
*Cultural
Competency
Toolkit*

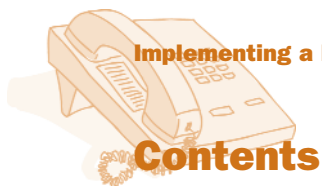
CHAPTER **10**



Implementing a Multi-Lingual Warm-Line

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Executive Summary

Consumer Voices Are Born (CVAB), a consumer-run drop-in center, proposed to establish a warm-line where individuals in the Clark County, Washington area facing mental health challenges could call in and discuss their problems with a peer. These consumer volunteers would be trained by crisis personnel and would be able either simply to listen or to make referrals to crisis or other community sources as needed. Additionally, CVAB proposed to recruit individuals representative of Clark County's multi-ethnic communities and to publicize the warm-line throughout these various communities.

Project Goals

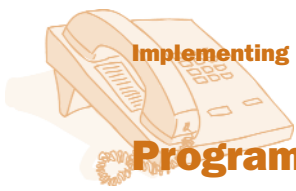
- To set up phone and pager systems for a multi-cultural warm-line.
- To recruit and train consumer volunteers to staff warm-line.
- To network with service providers conducting minority outreach.
- To translate materials into appropriate languages.
- To advertise and promote warm-line.

Introduction

At the time of this grant proposal, Clark County, Washington had a county-wide crisis response plan to address the needs of people in acute psychological crisis. Under this system, people in crisis could be assessed by professionals and referred for hospitalization. There were no intermediate services available, however, for people simply to talk and de-escalate. Local consumers could not meet with a crisis worker simply to talk, or to focus on problems that, while not acute, could potentially escalate through lack of attention.

If any such new services were to be established, it was also important that they take into account Clark County's multi-ethnic makeup. In recent years, significant numbers of Russian families had settled in the area, as well as South East Asian immigrants and people of Hispanic/Latino descent. Many of these populations were quite insular, and their members faced a cultural isolation which could only make more difficult the burden posed by mental illness.

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Implementing a Multi-Lingual Warm-Line

Program Plan

CVAB proposed to establish a warm-line where members of the Clark County community could call in and discuss their problems with a peer. These peer volunteers would be trained by crisis personnel and would be able either simply to listen or to make referrals to crisis or other community sources as needed.

The warm-line would be staffed by mental health consumers representative of Clark County’s multi-ethnic population. By networking with other service providers already conducting minority outreach, CVAB would publicize the warm-line throughout these various communities. And information materials on the warm-line would be made available in different languages.

Organizational Overview

Consumer Voices Are Born (CVAB) is an organization made up of consumers for consumers serving the Clark County, Washington area. A 501(c)(3) entity, it receives support from the Clark County Mental Health Community. At the time of this grant request, CVAB was already managing an entirely consumer-operated drop-in center.

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CVAB is recognized by its various partners within the mental health community as an independent, yet integral part of the community. CVAB board members provide regular feedback to the community regarding quality of care and consumer needs. The Clark County Regional Support Network, which is the governmental

agency that manages the county’s Medicaid mental health dollars, has long supported CVAB and has encouraged its growth. CVAB also works closely with the county mental health authority and with the private managed care association, United Behavioral Health.

Implementation

In March, 2000, CVAB entered into an agreement with a group of county-designated mental health professionals, the Columbia River Mental Health Services crisis team, to provide warm-line training to consumer volunteers. Columbia River then offered two, day-long trainings in 2000 to altogether twenty individuals.

The trainings were rigorous and thorough. Participants learned about symptomology, or the ways that individuals may behave when they are experiencing certain symptoms. Workshop leaders reviewed the differences between a warm-line call and a crisis call, and discussed under what circumstances it is appropriate for warm-line volunteers to contact crisis

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services. Participants also learned how to take “DAP” notes, a form of charting that provides a description of what the caller is saying; an assessment of the caller’s behavior and emotional state; and an action plan that the caller and warm-line volunteer agree upon together.

Important time during the trainings was also devoted to how the volunteers should prepare and protect themselves emotionally when taking calls. Issues of boundaries and self-care were discussed.

Monthly training topics could cover how to help someone who was hearing voices or simply how to assist someone in finding the right doctor.

Once warm-line volunteers had completed a day-long training, CVAB followed up with ongoing, monthly training sessions to help the volunteers further develop their skills. Monthly training topics could cover how to help someone who was hearing voices,

how to connect an individual with appropriate faith-based services in the community, or simply how to help someone to find the right doctor.

Additionally, CVAB offered separate cultural competency trainings. According to Donna Roberts, the project director, these detailed trainings focused “not just on ethnic diversity, but also on understanding diversity within a particular community. For example, there may be two people who are both from Russia, but one comes over because he wants to go to school in the United States, and the other comes as a refugee... They will have two very different approaches.”

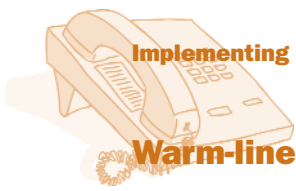
Minority outreach

CVAB was able to provide assistance to individuals in a variety of languages. Warm-line volunteers included Native Americans, Russian speakers, Spanish speakers and one Laoatian speaker. In addition, a sign interpreter was available for non-hearing individuals who wished to visit the facilities for assistance. Roberts reports, “we never had a problem of someone calling and not having a volunteer who knew their language.”

