



IRIS Recovery Research Fellowship (RRF): Peer Recovery Support Service Focus

Project Overview

Innovations in Recovery through Infrastructure Support (IRIS) is a NIDA funded initiative that builds capacity for organizations to engage in opioid-focused research. IRIS heard from all corners of the recovery sector that greater peer workforce integration is a common goal. Although peer recovery support services have consistently been associated with improved outcomes and use of peers is growing, many barriers exist to further workforce integration. The RRF built research skills for agency staff and early-stage scholars to address these barriers and uplift the vital role that peers play. While the RRF focused on peer recovery support services, skills gained were also applicable to other recovery practice and academic realms.

Project Aims

1. To build trust and stronger relationships to engage in recovery research grounded in community-based participatory research (CBPR)
2. To identify barriers and facilitators to effective peer workforce integration through targeted discussion and joint research activities
3. To develop skills to engage in practice-based research focused on peer recovery support services, bringing learnings back into their practice-based and academic settings
4. To develop and disseminate research tools for the opioid recovery system to better integrate peers into the workforce

Learning Outcomes for Fellows (with corresponding project aims)

- A. To use this network of community and academic institutions to create opportunities for collaboration using participatory research principles and practices (1)
- B. To identify the peer role and benefits of peer services, as well as the role different stakeholders play in peer workforce integration (2, 3)
- C. To integrate recovery research processes and practices to enhance their institution's work (3)
- D. To develop a plan to use Fellowship learnings to enhance recovery support service programming, research, evaluation, and/or fundraising (2, 3)
- E. To present research informed recommendations around peer workforce integration and other aspects of substance use recovery to the wider community through community education and advocacy (4)

RRF Monthly Learning Themes

September 2022: Community building, community-based participatory research, and RRF
October 2022: Using academic literature and other knowledge sources to examine peer role, benefits of peer services, and facilitators/barriers of peer workforce integration
November 2022: Using research towards policy advocacy work
December 2022: Using agency data and research for program management, evaluation, and fundraising, part I – Overview
January 2023: Using agency data and research for program management, evaluation and fundraising, part II - Quantitative focus
February 2023: Using agency data and research for program management, evaluation and fundraising, part III - Qualitative focus
March 2023: Presenting data and research findings in digestible and engaging ways to stakeholders
April 2023: Meet the Funder event: Telling compelling and data driven stories for sustainable funding
May 2023: Prepping research findings for community distribution: RRF position paper and presentation
June 2023: Presentation of RRF products: Reflections on learnings and RRF experience

Fellowship Cohort

IRIS secured a diverse cohort of 17 amazing Fellows representing: peers, peer supervisors, clinicians, managers, trainers, advocates, other agency staff, students, & staff researchers.

Fellowship Benefits

- Unique chance to learn community-engaged research and network with other leaders
- Important tools offered for evaluation and funding, along with resume building skills
- IRIS support for Fellows' agency-based research-informed projects
- Up to \$5,000 awarded to Fellows' agencies, up to \$1,000 honorarium for Fellows

Fellowship Products

- The Fellows collectively created a position paper on peer workforce development
- The Fellows planned and implemented research projects around peer support or other aspects of substance use recovery through their home institutions with IRIS support
- The Fellows presented research papers and posters at a June 2023 stakeholder event to share knowledge and facilitate its integration into practice, policy, and future research

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