

Creating an ADVOCACY NETWORK



What is lived experience?

Lived experience is the knowledge based in someone's perspective, personal identities, and history. It isn't just what happened in your life, it includes what we can learn from it. This knowledge is essential to identifying systemic issues and finding creative solutions to complex problems.

Learning from lived experience allows organizations and lawmakers to identify situations related to access, eligibility, equity, participation, and stigma. Through the involvement of lived experience we can create stronger partnerships with those we serve (including employees), make informed decisions, and improve equitable outcomes.

REFLECT:

- Are there any current mechanisms within our organization to learn from lived experience? What's Working? What needs improvement?
- What do we want to accomplish by utilizing lived experience? What can we learn?
- What would accurate representation look like?
- What realistic expectations can we set around participation?
- What resources are available and obtainable?



PREPARE:

- Be aware of power differentials and cultural expectations as it related to mental health, speaking out, and help-seeking.
- Be open and willing to hear any and all feedback, even if it doesn't align with your goals.
- Create tools and mechanisms for effective communication, engagement and follow-up.



ENGAGE:

- Make opportunities flexible and accessible.
- Seek willing volunteers, avoid over-incentivizing or setting unrealistic requirements on participation.
- Get buy-in from front-line staff.
- Implement Outreach strategies.



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