

SACRED CREATIONS

...because people are sacred creations of God.

03-07-14

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to again ask for 1115 support of initiatives which have a Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) as part of an interdisciplinary approach to supporting individuals on their journey to independence. Individuals throughout Illinois are utilizing this credential to transition from disability income to earned income and are the epitome of successfully delivered person-centered culture.

CRSS workforce development is a win-win for the State of Illinois. Integration of Recovery Support Services (aka professional peer support) across the health care and human service spectrum contributes to a far more comprehensive service array than what currently exists while simultaneously creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Despite not having the same resources as most stakeholder groups have which enable them to more fully participate in this process, individuals who participate in health and human service programs have consistently expressed a desire to advance the field of Recovery Support Services by funding CRSS education hours, internship opportunities and learning collaboratives. See page two for additional information on each of these topics.

Absence of the CRSS in the State Health Care Innovation Plan coupled with absence of the CRSS in the draft application of the 1115 waiver reveals a perpetuation of sustained dependency. Designating \$36 million in the first two years toward medical services with no funding designated for recovery services demonstrates the application is provider-centered and not person-centered. This needs to change. You cannot truthfully submit an application that uses "person-centered" language without incorporating any recommendations made by persons who actually participate in health care and human services.

To make this 1115 waiver application an authentically "person-centered" document, the following action is necessary.

- broadening the scope of inclusion of peer support and peer specialist services beyond the Division of Mental Health section of the waiver, by incorporating into the Primary Healthcare, Intellectual/Developmental Services, Child & Family Services, Older Adult Services and Housing Services sections of the waiver
- Supporting the development of the 21st century workforce by including in the waiver application investment in Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) education, internship opportunities and learning collaboratives to support expansion of Recovery Support Services.
- Insuring that task forces, advisory councils, committees, sub-committees, workgroups, ect. have representation from individuals with lived experience in proportion to other stakeholder populations.

Thank you for your careful consideration and attention. We await your response.

Respectfully,

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Here is what is actually missing from the 1115 waiver application in its current draft.

Certified Recovery Support Specialists (CRSS)

- Education Hours
- Internship Opportunities
- Learning Collaboratives

Regarding education hours, scholarships should be made available to cover training fees, travel, meals and lodging for individuals to participate in recovery education approved by the Illinois Certification Board. Previous scholarships were lost when the Illinois Mental Health Collaborative had a reduction in their contract. The trainings are still occurring (now developed by DMH), but pose a financial hardship to individuals who would be eligible for scholarships if they were available. Additionally, funding needs to be allocated for travel costs and fees related to the CRSS exams.

Regarding internship opportunities, employers should be encouraged to hire individuals that have already obtained some of the required education hours and are striving to earn the required supervised work hours. We frequently see job postings that say "ability to earn credential within 18 months of hire." This is a good practice for individuals with some basic recovery education. If you are an employer, you will want to consider someone who has successfully completed some or all of the following. Obviously, the more hours one has the more knowledgeable they will be about recovery support services

- CRSS Competency Trainings (annual 2 day training with new material offered each year)
- Recovery & Empowerment Statewide Calls (1.5 hours offered monthly)
- Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Facilitator training (40 hour training offered once per year)

Regarding learning collaboratives, the importance of this cannot be stressed enough. Because the credential is young and because of cultural bias that people have about what persons with mental health conditions can and cannot do, these collaboratives are incredibly important to insure that employers and employees have opportunity to dialog about successes and overcome challenges as they arise. It already successfully exists within DMH and when this credential expands to other health and human services, similar collaboratives need to exist to insure optimal outcomes.

Additional Information:

CRSS INFO

http://www.illinoismentalhealthcollaborative.com/consumers/consumer_crss.htm

CRSS JOB POSTINGS

<http://www.sacredcreations.org/CRSS.html>

MENTAL HEALTH COMMENTARY REGARDING 1115

http://www.thetelegraph.com/news/opinion_columns/808351/Closer-examination-of-the-1115-Waiver