers really does save time and resources in the long term because of the benefit of consumer input early on.

One of the tactics that an agency can take is to hire a consumer integration to develop a position for consumer integration coordinator or specialist, who can really orchestrate this. Or, you could also develop a consumer advisory committee that could serve a similar function that is dedicated to that task. It was mentioned that this committee or individual in connection with the committee or both, can develop a strategic plan, help with assistance on how the integration can actually unfold, help the leadership to figure out how to tailor policies to be inclusive and understanding of people's histories and lived experiences, providing accommodations.

And, of course the other important identifying concept is to grow that leadership pool of consumers. Also, just developing orientation materials, perhaps, for people that are newly coming on board and can provide orientations for new consumer employees or new consumer board members, and really just set that entire stage in the organization for integration of the ongoing and unfolding process.

Laura:

That's great Leah, thanks. You mentioned something about identifying leadership in the community and I think that's really key. I know that Steve talked about the importance of doing that in identifying folks by asking consumers that are coming into the agencies, who is it that they respect, who is currently or formerly homeless as people that they are connected to in the community and bringing those people on, then attracting those people to the agency as part of your effort. These are all really dynamic and important things that people are doing in the community.

Transforming systems using recovery principles, we talked about this just a bit last time that since the cultural change can be such an important part of the system transformation, it's important to familiarize everyone with it in the agency about what the recovery philosophy is from the beginning. One of the things is that was helpful when Leah and I were getting different

ideas from agencies about how they articulate with their particular vision of recovery was to lay it out in this chart, just as a visual, so people could begin to see the differences between the traditional approaches, which were more static, which had to do with the trauma not being so well understood, that things were not as flexible. As people moved into looking at the individual recovery approaches and trauma-informed approaches, you see that people begin to shift their assumptions and thoughts towards believing that recovery is possible for everybody and that trauma is central to the process of healing. When those principles and those values become applied to the agency, it becomes water, and they become more generally applied so that people see agencies as becoming more transformed. Agencies become more transformed when they implement those values into the agency as whole.

So, if you look across this chart, you can begin to see the differences between traditional settings, which is on the left, and the implementation of those values through the individual process as applied, and then to the right to the agency as a whole. We found this as a useful chart to try and chart out or map out the process itself. As agencies begin to do their own assessments within their programs, I would encourage folks to begin to create their own charts. How is it that they see themselves? How can they bench mark where they are now, in terms of their own systems? As you have your own discussions about, is recovery possible for everybody, you will want to write that down as this is where we are now. Then, move onto the values you feel are important for recovery itself, individually, for yourself, for the people you know, having consumers articulate those for themselves, and that goes into the center column. And then look at those values and say, how many of those values do we think would be applicable and important for our agency as a whole and how can we apply those. What is the vision?

This is the important part of creating a vision for the organization that will include everybody that gets everybody on board. It sets the tone for the buy-in from all levels in multiple perspectives and can get people excited. Then when you look at this chart, then it becomes important to look at the agency mission and vision and say, does our agency mission and vision conform to this vision of recovery-oriented environment? If it does, that's awesome, and if it doesn't, this is a great opportunity to see where those don't compare with one another and begin to look at what may not mesh as opportunity change.

I know that Leah wanted to give some examples of some agencies that are making headway in that area, and Steve also had a story about consumer buy-in.

Leah:

What I want to bring up is that this is not a process that needs to be limited to small agencies or organizations. I did about 300-400 staff and they have been working to implement a recovery model throughout the agency, so not just in the providing of services, but actually in how staff are trained, how teams operate. How they did it was that they established this wellness and recovery committee that is trained in the wellness and recovery action plan, which is a program that was developed by Mary Ellen Copeland. So, this committee is disseminating the recovery philosophy throughout the team and department level. They are really looking to becoming more consumer driven and focused as an agency and each team is seeing how they can incorporate that in their own way, depending on what their function might be.

The difference is that, they are also really seeking to incorporate the principles of wellness and recovery as individuals and one of the staff members that I talked to said, it's really hard to motivate a consumer we don't believe in and we aren't on board with ourselves. So, really trying to walk the walk, talk the talk, and get the staff to really adopt these practices into their personal and interpersonal lifestyles. This is something that they are really working with their HR department to focus on wellness and really look at the help of everybody in the agency. That's what we are talking about when we talk about transformation using recovery principles. It's not just benefitting to people receiving services, it's really a benefit to everyone.

