



April 7, 2016

## Executive Summary

**Background:** As the youth movement continues to expand across the country through a variety of federally funded grant programs and the support of state and local leaders, it is imperative for the sustainability of the local youth movement to capture the value of their work, demonstrate its' effectiveness, and provide appropriate guidance to the field on quality youth programs. Youth M.O.V.E National serves as a resource and convener of youth, young adults, and professionals to collectively acknowledge the value of youth voice. There is limited research available to effectively capture current efforts and limited tools developed to measure or monitor the innovative work happening in the field related to youth driven care and young adult peer support. In order to address the limited knowledge in the field, Youth M.O.V.E. National has established a Youth Best Practice Committee to support local chapters and young adult leaders around the nation with understanding the value of using data and evaluation, and to have young people drive the development of best practice standards and create assessments and fidelity tools to show effective strategies for youth driven processes across four purpose areas: 1) Youth engagement in systems change; 2) Youth peer support; 3) Youth voice in national evaluation efforts; and 4) Quality assurance in youth programming, with an emphasis on utilizing quality assurance for sustainability. We kicked off the start of this committee with a session at the most recent University of South Florida Research & Policy Conference on Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Behavioral Health on March 13th, 2016. Youth M.O.V.E. National hosted an exploratory conversation, using the World Cafe model, with youth, young adults, and adult partners around best practices for youth and young adult engagement in systems change work that will inform the next steps for the work of the Youth Best Practice Committee.

**Methodology:** Youth M.O.V.E. National staff opened the session with a brief conversation around indicators of successful youth engagement. Good youth engagement practices are at the core of moving from a youth-guided to youth-driven approach. This brief brainstorm served as the introduction and transition into the World Cafe. The purpose of the World Cafe conversation was to explore two topics. The first topic examined the core components of effective peer support. The second topic was concerned with identifying the key features and indicators of successful youth driven practice across multiple levels- the individual level, organizational level, and policy level. Participation in the session was open to any person attending the USF Research & Policy Conference which yielded 65 culturally diverse youth, young adults, and adult partners with varying knowledge and perspectives on the two topics being explored. Youth M.O.V.E. National developed three questions per topic which were discussed for thirty minute rounds. We closed the session with a "harvest" or report out from the audience to identify key themes, share discoveries, and summarize the experience. The World Cafe method provided rich and detailed insight into participants' beliefs and understanding of the core components and indicators

of best practice within youth and young adult peer support and youth driven practice. The preliminary findings summarized in this report inform opportunities for additional information gathering to support the foundation for prioritizing recommendations and outlining next steps. This summary highlights key observations and emergent themes.

**Summary of initial findings:** Qualitative analysis revealed overarching themes related to the core components of effective peer support and the key indicators of successful youth driven practices.

- 1. Core Components of Achieving Effective Peer Support:** Across the World Cafe responses, participants identified necessary practices to support the peer workforce and outcomes that indicate quality peer programming. In order to successfully implement youth and young adult peer support, participants reported three key features to address the needs of peer workers: 1) Strong and consistent supervision; 2) A positive work environment that fully integrates and values peers; and 3) The opportunity for professional development experiences. Respondents discussed the need for supervisors to offer coaching and mentorship while promoting self-care and offering flexibility for workers with lived experience. Participants also noted the importance of having access to training opportunities and upward mobility within an organization.

Themes	Areas of Focus	Participant Comments
<b>Supervision</b>	Flexibility  Coaching and mentoring  Self-care  Clear expectations  Frequent and easily accessed	Supervisors find the balance of giving flexibility to the YA with lived experience (e.g. more leeway to request and unexpected day off).  Good supervisors support capacity-building and help you see measurable growth.  Emphasis on self-care and assisting with action plans.  Values the role of peer support and offers clear responsibilities and concrete tasks.  Regularly meeting and having supervision.  Availability/accessibility of supervisor and support working through barriers.

