Expanding, Engaging & Energizing Peer Support Groups
Wyoming Independent Living Service Area
Perplexing Pandemic

How do we keep any type of peer group going when we can’t meet in person?

How do we use this time to educate on disability and how our CIL can help?

How do we get more consumers to be involved instead of losing consumers?

How do we help consumers with social isolation?

How are we going to get through this and not only just survive but thrive?
Pandemic Pluses

- IL team weekly Zoom meeting
- Cheyenne Advocacy Group into Eastern WY advocacy group WyDPAC
- Embraced Zoom
- IL Specialist to Facilitator Lead
Change is HARD

- No Change to Peer Groups
  - Zoom only needed for a few months to “get by”.
  - Technical problems
  - Awkward silences
  - Inappropriate Conversations
  - Attendance down
Zoom wasn’t going away & needed to embrace it and learn how to navigate

Needed to become better facilitators

IL team needed to come together and decide what the goals of Peer Support should be

Attendance increased with consistent message structure, engagement, and flexibility
Engage & Energize

- Facilitator Training
  - Healthy Community Living Facilitator Training (UMT, RTC)
  - WIL Facilitator Training
  - Evidence Based videos
  - “How to avoid death By PowerPoint” (David JP Phillips, TEDxStockholmSalon)
  - Zoom Training
  - Via Hope Peer Facilitator Training

- IL Team Values
Engage & Energize

- Peer Support Groups/Workshops
  - Renamed
  - Consistent Format
    * Engaging
    * Energizing
    * Directly disability related
    * Peer involvement in all decisions
  - Two facilitators in different centers
65% increase in attendance

Average of 2-3 attendees in specific centers to 6-9 across eastern Wyoming

Increase in referrals from other entities, case managers, transition coordinators, high schools & colleges

Almost doubled new consumers requesting other services and completing goals

IL Specialists are ready & trained to develop new groups
Name change from Disability Peer Support Group

Changed from unstructured format to peer support through structured activities

Move it, Learn it, Do it

Share knowledge & support for adapting to and living with disabilities

True “peer support” group creating a community of connection & acceptance
Ammo for Advocating

- Name change from Monthly Advocacy Peer Support Group
- Moved from “talking” about change to specific educational topics on individual & systems advocacy
- Peers collaborate with WyDPAC
- Group discussions on how to move disability advocacy forward
Moving Forward

- Hybrid Structure
  - Groups offered via Zoom and in person
  - OWL set up in all Centers
  - Flexibility increases access

- Increase outreach & public awareness

- Ongoing assessment of consumer/community needs

- Implement other Peer Groups as needed
Thank You!
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