Another thing to keep in mind that certain agencies we talk to are implementing is that we are very aware that the work of providing homeless services is extremely intense and very difficult and taxing work. To really make an effort intentionally as an organization is to do formal stress management agency-wide. One agency employs a therapist to come in a couple of times a month to work with folks. One found a board member who had a massage therapist come in to offer people things like massage and again getting back to the fact that these are tough economic times that we are facing, but these kinds of activities in an agency don't have to be expensive. You can look at schools that massage, or acupuncture schools. There are always students that will step up and volunteer who love to do these kinds of things.

Other people we talked to really tried to make an effort to try to do some fun things together to sort of break up the constant tension and difficulty of the work. For example, some people went to a comedy show, they try to create and make opportunities to laugh together and to keep the humor level up and be upbeat in the midst of a lot of the devastating situations and experiences that people are facing everyday.

Steve:

And Leah, I would like to add to that. I know that the happiest moments in my agency are when the masseuse shows up. You can just see people; they have a big grin on their face, so I know just how much that means to people. It seems like such a small thing, but it was just so important.

I am thinking, too, on this topic, the whole idea of buy-in and I want to share something. I actually worked with a gentleman who I have tremendous respect for. I really have him to thank for bringing me into out reach. The man is extremely knowledgeable about homeless services and we had an outreach position and were going to fill it and there was a gentleman who was currently homeless and that gentleman was perfect for the position, I thought. What ended up happening was, when I presented it to my employer, he didn't think it was the right choice because the man was homeless. Because he was homeless, he wouldn't have the credibility on the street to convince other people who were homeless that he knew what he was doing. That struck me as odd because here was somebody that I felt was really aware that there is stereotyping and stigmatization going on and yet he kind of fell into the same trap that I think is pretty easy to fall into. How do you recovery from homelessness? It's kind of like that vicious circle where you are homeless and can't find a job because you are homeless, so you can't leave homelessness because you don't have a job. I think it's one of those things where we have to provide the opportunities to folks who are homeless and let them make that decision to succeed

or fail, and be there to support them throughout the process. We at least have to give them a chance.

By the way, the individual that was in question here, the gentleman that was homeless, actually took a job with *The Contributor* and we will talk a little bit about that in a minute. He is actually succeeding quite well. He has a vendor, a writer, and I believe he is pretty close to getting his own place. That's really good news for that gentleman.

There is one other aspect to this and it is on the idea on recovery-oriented approach. We kind of have to ensure that everyone is committed to that approach. We can get agency buy-ins, but one of the things that happened here recently, was that there were a couple of board members who actually complained about advocacy efforts that a consumer provider was making in the off hours. This person was attending some rallies and getting the voice out there, and the board members actually complained to the executive director and ultimately the agency terminated the individual for participating. The board members were really, I guess in my mind, at odds with the agency and the funding and board relations kind of took precedence over the value of the consumer provider. Even though that individual who was terminated presented the agency in a really positive light and was fighting for everything that the agency supported, it was still a painful lesson that buy-in wasn't really happening. This is just a reminder to all of us that buy-in needs to be from the top down. Laura?

Laura:

I think that is an incredibly important point, Steve. You gave a great story to illustrate that. It also drives home the point that there is a problem when you only have one consumer representing a number of consumers in any agency effort. So, that's a great illustration, Steve, thank you.

This next recommendation that we would like to talk about, or this next area has to do with creating a range of opportunities for consumer integration. It's a great segway into this next piece. After setting the stage for integration, the next piece of that is creating a strategic plan and defining a number of terms that will help and be key to building that plan in choosing an environment with consumers across a range of socially valued roles and in an effort to build your capacity as soon as possible. The more people you have on board helping you create your plan, the more buy-in you will have from others who will be attracted to helping you build your capacity early on.

A part of developing that plan is to define these terms. We talked about this just a little bit last time and it's not as easy as it might sound. Who are consumers? I have gone into agencies and they have said we want to do systems integration and we want to do consumer integration. So, when we sit down I will say, ok, let's start with defining who are consumers, and people sort of look at me blankly, and you would think that this would be an easy thing to do. But, it's not always such an easy thing to do; it's not always an easy thing to do for a number of reasons. Sometimes there are competing voices under the term consumer, in other words, particularly in the mental health field, advocates and family members have sometimes called themselves secondary consumers. So, their voices become a substitution for people who have primary experiences of psychiatric disability or psychiatric diagnosis. It becomes hard to know who are

the consumers, who are we talking about? When there is a substitution of voice those have often been mistaken for the opinions and experiences of the consumers themselves. This kind of mistaken identity creates a tension and mistrust. It is critical that agencies begin by specifically defining and clarifying who it is that they are trying to recruit, and their capacity to build efforts.