<p><b>Work Environment &amp; Culture</b></p>	<p>Professionalization of peer positions</p> <p>Integration of peer positions into whole team</p> <p>Training for other staff and supervisors on the role and value of peer support</p> <p>Accessible certification process</p> <p>Youth guided and culturally competent</p> <p>Staff climate surveys- measure job satisfaction</p>	<p>Treated with respect and professionalism.</p> <p>How do you increase buy-in from other staff? Integrate peers with other positions in the workplace.</p> <p>As peer specialists, know to expect you are a part of a team and are seen as an equal. This can take time for professionals who have their own perspectives. The team needs to be trained together.</p> <p>Educate other employees/supervisors on the role of peers.</p> <p>Keep certification process simple! So hard to certify.</p> <p>Part of agency decision making at organization (youth supervisor).</p> <p>Cultural competence is huge- faith, culture, regional culture, generational divides, youth culture.</p> <p>Retention (of peer workers) and job satisfaction. Have employee surveys.</p>
<p><b>Professional Development</b></p>	<p>Access to training opportunities (e.g. boundaries, ethics, cultural competence, strategic sharing, MH First Aid, etc.)</p> <p>Standardized (national) curriculum</p>	<p>Training is key! Need to be aware of the different terminology across systems; balance of building a non-clinical, friendly relationship- consider the ethical boundaries.</p> <p>Stop changing the curriculum- so hard to certify! Standard national curriculum.</p>

	<p>Competency based standards</p> <p>Clear fidelity monitoring</p> <p>Individual readiness assessments</p> <p>Opportunity for growth and upward mobility (i.e. from peer support provider to supervisor)</p>	<p>Real training program that is competency based. Evaluation and outcomes-fidelity.</p> <p>Readiness tool (introspective assessment)</p> <p>Growth and opportunity. Opportunity to become supervisor (upward mobility).</p>
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**2. Measuring Effectiveness Within the Practice of Youth and Young Adult Peer Support:**

Throughout the conversation, participants explored what questions should be asked of recipients of peer support to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. Both youth and adult respondents established that peer support is a value based approach that is hope filled and relationship based. The hypothesis is that certain elements and features of this relationship will result in increased participation and engagement in treatment, ultimately leading to behavior changes. Participants identified certain measures to explore both the qualities of effective peer support and the potential outcomes. Analysis of the responses revealed trust, connection, and support in navigating resources and services to be critical components of a successful peer to peer relationship. Respondents discussed gauging perceptions of quality of life, perceptions of accessing and receiving services (and overall satisfaction with services), increased engagement in treatment, frequency of contact, and reviewing whether young people are “graduating” from peer programming and then becoming a peer provider as strategies to measure the effectiveness and quality of peer to peer programming.

Themes	Area of Focus	Comments
<b>A Value Based Approach</b>	<p>Trust</p> <p>Empowerment</p> <p>Quality of life improves</p> <p>Increased Connection Felt heard and validated</p>	<p>Is there rapport/trust? It’s less about numbers but about the conversations being had- way to show how meaningful services are (e.g. youth is willing to sit and cry with you).</p> <p>What changes have you seen in yourself?</p> <p>How has your life improved? Did</p>

	<p>Change in behavior</p> <p>Hope Filled</p>	<p>outcomes improve (housing, school, work, family life)?</p> <p>Did you feel understood/validated?</p> <p>Asking the youth: Do you set short-term, long-term objectives? Are they meeting them? Do you think peer support can help with that? Are the goals being met (e.g. utilizing services, avg. # of goals being met)?</p> <p>Did it inspire hope?</p>
<b>Access and Navigation</b>	<p>Frequency of contact</p> <p>Improved perception of accessing and receiving services</p> <p>Increased participation and engagement in treatment</p> <p>Ability to connect to resources or identify them</p> <p>Satisfaction of Services</p>	<p>Noticing that the YA are utilizing peer support on a consistent basis. (Frequency.)</p> <p>Do you feel stronger about not using services?</p> <p>Re-engaging in the system can be a sign of moving in the right direction (e.g. they are comfortable and engaged).</p> <p>Did Youth Support Partner help you navigate services?</p> <p>Do you feel supported? Are you getting what you need? Would you suggest to a friend?</p>

