From Patient to Professional: 

THE CHALLENGES AND ADVANTAGES OF HIRING FROM WITHIN TO END THE EPIDEMIC

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Goals of this Workshop

- Understand the benefits and challenges of hiring from within your client population
- Understand the benefits and challenges for staff of working with clients who have a similar experience
- Learn skills for identifying and addressing these issues from an administrative perspective
- Hear about how GMHC has responded to these needs
- Learn how we can continue to support our clients after they have taken on roles on our staff
GMHC and Hiring from Within

- The Denver Principles
  - Drafted at a 1982 conference of AIDS activists in Denver
  - Advocated for supporting individuals with AIDS and not treating them as victims or patients
  - “Be involved at every level of decision-making and specifically serve on the boards of directors of provider organizations.”

- How does GMHC support the Denver Principles?
  - Consumer Advisory Board
  - Representation on the Board of Directors
  - Active efforts to employ current or former clients
    - Workforce Development- linkage to HR and hiring managers
Having clients as staff members - Benefits

- The staff member has a firm understanding of the population they serve and the needs of that population.
- Often serving your own population can engender increased passion and dedication to the work.
- Current clients can look to these employees as inspirations; facilitation of the installation of hope.
- Current clients will feel confidence in your organization’s support of the population.
Having clients as staff members: Challenges

- Employees often lack professional experience while having a lot of lived experience
  - This can lead to a learning curve about professionalism/boundaries
- Overidentification with the clients they are serving
- High potential for burnout
  - These employees may often “take their work home with them”, blurring the lines between professional and personal
  - Clients may experience vicarious trauma more readily if they share similar histories. Many will not have the training and/or supervision to properly cope
What GMHC has done

- HR-driven Dual Role Training
  - Clients interested in a position within the agency are informed of how taking on a paid position could potentially impact their benefits
  - All clients who choose to transition to staff roles take a mandatory set of trainings pertaining to the changes in their responsibilities upon taking a professional position
  - Clients review how their standing in the agency will change now that they are an employee
    - Professional boundaries around interactions with their peers
    - Expectations about receipt of services from the agency (90 day transition window)
    - Recognition of agency expectation around behaviors
  - Becoming employed can be considered a treatment issue
    - Individuals aren’t hired because they are clients, they are hired for their skills!
Assisting client-staff after training

- All agency staff should have an awareness of the challenges that clients who transition to employees may face to ensure empathy and ongoing support.
- Whenever possible, clinical supervision should be provided regularly to assist the individual with the transition.
  - If supervision is not available, administrators should make efforts to provide staff with ongoing training around the aforementioned challenging areas.
- Expect that maintaining consistency in this area may present ongoing challenges, be prepared to offer support long after training concludes.
Questions??