One of the most consistent definitions of consumers has been, people who have in the past, or are currently receiving the kinds of services being provided. We use this because it can be relevant for any kind of service that you are talking about. If you are someone who is doing outreach to people on the street who are vulnerable to HIV, for instance, and that is the particular group of people that you are working with, then the consumers who are people using your services would be people who are vulnerable or have contracted HIV who are homeless, as just a for instance.

The Bureau of Primary Health defines consumers as, those who are currently served by the center and who, as a group, represent individuals being served. It is a very similar kind of definition and one that I think people can use because it can be broadly applied. So think about that as a critical piece of your strategic plans, particularly in an age where measurement drives funding. The question of how we actually measure this, meaningful or significant involvement, it becomes fundamental for agencies that are committed to working toward that end.

Some of the other definitions are integration, what is integration? How is it different from involvement? What is significance or meaningful involvement? What are the role or job descriptions that people have? And, defining those and clarifying those is really key, particularly since people come from chaotic backgrounds on the street and in their lives. So, stepping into a role that is not well defined can be a recapitulation of the chaos and it becomes very difficult to be consistent and perform well, when you are not sure what it is you are supposed to be doing. Very rarely, in the roles that I have been in, have I stepped into a role that has already been defined. That can be something that folks can help you with early on, people who are receiving services as defined roles that are clear both for the agency and for the individual stepping into them, knowing that roles can change over time and you can change them together and can be flexible. But, there have to be certain parameters for defining the involvement so that there can be performance measures as well. Creating a range of roles, what we mean by that is creating roles across the agency, not just congregating folks in certain types of jobs, but seeing people in all types of job in your agency and creating timelines for bringing people on board and creating numerical standards for whatever goals you are setting out to achieve.

What is meaningful involvement? It is more than tokenism. It is a sufficient number to have real impact and in flume and it is more than review and comment, it's more than advice, and it is more than signing off. What we are talking about is really infusing total environments with people at every level and creating a vision, not just creating positions for other people to come along and say look what folks are doing. This is a model for people to become involved in the future. Exchanging the vision in how we see people.

In a paper presented by the National Symposium on Homelessness Research in Washington a couple of years ago, the writers identified a way to think about this. We have included this chart because I thought it was particularly informative, to help agencies think through, what are the different dimensions of integration along this particular continuum. They thought of it in terms of three discrete stages, tokenism, involvement, and through integration. They also discuss the

number if consumers involved, the number of roles they occupy, the positional or decision making authority that they have and the compensation that they receive for the work that they are doing. Additional factors for measuring where people fall along that continuum we were talking about, what are other things that people can use to measure when we heard from programs about what they are doing and we learn from other projects about what is being done.

We added a 5th, 6th, and 7th dimension to this as well. The 5th has to do with the degree of safety and comfort people feel if they choose to disclose their experiences of homelessness and policy and decision making arenas. You may want to think about that as well. The 6th has to do with environmental factors. Does the agency take into consideration adapting or accommodating consumers or is the onus on the consumer to adapt to the environment? The 7th was introduced by Dan Fisher, a psychiatrist and executive director of the National Empowerment Center, who is someone who has also been diagnosed with schizophrenia and he has provided technical assistance to a number of agencies. He said that there is an important 7th dimension that we hadn't thought of, and that is the degree of impact the consumers have on the organizational environment, project, or meeting. He says, consumers might ask themselves, did my presence make a difference in the outcome of the meeting, or would the outcome have been the same if I wasn't there. Non-consumers might ask and measure the impact consumers have by asking that the presence of the people with experiences of homelessness change how I thought about making plans regarding the subject at hand. There presence made me uncomfortable enough to reconsider what I thought I knew. Ultimately, each organization will need to decide what significant means to them and commit to that goal over time and find a way to measure those efforts in order to create something that's sustainable. But, these are some suggestions of things that people have already used.

Our ladies here have sort of disappeared on our screen. Not to say that the range has shrunk, by the way.

