

HSD Provider Conference

October 22, 2025

Notes from Session: Increasing Live Experience and Expertise involvement in our homeless response system

Presenters: Belinda, Benjamin, Erika, Patrick, Bill

Moderators: Jaidra

Notetaker: Emily #1

Main Points from Session Overview/Presentation:

- Time when someone's lived experience shaped your perspective or changed your work - what happened?
 - Support from superiors and mentors
 - Recognizing effectiveness of long term relationships
 - Let client guide you to what they need/want
 - Keep it real, be authentic
- Portland part of a community of practice with Detroit and Chicago - goal is to increase input from PWLE in system/program design
- Why is lived experience voice important for influencing policy and developing services?
 - Have real world view of what struggle looks like
 - 'Nothing about us without us'
 - People most able to combat oppression are those who are being oppressed.
 - Ex - shelters - we can build them, but will people use them?
Not if we make a shelter that doesn't feel comfortable to folks

Questions/Answers:

- How does CoP reach out to people for their events? Still in early steps of implementation. Likely to be direct, in person outreach to camps and service locations. Open to ideas!

- PWLE highly cognizant of exploitation. Having a 40 hour a week job can feel that way and be hard for PWLE to sustain. Need supports at jobs for PWLE.
- Family system thinking about doing a PWLE advisory council - how can they be mindful about advisory group creation? Acknowledge the 'tokenism', allow people to speak up in the meetings, don't censor their language. Pay people for their time!
- How do you invite people with lived experience into decision making or service design?
 - Give opportunity for feedback to folks in services (shelter, etc). Ask them what worked well, what didn't work well.
 - Invite people to give feedback in multiple ways and times
 - Have an advisory committee that has regularly scheduled meetings; offer multiple ways to contribute to committee (comment cards) in addition to meeting attendance
 - Offer ways to give feedback to board of directors for an organization
 - 'Reduce professionalism' - meet outdoors at a park, or somewhere non-office-y, wear regular clothes vs. dress clothes, actually enact the feedback you receive
- How do you respond when feedback challenges program rules or routines?
 - Review feedback regularly (quarterly, annually); evaluate guidelines against feedback on a regular basis
 - If a rule isn't working, ask what would work for folks (drop-in hours vs. scheduled appts)
 - Ask if you're trying to control people or empower people?
- In which spaces are there gaps in expertise from people with lived experience?
 - PWLE in management or supervisor roles at providers/system level
- How can gaps in lived experience/expertise be filled?
 - Provide PWLE with funding
 - Give them a line to be hired
 - PWLE on boards for non-profits