



NEWSLETTER

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Strengths Model Case Management

Options began using the Strengths Model of case management in 2001. This model has a proven track record of effectiveness and incorporates values which Options feels are essential in providing consumer-centered services. (*Consumer* is short for *consumer of mental health services*.)

The basic premise behind the Strengths Model is as follows: People with psychiatric disabilities respond to the same positive reinforcement to which all people respond. By supporting and enhancing the inherent strengths and skills that each individual person possesses, including their connections to the community at large, the case manager supports and enhances a path to functionality and interdependence within that community. This philosophy of practice is different than the traditional model of problem fixing for mental health consumers. In the traditional model, problems are identified and targeted with a magic bullet solution; consumers are dependent upon the mental health care system and are excluded from interaction with the surrounding community. In the Strengths Model, strengths are identified and utilized to empower consumers. In order to connect to personal and community resources, consumers are seen inclusively as holistic beings, inherently integrated with the community.

This inclusive perception allows possibilities, rather than problems, to be the focus of care. Strengths Model service providers work in partnership with the consumer, viewing the relationship as human-to-human, rather than professional-to-patient.

Strengths Model

Fosters independence
Community based
Enhances skills

Traditional Model

Fosters dependence
Agency based
Focuses on illness

Strengths Model methods of service delivery:

- 1) Engagement and relationship: The purpose is to begin development of a collaborative helping partnership during the initial meetings with a potential consumer.
- 2) Strengths assessment: This is the process of gathering information regarding seven "life domains", which are directly related to successful involvement in the community.
- 3) Personal planning: The consumer and case manager create a mutual agenda for their work together with a Personal Plan. The consumer establishes long-term and short-term goals or tasks, and target dates for their completion. The strengths assessment provides information and guidance.
- 4) Resource Acquisition: The purpose is to acquire the environmental resources desired by consumers to achieve their goals and to ensure their rights. The primary focus of resource acquisition is true community integration.
- 5) Continuous collaboration and graduated disengagement: This is the process of helping people to achieve important life goals while gradually disengaging as they become more self reliant utilizing support and resources in the community.

This model has produced measurable results, beyond those of the traditional model. Options Case Managers, clients and staff have all experienced a deep satisfaction and feeling of hope at the effectiveness of this caring and human based model of care.

A Success Story

Evan is on vacation. A typical event in most of our lives; vacation with family. But for the past 20 years the very thought of “vacation” was unthinkable. Vacation from what? The voices in his head? The anxiety generated by the dread of leaving his apartment house to shop in a grocery store three blocks away?

Evan has been in the mental health system for most of his adult life. Like many others, his symptoms have waxed and waned over the years in response to medication, life events and the seemingly random arrival of emotional storms that darkened his days and left him pacing in circles through the night. Unable to maintain a job, challenged by learning disabilities keeping school out of reach, he spent years on the street, in foster homes and hospitals.

For the past 5 years Evan has lived independently in an Options owned apartment building. He has been able to cook for himself and maintain his apartment but was enormously challenged in his ability to progress through the motion of life in the community at large

He gained comfort and companionship from the dozens of wild birds that flocked to the feeders he carefully placed in the enclosed yard behind the apartment house. In the sequestered company of feathered migrants he was calm but the everyday moments of bill paying, shopping, and banking seemed impossible to perform on his own. For years his money was managed by a mental health worker, necessary bills were paid and he was given a weekly allowance for daily personal needs. Evan met with his case manager regularly and, with guidance and patience, identified what he wanted. He sought to handle his own money, pay his rent, make deposits at the bank by himself, and, someday, to have a job.

Building on Evan’s strengths and interests, he and his case manger developed a plan. Each month they went over the deposit slip and how to fill it out. They went together to the bank and Evan witnessed the process several times and then practiced filling out the slip at home. With time he was able to do it himself with the case manager present. He now goes to the bank by himself each month and has some comfort with the process. Similarly, the process of paying rent was practiced and repeated until Evan felt able to do it alone.

With his love of wild birds as a foundation, an arrangement with a local Nursing Home has allowed Evan to set up and maintain several bird feeders in the garden as a weekly volunteer. Gaining confidence and experience from his volunteering, the idea of regular paid work as birder and groundskeeper is a real possibility. Little by little, step by step, the rhythm of a regular life has been created, including a vacation.

Current Activities

Options rises to the challenge: We have not been immune to the budget pressures being experienced throughout the country. For Options this has triggered an energetic response:

- In September the staff and consumers from the Union stepped forward and carried out our first ever Yard Sale Extravaganza. The basement of the “G” Street facility was emptied of accumulated house wares, appliances, office furniture and bakery equipment. Invited sellers from the local community joined us for a wonderful day. With hoopla and good spirits, face painting, the fun house, hot dogs and the “fly guy” wind flag, \$2,250.00 was raised to procure needed resources and equipment.
- The administrative staff answered a call for proposals by the state DHS and, as a result, Options acquired a contract to provide case management services to clients of the local Self Sufficiency Office. Options is pleased to be able to expand its list of contracted Community Partners.
- The Board has formed a Fundraising committee to plan the annual fundraising strategy for the organization.

The service integration partnership, that Options has with Josephine County Mental Health, continues to broaden and strengthen. Jeff Krolick, Options Clinical Director, will be assuming supervision responsibilities for the county community support unit.

Other Accomplishments:

On October 2nd Options was awarded recognition in a Proclamation for Disability Employment Awareness Month, from the City of Grants Pass. The Mayor presented the award to Sharon Doshier at the City Council Meeting.

Options continues to be sought after for consulting as an innovative model in the applications of Strengths Based Case Management, development of affordable housing and not for profit Organizational Development. Jeff Krolick is currently consulting for Jackson County Mental Health; Sharon Doshier is mentoring three different counties in IPS implementation; and Kim Miller and Darrel Pearce are working with three different groups to develop housing for special needs populations. Kim is also providing organizational development consultation to a group in Ashland.

Moving toward 2003 we are thrilled to be deepening our relationship with the county service providers and expanding our ability to help people with mental health disabilities to discover skills and untapped abilities.

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Options' spacious meeting room is again
for rent for community events, staff retreats or other gatherings. For details, call
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