I put this up last time to illustrate the point that people with experiences of homelessness are everywhere, and they are engaging in opportunities that are only limited by the imagination. I put it up to say that there are many people with experiences of homelessness that we don't know about. This was driven home to me as we began this project. I began asking my own friends, how many of them had experienced homelessness. I found out, to my surprise, that many of them had and they were people I had known for a long time, which then begged the question, why aren't we talking about this with one another? What is going on with this issue of disclosure? What is the issue regarding shame and mobilization of shame regarding not having, as Steve said, the ability to provide shelter for ourselves and for our families. It begged the question, where are consumers and what is the range of roles?

Steve, you wanted to comment on that.

Steve:

I think, Laura, it's a great point. Part of the issue with full integration, especially as you begin moving up the senior staff chain and you start reaching executive levels, there is a fear of consequences there. For me, it was really easy to disclose practically everything about my past when I was an outreach worker. As I began to move farther up the chain and supervise and have

resources at my finger tips, I became more concerned about how much I was actually disclosing and whether or not in the future some of that could be held against me. The reason, I think is because as you move up the chain, there is more to lose and there is more pressure on you to fit a particular mold. It's hard to imagine, for most people, responding to an executive director who is a recovering heroine addict who has spent time in a penitentiary. It's just one of those things that we have to kind of be careful about how we view people, how we think about the range of roles that people play by attaching the past right onto their backs. It's just something that I hope people are aware of. We come from a place of trauma. A lot of us have had some really terrible experiences. Many of them we are not proud of, I am certainly speaking of myself now. But, change is real and a lot of us have earned that and I hope that people take that to heart.

Laura:

Thanks Steve, we had a good conversation about this and I wish there was more time because I would love to hear what other folks are thinking about it as well who are participants on the line. I just think that it's so key to know that recovery is possible and the way to know that is to see people with those particular experiences who are modeling recovery, not just in entry level positions or low paying positions, but in all kinds of positions in executive management positions, in middle management positions. Not even doing management, but doing things like outreach and advocacy and doing all kinds of things in any one of these areas that you see on your screen now. Those are the ways I think we are going to change the face of who people presuppose people with homelessness are. The way to do that is to infuse environments with a variety and diversity of faces and voices and people who have different opinions about the way things should go in recovery.

Here are some of the roles that people articulated that they are playing currently in these environments and Leah is going to talk a little bit more about a couple of them because she spoke to a number of the PATH providers directly and found a couple of really exciting roles that folks were doing.

Leah:

There was a program in Albuquerque that I felt in many ways was doing it right. They had an art studio that was governed by people with lived experiences of homelessness and had a very active mentor program. There is a wonderful story about someone who had basically started coming into the studio because he felt it was a safe place. He developed his own artistic abilities and taught himself the skill of making clay figurines. The advisory council really recognized his skill and pretty soon he became a mentor. He was bringing other people in as artists. He was in an art show. It's very exciting that this is a contract position where people are paid for their work. They rotate mentors and they really act as studio assistants who help people to become acquainted to the studio and get what they need to do their creative work.

Another part of that studio that is so exciting is that the government committee really does involve the consumers. I think 85% of the people using the studio are currently or formerly homeless. The committee really does set the agenda for how that operates and participates in the decision making process, selecting themes for art shows, suggesting artists to approach about leading some of the workshops. So, it's very much about consumer governance.

Another possibility that people can think about are speaker bureaus, which are becoming more wide spread. One of them is the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless has a speaker's bureau that gives presentations at schools, conducts workshops, and trains service providers on working with people. There is similar programs going on in Cincinnati, real change news in the different areas, project homeless connect, there is really just a ton of opportunities out there for people to really put the human face on homelessness and really break down the barriers of stigma and discrimination in the community.

Steve:

And Leah, one of the ways we did it here in Nashville, a group of us joined together and formed a street newspaper called *The Contributor*. Our goal was two-pronged. One, we were really frustrated at finding employment opportunities for people on the street who had their barriers that were related to the traditional felony conviction or bad credit, or just not having an address or a phone. So, we created a newspaper that was sold by individuals who were homeless, writers were formerly homeless and homeless. Everybody can write, but the primary group of writers is formerly homeless and homeless folks. We also wanted to raise community awareness. We wanted individuals on the street to have face to face interaction with people who were homeless. Vendors were able to take the papers that were produced by them. They were able to take that out there, sell if for a dollar, raise awareness, and get face to face interactions with people who may have never had the opportunity to talk with somebody who was homeless before. I am happy to say that *The Contributor* now has grown to a circulation of 5,000. We have about 60 vendors in Nashville. We were featured in the *Nashville Business Journal* and it is at time when most newspapers are collapsing, *The Contributor* is actually growing. The really good about that was that it was really inexpensive to do it. Most of the folks who did it volunteered a little bit of time. Once it got up and running, it took a little bit to get people on board, there was a lot of skepticism at first, but it has long since proven its worth, and lots of folks are clamoring to get on board.

