Webinar 9: Building a Workplace Peer Support Program

Thrive in your Workplace | 2019

Thrive NYC

Agenda

I. Objectives

II. Overview of Social Support and Mental Health

III. Peer Support Programs

IV. Wrapping Up

Thrive
NYC

Objectives

By the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Understand the importance of social support for mental health

- Describe different types of peer support programs in the workplace

- Access tools and templates to get started

Thrive NYC

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."
– Helen Keller

Social support and mental health

- Relationships are a key part of maintaining both mental and physical health

- Social support gives us the feeling of being loved, cared for, respected, and belonging to a group

- A strong social support system can improve or protect mental health and decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety

How does social support strengthen the workplace?

Social connections between colleagues can:

- Create a sense of purpose and well being

- Reduce symptoms of burnout

- Increase collaboration and innovation

There are 3 commonly used social support programs for the workplace:

Employee champions

Employee resource groups

Peer navigators

Peer support program 1: Employee champions

Employee champions promote mental health at work by:
- Modeling positive behaviors
- Addressing stigma against mental illness
- Promoting workplace wellness events

In selecting Employee Champions, a good candidate is:
- Respected by both workers and management
- Has a passion for mental health
- Willing to be the 'face' of the system

Thrive
NYC

What do Employee champions actually do?

Champions often work as multidisciplinary teams to identify goals and activities, such as:

- Holding events

- Supporting social media campaigns

- Writing blog posts about mental health

- Speaking about personal experience

- Sharing educational resources

Two examples of Employee champion programs

Google's Blue Dot Program
- Employees become champions by volunteering to complete 30 minute training (400+ trained to date)

- Identified by a blue dot on their name badge

- Provide peer support by practicing "compassionate listening"

Accenture Mental health Allies
- Volunteers who provide mental health support and information

- Participate in a 3-hour training (1300+ trained to date)

- Aim to normalize and de-stigmatize mental health

Thrive
NYC

Best practices for introducing Employee champions

- Ensure supervisors support employee champions by providing dedicated resources and time for participation
- Celebrate and reward champions' efforts
- Provide recognition and share success stories
- Communicate regularly and often
- Offer opportunities to collaborate with leadership and HR on organizational goals

Peer support program 2: Employee resource groups (ERGs)

ERGs often serve as a source of internal support for employees and symbolize a commitment to certain values. ERGs:

- Represent groups of employees who share concerns about a common topic, such as mental health, gender identity and others
- Support the recruitment and retention of diverse employees
- Facilitate culturally sensitive product development and processes
- Build an inclusive and engaged workforce

ThriveNYC

What do mental health ERGs actually do?

Collaborate with HR to:
- Standardize policies about accommodations and that promote positive mental health
- Educate staff about available resources

Launch stigma-reducing activities:
- Encourage leaders to communicate about mental health
- Normalize talking about mental health at work

Coordinate and conduct trainings:
- Hold Mental Health First Aid training
- Develop other educational materials

Best practices for introducing Employee resource groups

Ensure alignment with legal and HR departments:
- All employees should be invited to voluntarily participate
- Use positive language to frame the opportunity

Integrate the ERG's practices into organizational priorities
- Co-develop objectives and goals between leadership and ERGs
- Design ERG activities to support business goals
- Provide executive support to ERGs

Peer support program 3: Peer navigators

Peer navigator programs employ people with lived experience of mental illness or substance misuse to model recovery in the workplace. They differ from employee champions in that their *lived experience* is a crucial part of the role.

Peer navigators are typically used in healthcare or social service settings, however many other types of organizations are starting to explore the role of peers in the workplace

Thrive
NYC

Example of a Peer navigator program

Howie the Harp

- A national model for peer advocacy

- Trains individuals with lived experience to provide effective peer support services in Human Services

- Program includes classroom training, internship placement, and job search support

- Over 1,000 peers trained

What do peer navigators do?

Key elements of peer navigator support include:
- Shared experience
- Empathy
- Hope
- Role modeling recovery
- Active listening
- Motivational interviewing
- Constructive disclosure

Peer support programs have been shown to decrease rates of hospitalization and self-stigma, while increasing quality of life, satisfaction, empowerment and hope.

