

Literature Review: Benefits of Peer Support Specialists in Treatment Settings Serving Women with Substance Abuse Disorder

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Intro

- Studies have consistently shown a greater prevalence of substance use disorder (SUD) among males relative to females
- Females with SUD may be perceived as lacking morals, being promiscuous in their sexual relationships, and being neglectful in their roles as mothers.
- As a long-time provider of recovery support services, I have seen that many women entering residential treatment have a fear of the unknown.
- The peer support specialist serves as a safe person women can relate to when they enter treatment.

Methods

- A literature review was utilized that covered three articles relevant to peer support services with women in recovery programs.
- I searched academic databases, on the internet, and drew from my professional experiences and that of my colleagues.
- The terms used for the search included women, residential treatment, women with children, pregnant women, and peer specialists.

NEED TO FEEL SAFE? CONNECT WITH A PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Results

- The three studies reviewed used qualitative research methods designed through semi-structured interviews and focus groups.
- The studies used thematic analysis to analyze data, which involves looking for patterns and common themes.
- My analysis of results across studies showed many benefits for women that participate with peer support specialists.
- Participation with peer supports specialist was key in women's recovery process including reduced relapse rates, increased treatment retention, and improved social support.

Discussion

- Further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of peer support specialists for women in residential recovery programs.
- Other avenues of integrating peer support specialists into the workforce should be explored.
- Peer workers would also benefit from expanded use across settings, as providing support to others can increase their own self-esteem, confidence, and feelings of accomplishment.

Conclusion

- Integrating more peer support specialists into the workforce across various settings including residential programs for women would be beneficial.
- Peer support specialists do not replace the formal treatment individuals needed to manage their SUD but they do add an extra layer to treatment.