The thing it did for a lot of people that are homeless that started it, they have gone on to write for local newspapers. A couple of them have earned enough money to actually consider it employment and are housed as a result. Many of them use it as a stepping stone and a way to show that they have been employed. So *The Contributor* has just been a wonderful way to raise awareness and to put people to work to give face to face interaction with the community, to give some dignity is also a great way to kind of get around the panhandling law and give people a real opportunity to earn money rather than to panhandle the money. It is just a wonderful way to make that happen.

One other thing, real quickly, I actually did a talk to the Hoby Conference this year. The Hoby Conference is an annual event where the high achieving high school folks around the state all get together, they are selected by their schools, and they spend a day in leadership training. Part of it is how they can better improve their community. We talked to the folks about homelessness and that generated this tremendous kind of brown swell among the high school population here, and they started to, a couple of them organized a shoe giveaway, some are putting together a backpack giveaway, many of them have volunteered for Project Homeless Connect, and we have an Annual Veterans Operation Standdown event. The other thing that did, I think this is important, that it gave a voice to young men and women in high school who ordinarily don't

actually get that kind of opportunity to be heard and to contribute in some meaningful way to their community. It was a real inexpensive way to get people motivated and actually make a change.

Laura:

That's awesome, Steve. It's really exciting work and it fits in really well with this next section on building capacity and consumer buy-in. Informing people that their presence is really critical is a critical way to get people on board and the Hoby Conference is an awesome example of doing exactly that. I also have an example of a group that did this at a Department of Mental Health (DMH) Taskforce. I was invited to be a part of this Taskforce on seclusion and restraint with the Department of Mental Health years ago, and there were a couple of us on that task force who were consumer survivors. One of the things that they did that I had never experienced before, but have encouraged folks to do since, which was that the leadership made a statement early on that the consumer voice was really key and critical to the recommendations that were going to the commissioner and would drive changes, policy, and practice, and because of that the consumer group didn't show up or couldn't make it for some reason and they were going to cancel the meeting. This showed that our presence was really key to how things went, that we weren't just joining in after the fact, but that we were critical and key players to the whole process and it did a couple of things.

One is that it changed how the group viewed us, who were sitting at the table as key members, it sort of lent us some of that credibility in addition to the fact that it created an accountability that we each felt for showing up. It did an enormous thing in terms of changing the environment and in terms of getting buy-in, in terms of then building capacity because we each went into the community and said, hey look, this organization, this committee is really serious about making change, and they are really serious about bringing more people along and really serious about building capacity. In addition, they ask people, what is it that they could do? What is it that interests them? What other things should they be doing to attract others?

Other things that are important are clarifying roles and expectations, defining recruitment strategies, and making sure you get the word out there and advertise. These are all critical and key components of building capacity and getting consumer buy-in early on. I would go into this in more detail, but for the sake of time, and I really want to make sure we have time for questions; I am going to buzz through a couple of these. So, if you see a couple of these fly by, it's not because you can't get them later on. If you request the overheads, you can get all the material because I really want to make sure we do what we said we were going to do which is really give time at the end.

I am going to go to the next slide here, which is defining recruitment strategies, and I really want to point out one key thing here. People say how do we get people on board? There are agencies that serve thousands of individuals and I have been asked by those agencies, which are doing tremendously good work, how do we get people on board? Who are the people that we should get on board to be a part of our consumer integration efforts? I would have to say that one of the key features in the initial success of recruiting is to start by recruiting people with past histories of homelessness to pave the way for those who are currently homeless. I am not saying that it isn't critical to bring folks with current experiences of homelessness on board, but that, as a part

of the strategy to build your capacity, it is easier for the organization and also easier for consumers coming in generally if you start with folks that have a little bit of time and resources behind them to work with you to create a strategic plan to bring people with fewer resources into the project. So it isn't one or the other, it's creating a continuum, creating a diversity, using people who have past histories, to use that experience and expertise to help you get other people on board as well. Get to know people from your consumers who are part of a network of local and national consumer organizations. And, if possible, attending those meetings can be really helpful for identifying other people who may want to be involved.

