QuickGuide

Negotiating Avenues of Information and Support from Community Organisations

Introduction

A peer network may seek information and support from organisations in their community. Community Organisations are defined as not-for-profit, and can be community and neighbourhood centres, child care, aged care, sporting clubs and associations, recreation clubs and societies, churches, residents' associations and service clubs.

Many goals and interests of community groups are shared with the peer support network. A peer support group may meet at a venue or a room which is generously provided by a supportive community organisation at a low or no cost. A guest speaker from a community organisation could attend a peer network to share their expertise and local information.

This is a guide to seeking information and support.

Let's make it happen

1. ***Consider the needs and resources required by the peer group to establish and sustain.*** Basic needs may be: access to a suitable venue, catering, guest speakers and assistance to advertise or promote the group. It's important to advertise the existence of the group to people who have a disability who are in the target audience. In some cases, community organisations supervise clients or are in close contact with people who are in the target audience providing an opportunity to reach potential group members. Make a list of what's required before contacting.

2. ***Make a list of local Community Organisations which shares a goal with the peer support.*** Consult your own known contacts - professional and personal or search online, through the local paper or media. Contact person names are more effective than company names.
   Keep an eye out for any similar existing peer support groups or initiatives. Consider them as potential allies, and work towards running complementary and not competitive activities.

3. ***Make contact by phone, online and face-to-face with Community Organisation senior staff.*** Refer to your list of needs and make an 'ask'. Mention how the peer support will complement an existing group. Raise the profile of the group. Don't be shy, community enterprises are often based on resource availability. Be ready to promote the benefits of the group in an expressive way. Show your commitment and passion.
   Negotiation means expressing your request and working with what's offered. If nothing is available, keep looking and consider how to adapt the group to run with less or different resources.

4. ***Maintain contact with Community Organisations.*** Peer networks need to be constantly promoted and advertised in any available media. It's a way of reminding Community Organisations that the group continues. It may happen that as the group becomes more known over time other organisations will be more interested in providing information and
support and encouraging their clients to take part.

   In summary, maintaining regular contact, or relationship building, benefits peer network groups extensively.

5. ***Acknowledge, thank and celebrate.*** Regularly demonstrate gratitude for the support and information provided by a community organisation. This will build up goodwill in order to continue and sustain the group. One form of doing this is to communicate or share the good news and achievements of the group. This can be done in the form of a personalized addressed letter, a newsletter story or even a Facebook positive post.

Where you can find more information

There are online resources about community organisations:

Community Door – provides useful checklists, tools and other resources for building collaboration between organisations

https://communitydoor.org.au/collaboration/useful-checklists-tools-and-other-resources

Community Tool Box – has quick start tools to get you going!

http://ctb.ku.edu/en/toolkits

Our Community

An online community group which provides advice, connections, training and easy-to-use tech tools for people and organisations working to build stronger communities.

https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/

Co-authored by Physical Disability Council NSW