Best practices for introducing Peer navigators

- Generate a clear and consistent vision of peer work as it relates to your organization

- Adjust existing practices and policies to accept the nuances and experiences of this new population of employees

- Make the peer staff experience consistent with all other staff's experience

- Coordinate regular supervision for peers in a manner consistent with the organization's existing supervision structure

- Offer accommodations when necessary to support peers at work

Get started launching a Peer navigator program

1. Communicate a clear commitment to the importance of lived experience from leadership

2. Identify funding for a peer support program

3. Provide educational training to staff about peer support and elicit feedback

4. Establish a volunteer advisory council to partner on program development

5. Decide whether or not to hire peers from inside the organization

6. Recruit peer specialists from a pool of candidates generated by a certification program

7. Train supervisors how to collaborate with peer staff

ThriveNYC
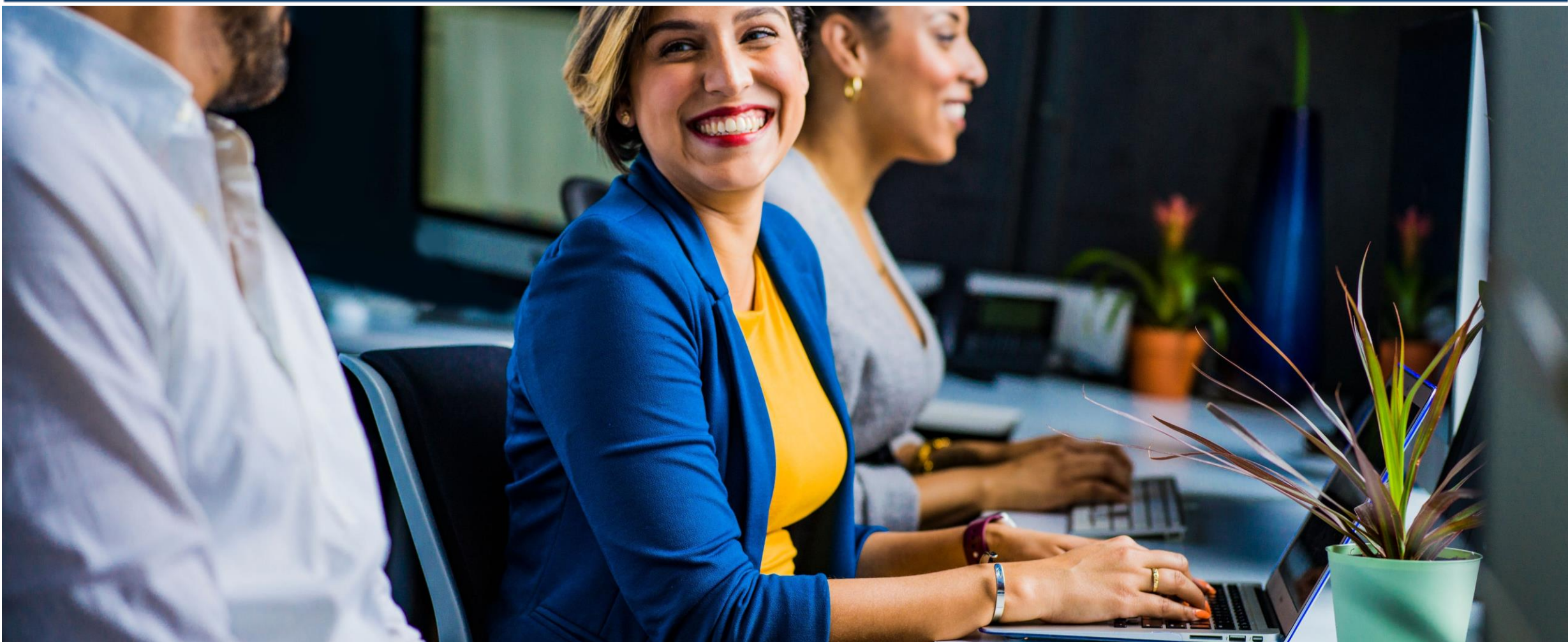
"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."
– Coretta Scott King

Visit our website to join us for additional webinars!