We found this advertisement, which I am going to just refer folks to. I loved it. I thought it was funny, I made me laugh, and I encountered one that was similar to this when being hired by the Department of Mental Health. They used the language that first hand experience with a psychiatric diagnosis or hospitalization was preferred. This is the first time I have seen the substitution of expertise, meaning, instead of a particular degree or particular kinds of experiences, they took into account that first hand experience in the systems gave a systems knowledge that I would bring to the job and substitute for the kind of expertise other people might find in an educational facility. This can be a fun and creative way, you can again, work with the people you serve to develop an advertising campaign that can be fun, direct, funny, and really eye-catching. I mean this caught my eye. The job was available and I certainly would have called her and said, this is a great ad. So, I encourage you to think along those creative lines.

The last set of recommendations is about keeping your changes and the work that you are already doing sustainable. They fall into these five areas. Again, I am not going to go into them in any great detail, but they have to do with establishing the welcoming environment and the changes that you need to make regarding that. Addressing the boundary conflicts, I am going to say briefly that consumer providers are what are known in other fields, business fields particularly, as boundary spanners. They are people who span two or more different worlds and often those worlds have conflicting values. One of the issues that happens with consumer survivors coming into your organizations is that they have to figure out how to mediate between all these different values. This becomes part of one of the many boundary conflicts they encounter. Encouraging peer support and peer mentoring and peer supervision can be key to helping support the newer folks that are coming on board. Staffing policies and procedures to reduce those barriers and to make sure that you document your process and that you evaluate your process because it is so important to contribute to the field of knowledge that is emerging currently about what is being done.

Establishing a welcoming environment means asking your consumers about the barriers to involvement. Here I would really like to thank Darbie Penny, who is a friend, colleague, and former director of recipient affairs of the office of mental health in New York who helped provide important framework for analyzing system barriers in terms of procedural and structural barriers. We had previously been talking about things in terms of physical and emotional barriers and it has been really helpful to think about structural and procedural barriers as well. These are things that consumer survivors can help you identify and these are some examples of those structural and procedural barriers, lack of meeting skills, or not understanding system jargon language, and some of the solutions that you can put into place to address those. Technical assistance or orientation is a couple of key pieces. People who don't own cars, using vouchers, or paying for transportation to get people on board, all of those are really key. Here are some more

as well - not enough time for people to ask questions or to speak and reassessing the paces of meetings.

Many people when they are talking about systems change, will say, it's really tough to do this in this environment where resources really aren't that abundant. And I would just admit that a number of these obstacles or barriers or these issues that arise are opportunities for dialogue about the environment to improve your overall environment. Second of all, these are things that can be mended without any huge resource influx.

In addition, there are attitudinal barriers that can prevent people from participating. These are the things that can be addressed also without a huge resource influx, but are really key to keeping people on board and keeping people involved. Steve, you were going to talk about this just a little bit. Do you want to say a word or two?

Steve:

This just takes me back to the gentleman, to the person who didn't hire the gentleman because he was homeless. It was one of attitude and it is just a question of, how can we ensure and keep this at the forefront? Even the best and the brightest of us can fall victim to it if we are not annually made aware and aren't thinking about it. That's all I really wanted to make sure we got across.

Laura:

That's great Steve, thank you. Physically and emotionally accessible environments, these are things that people can use to create a strategic plan. Meeting face to face rather than a speakerphone, that's one that not a lot of people thin about, but for folks that hear voices, and I happen to be one of them, being on a speaker phone in a room where there is a disembodied voice in the middle of the room is a very difficult task. It makes paying attention and being present, and being a part of the conversation, that's already technical in nature, that much harder. These are thinks to think through. They are things that can be accommodated and sometimes somewhat more easily than others. Certainly they make again, the conversation more interesting and you learn about, this is a cultural piece, which I always think is really fascinating: how different people interpret a process of what's going on. You come up with some solutions that create more of a partnerships as you work toward an end that brings you together. Not meeting in a crowded space is another one if possible. I understand that that one can be hard to do, but often when I walk into a meeting and it's late, there will be a crowded space and the chair might be either with it's back to the door or it might be at the end of the room and crowded spaces often have a way of creating am environment that can retrigger old feelings of being hemmed in and retraumatization. These are things that can be considered when creating an environment that can be more user friendly.

