

2018 Youth Peer Support Priority Agenda

Youth MOVE National (YMN) is a youth-driven, chapter-based membership organization across 38 states, the District of Columbia and 4 tribal communities. YMN is dedicated to improving services and systems that support youth and serves as a national resource and convener of youth, young adults, and supportive allies to build a collective movement that unites the causes and voices of youth. As the youth MOVEment continues to expand, it is imperative to capture the value of the work, demonstrate effectiveness, and bring youth-driven approaches to scale, including youth peer support. The priority on increasing the development of and access to youth peer support has been steadily increasing over the past years. Youth MOVERs indicated peer support as the prioritized theme in the What Helps What Harms policy initiative, identifying that this support is needed to see maximum positive impact.

Since 2003, with the support and guidance of the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, the emergence of youth guided practices and youth driven programs have been

established across the country. YMN serves as catalyst for change in the behavioral health and other child serving fields, ensuring that young adults are heard, valued, and meaningfully contribute to their individual care and the

systems that they depend on. When experiencing the need for behavioral health support, young adults tend to identify friends and family members as the preferred sources of help over health professionals (Rockwood & Wilson, 2007). The natural inclination to turn to peers for help highlights the opportunity to mirror the peer support efforts developed in the

family- driven and consumer-run movements. Young adults need developmentally appropriate programs that enhance emotional competency, knowledge, positive understanding of mental health, improve help- seeking behavior, provide social encouragement, and the availability of established and trusting relationships that are seen through a peer lens.

The peer support approach is characterized by the development of a “peer” relationship between two individuals with lived experience. These relationships can range from informal,

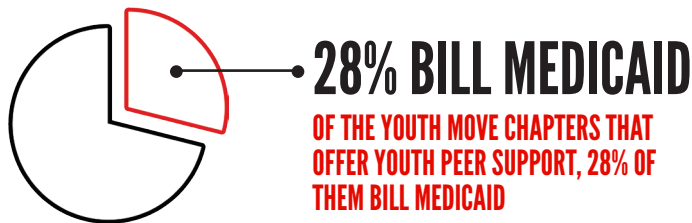




14% OF YOUTH MOVE CHAPTERS OFFER FORMAL (BILLABLE) PEER SUPPORT

or naturally occurring, to a formal position in which an individual with lived experience is employed to support others who face similar challenges (Repper & Carter, 2011). As the Youth Peer Support (YPS) movement rapidly expands, it is critical to ensure that youth peer services being provided are high quality, developmentally appropriate, and accessible for youth and young adults seeking support. YMN recognizes the value of the peer support model and understands the importance of youth voice in developing responsive systems and supports for youth and young adults who struggle with behavioral health issues. With two well established lived experience movements to draw upon, there are best practices that the youth movement can apply to the expansion of YPS.

adopters of youth peer support, best practice approaches have emerged to guide the field. YMN has identified unique considerations for the development of youth peer support services and these include the need to require the integration of positive youth development, resilience building, and generational and historical considerations, in order to promote developmentally appropriate, useful, and appealing services. Additional considerations necessary relate to establishing a ready workforce and the development of work environments that are prepared to embrace the value of lived experience and a youth driven approach. In order to meet the unique needs of the youth peer support movement, YMN has established guiding documents, resources, tools, technical assistance opportunities, and this priority agenda to support the development and expansion of youth peer support services.



This peer support priority agenda represents the opportunities Youth MOVE National supports and will work to address moving forward:

In 2013, Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) and Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) disseminated an informational bulletin that identified the significance of family and youth peer support in meeting the needs of children, youth, and families with significant mental health challenges. With the identification of YPS services as an enhancement to the service array, many states and youth programs are seeking to establish this new service and continue seek out guidance on how develop, implement and monitor YPS services.

AREA 1: EXPAND YOUTH PEER SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ARRAY

Through collaborative efforts between YMN, youth leaders, and states who are early

Youth MOVE National is committed to supporting the expansion of youth peer support services within the behavioral health system through continued advocacy for the allocation of state and federal resources. We believe youth peer support is a unique, developmentally appropriate service that can support youth and young adults as they navigate their mental health challenges. We propose the following strategies to support the expansion of youth peer services within the service array:

- Define and disseminate best practice standards.
- Provide tailored technical assistance (TA) and training on YPS service design, implementation, and sustainability.
- Monitor and track current national efforts on implementation of YPS.

AREA 2: BUILD CAPACITY OF THE YOUTH PEER SUPPORT WORK FORCE

In order to effectively expand youth peer support services, Youth MOVE National recognizes the need for a highly qualified, competent, and confident youth peer workforce. Currently, there are a limited number of youth peer providers and we aim to increase the number of trained and credentialed or certified youth peer providers. We propose the following strategies to build the capacity of the YPS workforce:

- Define and disseminate core competencies for youth peer support.
- Provide tailored TA on the selection, adaptation, and enhancement of curricula to ensure the peer workforce is skilled and qualified to provide services.
- Offer national, standardized professional development opportunities for the youth peer workforce.
- Provide opportunities for those with lived experience to connect with other peers in the field.

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Youth MOVE National consistently supports meaningful participation of youth voice in systems change work and will continue to actively gather feedback on emergent best practices to inform national standards, develop products and resources, and continue to advise the field and assist communities in designing, implementing, and sustaining quality youth peer support programs. YMN will continue

to advocate for the expansion of youth peer support services to ensure youth have access to a comprehensive service array that meets their needs. Through systematic data collection efforts, YMN has identified the expansion of YPS in the behavioral health service array and continued workforce development to be the most pressing opportunities to bring quality youth peer services to scale.

For more information on Youth MOVE National Peer Support, check out our website at youthmovenational.org or contact us at info@youthmovenational.org.

Repper J, Carter T. A review of the literature on peer support in mental health services
Journal of Mental Health. August 2011, 20 (4): 392-411

Rickwood D, Deane F, Wilson C: When and how do young people seek professional help for mental health problems?. Med J Aust. 2007, 187 (7 Suppl): S35-39.