

From Juan Navarro, Executive Director
Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse

**OUR STRENGTH IS OUR STAFF:
The Power of Peer Specialists**

Substance Use Disorder treatment programs have long employed staff with personal experience in recovery. Even in the “dark ages” before counselor certification, comprehensive staff training, and evidence-based practices, it just felt right. People with experience, strength, and hope in recovery want to share it with those who are new to treatment. And newcomers benefit from their “real world” perspectives.

Today, peer support is considered a best practice by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and it is facilitated by specialized staff training and support. Although established in the public mental health system, peer support now plays a vital role in Substance Use Disorder treatment strategies, too.

This seems like a perfect opportunity to salute L.A. CADA’s trained peer specialists. These treatment professionals have used their lived recovery experience as the stepping stone to professional training and certification – and it benefits our clients every day. The agency and its

Board of Directors could not be prouder of their work, and I don’t hesitate to say that L.A. CADA couldn’t function without them. This multi-disciplinary bunch includes licensed therapists, certified Substance Use Disorder counselors, professional interns, support staff, and volunteers on every level of the agency. We’re pleased to have not only those with lived experience in recovery on our staff, but also those with experience as family members and close friends of people struggling with alcoholism and addiction.

And guess what? What our peer specialists do works. Research shows that the use of peers improves outcomes via *reduced symptoms, increased social support, improved well-being, and longer-lasting recovery.* Sometime in our busy day, let’s find the time to thank the treatment professionals around us who have taken their personal lemons and made lemonade – the exact kind of strengths-based, solutions-focused support that behavioral health treatment clients need the most.

**Clients Corner:
TOMMY S.**

“My name is Tommy. Who am I? Today, it’s a happy man in recovery.” It wasn’t just the program that kept me sober, it was the staff. So, when I first got into treatment, I was sure that no one in this place could understand me. How could they, right? They are all so sober and clean and perfect – that’s what I thought. But when I got to know the counselors and the rest of the staff, I was surprised. What I found out is they are exactly the SAME as me, only they are in recovery -- like we say ‘one day at a time’.

You, know, my counselor was homeless once just like me. The intake guy, he was in jail once, like I was. Even the drivers around here are clean and sober and they don’t act ‘better than.’ That is what an addict needs to find the way out. I love their attitude on life – L.A. CADA staff taught me how to have hope. I think the greatest gift I ever got was I got to know these people and to have them for my mentors.”

COMING UP...

LAST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH TRAINING:

MARCH 29, 2019 • 12:30pm–4:30pm

“Integrating Gender and Sexual Orientation into Inclusive Client-Centered Care” 4 CEUs

Juan-Carlos Fabian, Project Manager, START In-Custody Treatment, L.A. County Men’s Cental Jail, L.A. CADA L.A. CADA Wellness Center

11015 Bloomfield Ave., Santa Fe Springs. CA 90670

To register, go to <http://www.lacada.com>

MARCH 23, 2019 • 9:00am–3:00pm

A New Way Of Life & UCLA Law Reentry Legal Clinic

L.A. CADA Training Center (562) 676.4259

5861 Cherry Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805

APRIL 10, 2019 • 1:00pm–5:00pm

HISTORIAS

National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day

L.A. CADA Wellness Center

11015 Bloomfield Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670

THE EVIDENCE IS IN: Peer Recovery Support Services

Peer recovery support services are designed and delivered by people who have experienced both substance use disorders and recovery. This brand of social support is designed to fill the needs of people with Substance Use Disorder. *Trained peers help our clients to become and stay engaged in the recovery process and reduces the likelihood of relapse.* Because services are designed and delivered by peers who have been successful in the recovery process, they embody a powerful message of hope – as well as a wealth of experiential knowledge. Peer support can effectively extend the reach of treatment beyond the clinical setting and into the everyday environment of those seeking to sustain recovery.

Research has shown that Substance Use Disorder recovery is facilitated by social support, specifically *emotional, informational, instrumental, and affiliational support.* Four major types of recovery support services are emerging in national projects: (1) peer mentoring or coaching, (2) recovery resource connecting, (3) facilitating and leading recovery groups, and (4) building community. This is not treatment and it’s not 12-Step work. Peer Recovery Support Services are a distinct practice that provide mentoring, resource connecting, facilitation of recovery groups, and community building.

Learn more at https://www.samhsa.gov/search_results?k=peer+recovery+support+services