We were going to talk a little bit about language and I think that we cannot possibly overstate the importance of language. Language as a cultural phenomenon. Language as it relates to a barrier to participation and just for the sake of brevity we are going to move through that quickly today and talk about boundary conflicts. This quote I though was particularly powerful that somebody gave: "when I returned home from work and shut the door I was over come with loneliness. I couldn't call my friends because I was a provider and I couldn't call my co-works because I was

a client." This is the kind of no persons land often that consumers cane find them selves in without the proper support from other consumer-survivors who have been through the experience of working in agencies when it calls for the need for not just having one person, but having many people on board or a couple people on board, having some good coaching from folks that have been in similar positions, who can assist individuals in creating an identity that they are comfortable with and to tease out what the different issues are as they span these different roles.

Reviewing and adopting policies that are barriers to involvement. Policy issues are really key so I hate to just, I really do hate to just buzz through these. However, there are a couple that, they are all really worth mentioning, but…the language of bereavement benefits, revisiting some of those can be key meaning that so many folks that I had encountered on the street have past away and I considered them family. And because I wasn't technically related to them, when I worked for agencies it was very hard to get a bereavement leave to go to a particular funeral or to pay respects to people who have passed away. So some of these things regarding definitions of families and expanding those and asking folks how they define the people who are important to them and building those into some of the policies that are in the agency are really key to whether folks will feel connected to the agency and will stay connected over a period of time. Also adjusting hiring practices so people don't lose their entitlements and benefits is also really key. People will say I'd love to be a part of your effort, however, right now I can't afford to lose my medical benefits. And there are ways to talk to folks who are entitlement specialists to do both things: to accommodated having folks involved to the extent that they can be involved and to also address the entitlement and benefit issues that come up.

And finally I am going to talk about, this came up last time. It was a conceptual model for creating on going quality improvement through consumer integration. This is up there to as we talk about documenting and evaluating your process and your progress. I think it's really important to benchmark your process and your progress over time and to take snapshots, just like we talk about folks doing in recovery. That recovery is best measured incrementally and longitudinally. And I really think that the way to evaluate agencies, and to show your success is to benchmark your progress incrementally and longitudinally. It mirrors that same recovery-orient approach that we talk about with individuals. One of the ways to do this is to look at where your current organizational environment is to the markers and dimensions that we have talked about, where are you now in terms of involving your consumer/survivor folks. Engaging people such as the key stakeholders in the agency: to what extent are you doing that regarding the dimensions that we mentioned. The role, the pay, the number. Creating role innovation and then measuring those in order to keep your efforts sustainable overtime and looking at your process. In other words does the role innovation impact your organizational environment. The questions that Dan was asking are really key. Do we have enough people on board stratified across the agency to change the conversations that are being had? To change the organizational environment as a whole. Not just in some areas, but in many areas. And when you document the process it can be a really exciting project. There are a couple of agencies that are doing some of this documentation process though consumer quality reviews. Other folks have done historical projects: they have recorded things though video. There are all types of creative ways of doing this that involve consumer/survivors themselves that can create a model of partnership to pass on the word that you are in the process of doing the work and that this is something to celebrate. And you can celebrate it together in a really visible way.

At this point I am going to turn it over for questions so we have enough time.

Kristen:

Great. Thank you so much Laura and Leah and Steven for that wonderful presentation. We've got just a few questions from our audience at this time. The first one is something that you touched on briefly. Talking about recruiting consumers who have a year or two of resources and stability behind them. One of our participants has a question about vulnerability to involuntary commitment or perceived vulnerability on the part of consumers who are thinking about participating. How does that impact the agency and what considerations do you need to take into account to involve those consumers who have those concerns?

Laura:

I'm going to see if I understand the questions. If I'm understanding it correctly, we are talking about people, the concern of people who may be worried about involuntary commitment. Is that right? Ah, okay, alright. Again I think that this is where involving a number of consumer survivors is important. Folks that have, folks that can…there are agencies where people meet to support one another. They meet off site generally. So, when an agency involves a few folks who are in various stages of recovery or however they are in the moment, they meet with one another to garner support from one another and they generally meet off-site so there isn't some kind of conflict between agency time an support that goes on. And so I think it's really important to create a space for folks to talk to tone another, to support one another, to create supervision, to create caches on the jobs, because for a lot of people this is going to be new. Both for the agency and for individuals and so the more people you can get on board the better and the variety of experience that you can get the better. I don't know that I have really answered the question but I'm hoping that I have. Does anybody else, Leah or Steve have something to add to this that I may have missed.