**3. Key Features and Indicators of Successful Youth Driven Practice:** The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) strongly values a youth guided approach to systems change work. Youth M.O.V.E. National recognizes that as youth programs evolve, and the youth movement advances, the field is moving towards a youth and young adult driven approach. During the World Cafe, participants explored the key features that help determine between youth guided and youth driven, as well as the indicators of successful youth driven practice at the individual, organizational, and policy levels. Consistent themes emerged throughout both discussions. At the core of youth driven practice across all levels, participants

identified equality in decision making and actual changes as a result of youth recommendations as non-negotiable criteria. Respondents established that training and preparation of youth leaders, transparency in decision making, funding youth programming, and considering lived experience when making personnel decisions are also indicators of good youth driven practice. Overall, the key features identified indicate that youth driven practice is action oriented versus a passive approach to utilizing youth voice.

**Successful Youth Engagement includes:**

Lived experience; Transparency; Multiple voices; Language; Empowerment; Presence; Purpose; Community reception; Accommodating; Equality; Supportive; Ethical; Hope; Informative; Networking; Cohesive; Integrity; Relevant; Mutual; Fun; Involvement/Consistency; Sustainable; Humorous; Voice; Sacrifice; Happiness; Reciprocal; Communication (not one-sided)

Themes	Area of Focus	Comments
<b>Key Features of Youth Driven</b>	Equality in decision making (at all levels)	Youth are involved in decision making at all levels = youth driven.
	Actual changes occur as a result of recommendations made by youth	Driven results in outcomes, actual impact, reflective process, and decision making ability.
	Employment of youth staff in leadership positions	If an agency says it is youth driven but the leadership does not employ a youth in a leadership position = not truly youth driven.
	Transparency and shared information	Information is shared and accessible.
	Training and preparation for youth to be effective advocates and leaders	Coaching plans that are sustainable so that youth know of expectations and can excel beyond their current role.
	Active vs passive (i.e. ideas are generated by youth as opposed to serving in an advisory capacity only)	Youth guided- "recipe" is provided. There is an outline and expectation. Adults influence an approach. Youth

		are consulting on ideas already laid out. Adults take short cuts.
<p><b>Successful Youth Driven Practice at all levels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Individual</li> <li>● Youth programing</li> <li>● Organizational level</li> <li>● Policy level</li> </ul>	<p>Support for meaningful youth participation, values youth participation a mutual opportunity to learn and grown</p> <p>Those with lived experience serve in leadership role within the organization and are included in decision making processes</p> <p>Young adults feel valued and supported. I.e self- care and incentives to participate</p> <p>Partnerships and environments value culture and are youth friendly</p> <p>Youth programing and young adult roles are valued and sustained</p> <p>Youth programing includes quality improvement practices. Roles, responsibilities and communication pathways are identified and clear between youth and leadership/decision makers</p>	<p>Develop the partnership between youth and adults as collaborative partners; allowing youth to be full partners.</p> <p>Dedicated positions for youth. Youth (employed and recipients of services) are fully immersed at all levels of implementation and decision making.</p> <p>Recognize need for self-care; recognize personal impact on their own life...community recognition and support.</p> <p>Hiring youth friendly staff/other staff who are in recovery; not an institutional environment.</p> <p>Dedicated positions for youth; youth are participants; research; policy addresses youth priorities and there are funding supports for these principles and priorities; link funding back to youth barriers; put money where mouth is.</p> <p>How would you evaluate success of the program? How would you measure that you are in a youth-driven organization? Clear communication pathways to known decision-makers.</p>

**Future Implications and Next Steps :** Youth M.O.V.E. National consistently supports meaningful participation of youth voice in systems change work. Though additional exploration is needed to formally define youth driven practice, the respondents identified key indicators for effective and

successful peer support and youth driven care. The World Cafe also provided the National Youth Best Practice Committee valuable information needed in order to identify best practices for a youth driven framework and guide the overall direction of the committee. The Committee will continue to utilize a variety of methods to gather additional feedback on emergent themes to inform national standards, develop products and resources, and to assist communities in designing, developing, and implementing quality youth driven programming.