

Prisoner Peer Support Program SA Department for Correctional Services

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Overview of Presentation

- Peer Support
- Prisoner Peer Support Programs
- Peer Support for Female Prisoners
- Peer Support Programs within Prisons (considerations)
- Prisoner Peer Support Program in SA DCS
- Review of existing program
- Prisoner Peer Supporter Program – Working Party Outcomes
- Pilot Program at Adelaide Women's Prison

Peer Support

- Peer Group “A collective unit in which the members share some common characteristics”, the “Individuals usually share related values, experiences and lifestyles and are approximately the same age” Mullins (2004, p 2)
- Used in a variety of contexts
 - Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Programs
 - Sexual Health
 - Youth violence
 - Teenage Parenting
 - School based education/health promotion programs
 - Individual and group settings
 - Have demonstrated uniformly positive outcomes using peers (Deville, Sorbello, Eccleston and Ward, 2003)

Peer Support

- Peer supporters able to speak in a language appropriate for the target group
- Are trusted and have credibility with the target group
- Provide information/awareness in the most appropriate manner for this group

Prisoner Peer Support Programs

- Widely used in Australia and overseas (UK, Canada, USA)
- Provides the opportunity for prisoners to help each other, and the staff of the prison, to deal with a variety of situations inherent in prison life
- Comparison research demonstrated that peer-led groups were as effective as professional-led programs in changing attitudes and behaviours and offenders showed a strong preference for interventions led by inmates (reducing HIV risk taking behaviour, randomized study with N= 478 control group N=1169 in peer-led and N=648 in professional-led) (Deville et al, 2003)

Peer Support for Female Prisoners

- Programs conceived of as being fundamentally similar
- Existing programs (Canada) identified that support provided to women on admission to prison, those with mental health problems and those who are segregated as being particularly helpful (Syed & Blanchette, 2000)
- Female peer supporters also provide assistance in family-orientated issues, relationships and family dynamics

Peer Support for Female Prisoners

■ The evaluation of this program identified that female prisoners requested peer support for the following reasons:

- Upset/Angry
 - Lonely
 - Self-Injurious
 - Suicidal
 - Psychologist not available
 - Argument with another prisoner
 - Argument with a staff member
- (2000)

Syed & Blanchette

Peer Support for Female Prisoners (Contin)

- Evaluation results indicated that female prisoners were supportive of the program and reported high levels of satisfaction
- Staff survey results (33%) reported a change in atmosphere at the prison since the introduction of the program, an environmental positive change, less tension in the atmosphere and prisoners more open in general and discussing issues more freely
- Interview data also supported the observation that access to peer supporters reduced the workload of staff, through peer supporters dealing with more minor issues and thus reducing the requirement of staff to address these concerns
- Changes reported by Peer Supporters and staff included: increase in responsibility and accountability and higher self-esteem
- Syed & Blanchette (2000)

Peer Support Programs Within Prisons (Considerations)

- Adair (2005) summarized the information available on prison-based peer education programs
- Controlled research is lacking but preliminary reports are positive
- Adair (2005) identified a number of implementation issues:
 - Identification of required numbers of peer supporters (1 peer to 30 prisoners)
 - Recruitment and selection via clear criteria and multi-disciplinary panel, final selection occurs post training
 - Use of accredited training packages encompassing listening and communication skills, problem solving, group work skills, ethical and cultural issues
 - Establishment of a peer support team
 - Resources to coordinate the program
 - Ongoing training, development and improvement
 - Have a program evaluation framework established

Prisoner Peer Support Programs in SA DCS

- In South Australia – original program was offered in the 8 state prisons, commenced mid 1990s. In Mount Gambier a similar program is run but is coordinated by Lifeline locally, based on the UK model, prisoner peer supporters are referred to as listeners,
- Focus has been on at-risk prisoners, education regarding communicable diseases (HIV and Hep C), drug and alcohol abuse and general support to prisoners as required
- Referrals occurred via – self referral (using prisoner request form), other prisoners, relevant staff (intervention, medical, custodial officers)
- Existing program - no accredited training, no ongoing structured training and development, no evaluation, no formal policy or procedure in relation to the program

Review of Existing Program

- Review of the existing Prisoner Peer Support Program was undertaken in late 2006 and early 2007
- Review identified number of issues with existing program
 - Clarification of the role and function of Prisoner Peer Supporters
 - Identification and selection of appropriate Prisoner Peer Supporters, type and mix of peer supporters
 - Training and development of Prisoner Peer Supporters
 - Incorporation of Peer Supporter Role into the Case Management process
 - Need for clear selection criteria, Position Role Description, Accredited training, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Local Interpretation Statements (LIS) to be developed

Review of Existing Program

- Working Party established to update and review existing documentation, clarify role and function, and establish an evaluation framework to determine program effectiveness and outcomes.
- Documentation created and/or updated
 - Prisoner Peer Support Program Application
 - Role Expectation Statement
 - Standard Operating Procedure
 - Prisoner Peer Support Interview Questions

Prisoner Peer Supporter Program - Working Party Outcomes

- Peer Supporter Coordinator identified in all prisons
- Program linked into Intervention Services and Case Management processes
- Peer Support training provided by Relationships Australia (36 hour program) in the prison setting
- Accredited training identified – modules from Certificate III in Community Services Work
 - Apply Basic First Aid
 - Communicate appropriately with clients and colleagues
 - Implement health promotion and community intervention
 - Optional modules of:
 - Respond effectively to difficult or challenging behaviours
 - Support group activities
 - Work effectively in a cross cultural context with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people and organizations

Prisoner Peer Supporter Program - Working Party Outcomes

- Hepatitis C Council providing training in Hep C and communicable diseases
- Support services and systems identified for peer supporters (debriefing through intervention staff and roster systems to prevent burnout)

Pilot Program at Adelaide Women's Prison

- Planned for early 2008
- Currently finalizing all documentation and PSA consultation and feedback
- Local Interpretation Statement to be developed inline with the SOP
- Program to be implemented and evaluated during 2008
- Further thought be given to expand on initial training with another module from the Certificate III in Community Services – Orientation to Aged Care Work, given the rising numbers of ageing prisoners in the SA DCS prison system

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