Leah:

I think you covered it Laura, but that was my understanding of the question as well. Hopefully that was helpful Laura.

Steve:

And I don't really have any input because it is something that I don't typically deal with and I don't want to give misleading or erroneous information to anybody.

Laura:

Alright, thanks.

Kristen:

Great, thank you. The next question is actually a combination of questions that we have gotten from a couple of participants about what meaningful integration might look like at a state level

perhaps and also when working on a leadership council where you are working with high level executives. How do the benchmarks for meaningful integration change in those context.

Laura:

So involving people at a state level, what would that look like, meaningful involvement. I think that that meaningful involvement at a state level is…

Leah:

I think that if I could jump in Laura some of the same principles I feel really apply if we are talking at an agency level, at a state level, at an entire systems level. It is about numbers, it's about valued roles, it's about people in all levels. I mean why should a consumer not be a commissioner for example. I think these are the kind of ways we need to be thinking. That all committees have that meaningful representation in terms of numbers and roles and that's what I see if we are wanting to talk about benchmarks. Use those same methods that we are talking about at the agency level to evaluate and document progress of the strategic plan at the state level. However the different mechanisms work I know they differ from state to state, but that's what I would say.

Steve:

You know one of the things that comes immediately to mind for me are the barriers that some of us will face at the state level. You know it is one thing to be hired by a non-profit who doesn't hold a felony drug conviction over your head or looks at some of the issues that surround homelessness ad addiction, but at the state level, I know that I am pretty much band from some state level employment just because I've got something in my past. I recognize that and the first thought that came to mind was that meaningful involvement is meaningful involvement across the board, but I recognize that there are barriers out that tat for many of us we resign ourselves that we will never be able to get there because we've twenty tears ago or ten years ago we've made a really poor choice and it haunts us. That is a system issue that I think in the long run needs to be address especially for our population, but meaningful involvement is meaningful involvement and wherever we can we need to put voices that have experience, real lived experience in every position that we can. I'm not talking about completely overwhelming the system, but certainly we deserve a spot.

Laura:

Yeah I think, thank you for that, I think a part of the confusion that I had is that I don't see it differently than involvement in a state level as Leah was saying, as any other involvement in any other arena. As a matter of fact I think that the leadership in this has come from state agencies. If you look at some of the movements the folks that have been out are often in the mental health field, there are positions in many of the state or the office of consumer affairs and those are positions that are integrated into the state level. They are government jobs and the people within those jobs are responsible for the issues of integrating and incorporating a visible presence at leadership levels, as well as bringing along others and creating initiatives in the community at the local level to make sure the capacity gets bigger and is built. So I guess I didn't see the distinction. We've had a commissioner in Maine who came out as a survivor in a different way.

He was a trauma survivor and that was also an important event for setting a tone similarly creating a critical presence. It allowed other people to come out and say "hey yeah I've had that experience too". And the more we can create those visible presences, the more we can create the possibility that people will say "Hey look they are doing it, I can do it too". This becomes then a possibility and creates and makes it bigger. It makes the possibilities bigger. I just think that that's real critical.

Kristen:

Great. Thank you so much. Before we end today's webcast I would like to remind everyone to please visit our website at http://www.homeless.samhsa.gov. Again that's h-o-m-e-l-e-s-s.s-a-m-h-s-a.g-o-v. For those of you who may have missed our earlier introduction of our website, you can register and create a personal profile connect with other users, access thousands of our articles and resources and get up-to-date information about events and training opportunities. Materials from today's webcast including an audio recording and a written transcript will be available on our HRC Webcast Resources topic page on the HRC website within a couple of weeks. To request a copy of today's slides immediately, please e-mail generalinquiry@center4si.com, which is displayed on your screen right now. Please also remember to think of the HRC for your training and technical assistance needs. If you have questions please email us also at the same address generalinquiry@center4si.com. I have opened a brief pole with a few questions about today's webcast on your screen. Please take a moment to complete these questions your feedback is very important to us and it helps us to serve you better. On behalf of the Homelessness Resource Center I would like to thank our presenters: Laura Prescott, Leah Harris, and Steven Samra, and all of you for taking time out of your day to be with us. Thank you everyone and have a great day.