

The Development of Recovery Competencies for Inpatient Mental Health Providers Working with People with Serious Mental Illness

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Introduction: The vision of recovery has become the foundation for mental health services worldwide. The development of recovery-oriented services is particularly challenging in in-patient settings. Occupational therapists have a long history of promoting personal empowerment, individual choice and engagement in meaningful occupations, all fundamental elements of recovery, within inpatient settings. The profession is in a good position to take on leadership roles to promote recovery practice.

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to identify the most salient recovery competencies required of inpatient providers to inform the development of an education program and develop a shared understanding of recovery by occupational therapists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, and managers.

Methods: A qualitative research design, including key informant interviews and a literature review, was used. Interviews were held with 2 people living with mental illness, 2 family members, 3 inpatient mental health service providers, 2 community mental health service providers who had previous experiences in inpatient settings and 2 mental health educators in strategic positions in workforce training. Data collection and analysis focused on developing and understanding of how characteristics and conditions of the inpatient context influence the delivery recovery-enabling services. Analysis focused on integrating the two sources of data to develop a recovery competency set.

Results: Stabilization of mental health in a highly structured and controlled setting is a major concern of inpatient settings. To practice recovery services in this context, providers are faced with balancing the medical model with an illness focus and the recovery model with a focus on consumer growth and development. Operating from a strengths-base, hope inspiration, therapeutic risk-taking, and a system-level perspective are a few of the key competencies central to promoting a recovery-oriented inpatient context.

Conclusion: It is imperative to develop inpatient providers' recovery competencies. The need for collaboration in the interprofessional education process is important in order to transcend typical disciplinary boundaries, integrate a consumer-centered service, and promote recovery.

Contribution to the practice base of occupational therapy: In future studies, the results can serve as a tool for tailoring workforce education to prepare providers for recovery-oriented services.