Webinar 1: Building the Business Case

Webinar 2: The Model for Improvement

Webinar 3: Evaluating your Mental Health Initiative

Webinar 4: Workplace Diversity and Mental Health

Webinar 5: Accommodations, Risk & Compliance

Webinar 6: Offering High Quality Benefits

Webinar 7: Supportive Management Practices

Webinar 8: Addressing Burnout in the Workplace

Webinar 9: Building a Peer Support Program

Webinar 10: Creating a Vicarious Trauma Informed Workplace

Thrive NYC

Tools & Resources

• Mind Share Partners offers a free toolkit about mental health ERGs and advising services to create a safe, compliant, and productive forum for continuing the mental health conversation

• Mental Health America Center for Peer Support offers a variety of resources about integrating mental health peers into the workforce, including peer certification training programs, research and resources to guide implementation

• NYC Peer and Community Health Workforce Consortium created an online toolkit to help organizations support and integrate peers and community health workers

• Time to Change is a UK based social movement focused on mental health that utilizes employee champions within organizations

References

- Anderson, Jen. (2011). The Case for Mental Health Employee Resource Groups.Thrive Global. Accessed from: thriveglobal.com/stories/the-case-for-mental-health-employee-resource-groups-why-companies-like-google-have-a-mental-health-erg/.

- Arena, M., Cross, R., Sims, J. & Uhl-Bien, M. (2017). How to Catalyze Innovation in Your Organization. MIT Sloan Management Review. Accessed from: https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-to-catalyze-innovation-in-your-organization/.

- Bologna, M. J., & Pulice, R. T. (2011). Evaluation of a peer-run hospital diversion program: A descriptive study. American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation, 14, 272- 286.

- Brummett, B.H., Mark, D.B., Siegler, I.C., Williams, R.B., Babyak, M.A., Clapp-Channing, N.E., & Barefoot, J.C. (2005). Perceived social support as a predictor of mortality in coronary patients: effects of smoking, sedentary behavior, and depressive symptoms. Psychosomatic medicine, 67 1, 40-5

Thrive
NYC

References

- Chinman, M., Oberman, R. S., Hanusa, B. H., Cohen, A. N., Salyers, M. P., Twamley, E.W., & Young, A. S. (2015). A cluster randomized trial of adding peer specialists to intensive case management teams in the Veterans Health Administration. Journal of Behavioral Health Services Research, 42, 109-121.

- Corrigan, P. W., & Sokol, K. A. (2013). The impact of self- stigma and mutual help programs on the quality of life of people with serious mental illnesses. Community Mental Health Journal, 49, 1-6.

- Cross, R.L., Martin, D.M. & Weiss, L.M. (2006). Mapping the value of employee collaboration. McKinsey Quarterly. Accessed from: https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/mapping-the-value-of-employee-collaboration

- Davidson, L., Bellamy, C., Guy, K., & Miller, R. (2012). Peer support among persons with severe mental illnesses: A review of evidence and experience. World Psychiatry, 11, 123-128.

- Helliwell, J. F., & Putnam, R. D. (2004). The social context of well-being. Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences, 359(1449), 1435–1446. doi:10.1098/rstb.2004.1522

Thrive
NYC

References

- Maclellan, Lila. (2019). Google is running an employee mental health project without any metrics. Quartz. Accessed from: https://qz.com/work/1650113/googles-blue-dot-mental-health-project-promotes-compassionate-listening/

- Miech, E. J., Rattray, N. A., Flanagan, M. E., Damschroder, L., Schmid, A. A., & Damush, T. M. (2018). Inside help: An integrative review of champions in healthcare-related implementation. SAGE open medicine, 6, 2050312118773261. doi:10.1177/2050312118773261

- Molavi, R., Alavi, M., & Keshvari, M. (2015). Relationship between general health of older health service users and their self-esteem in Isfahan in 2014. Iranian journal of nursing and midwifery research, 20(6), 717–722.

- Shakerinia I. Effect of Social Assists and Hopefulness in Elderly Health Status with Chronic Pain. Salmand. 2012;7(1):7–15.

- Steffens, N. K., Haslam, S. A., Schuh, S. C., Jetten, J., & van Dick, R. (2017). A Meta-Analytic Review of Social Identification and Health in Organizational Contexts. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 21(4), 303–335.

Thrive
NYC