Roberts conducted extensive public outreach to the Clark County’s various ethnic communities, meeting with community leaders and attending community functions to provide information on the warm-line. She describes these public outreach efforts as “absolutely necessary and ongoing.” In addition, CVAB prepared translations of their informational brochures in Cambodian, Russian, Vietnamese, Laotian and Spanish.

Translation services can be the most expensive part of a multi-lingual operation. Translating one brochure can cost several thousand dollars.

To find translators, Roberts spoke with several public offices that she knew, by law, were required to provide translations of their written materials, and she asked them to recommend translators. She was also able to gather some translated materials for free this way: “Some of the documentation — like our complaint and grievance policy — is the same one used by the county regional support network, so I received copies from them.”



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Warm-line staffing/ usage

The number of calls the warm-line received could vary, with peak volume reaching some two hundred calls per month. Calls could also be lengthy, and Roberts reports that “on the average people will call and talk from 30 to 90 minutes.” She adds, “we have had calls that have been six hours in length.”

To meet this demand, CVAB relied upon a group of twenty volunteers. For the day shift, typically CVAB tried to have two volunteers available at all times to field calls, with a supervisor also present. At night, they also tried to have two individuals available, but sometimes it was necessary to have one person handle both pagers — with a back-up person available to take extra call as needed.

CVAB received all calls through a system of two pagers with voice mail. Incoming calls went directly to the pager and were then answered typically within ten seconds. The longest a call-back might ever take was six minutes.

Discussion

In conducting minority outreach, “most of the work I have done has not been in publicizing the warm line,” says Roberts. “It has been in getting someone to introduce me into the community’s inner circle, and then letting them get to know me and trust me.” To make the warm-line known throughout Clark County, Roberts relied on her connections with various minority community leaders.

For example, Roberts met a South East Asian woman through the YMCA who was a recognized leader in that community. Says Robert, “I spoke with her when we first started the warm-line. Then I kept her posted about our progress along the way, and I gave our translated materials to her.” Ultimately, the community leader invited Roberts to attend a conference on South East Asians in America held in Clark County.

With the Russian community, Roberts went through a similar process. Through her work on the county’s mental health cultural competency committee, Roberts met a Russian-American woman who worked with a local managed care provider. This woman then provided Roberts with further introductions into the local Russian community.

Making these inroads, according to Roberts, requires time and patience. “Once you have made the contact with the local leaders, then they will ask you more about your program and then they’ll go back and let their community know. So it’s a long a process.”

CVAB rented two pagers per month with voice mail for \$15.00 each. Each pager could handle 500 calls per month.

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Providing a safe venue

Roberts does feel that the warm-line offers a venue for individuals who might be hesitant to seek help in other forms. For example, “especially in the South East Asian community, it is still not widely accepted to go outside of the family unit for help — and if you do, you go to a community elder or a spiritual leader rather than to the mental system. We offer some anonymity that you won’t find in going into a mental health organization.”

Moreover, the fact that the warm-line is run by consumers may also make it easier for people in need to pick up the phone and ask for help. “We also offer a little more because we’re not professionals, we’re peers. So there’s not the same stigma that’s entailed in going to a professional.”

Finally, Roberts adds, “and one of the other things that we try to do because what’s accepted in our (predominantly Caucasian) culture is not necessarily accepted in other cultures, is we try and team a male and a female so that people can speak to the gender they’re more comfortable with.”

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—Donna Roberts, project director

Conclusion

CVAB’s warm-line has been such a success that in April 2000 the Clark County Board of Commissioners and the Mental Health Advisory Board adopted CVAB as a formal entity in the Clark County Crisis System. *The Oregonian* and *The Columbian*, local newspapers, have both run articles reporting on the warm-line, and Roberts has also been interviewed by the local cable television news channel.

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With this interest and support, the warm-line will continue to grow. As of this writing, Roberts has 22 new consumer volunteers awaiting warm-line training, and she has hopes of eventually making services available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Roberts would like also to serve as an example to mental health organizations interested in launching similar initiatives. “I’d like to see us partner with other places across the state that are trying to get their own programs going.” She has already received queries from different organizations, including one as far away as Wichita, Kansas.

Most importantly, Roberts wants warm-line services to continue to penetrate into Clark County’s various minority communities. She sees continued growth and outreach in this direction as “absolutely necessary... We just got the census back. The Hispanic community has more than doubled and there have been significant rises in the rest of the minority communities as well.” With continued effort and planning, CVAB should be well-placed to meet these growing needs.

Additional Resources

(Asian Americans)

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. Boston: Little, Brown. 1998.

Tuan, Mia. *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1998.

Uba, Laura. *Asian Americans: Personality Patterns, Identity, and Mental Health*. New York: Guilford Press. 1994.

Zia, Helen. *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 2000.

(Hispanic/Latino Americans)

Augenbraum, Harold et al. *Growing Up Latino: Memoirs and Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1993.

Garcia, Jorge and Zea, Maria (editors). *Psychological Interventions and Research With Latino Populations*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1997.

Olmos, Edward (editor). *Americanos: Latino Life in the United States*. Boston: Little, Brown. 1999.

Padilla, Felix. *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. 1985.

(Russian Americans)

Berry, Ellen E. and Epshtein, Mikhail N. *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1999.

Foner, Nancy (editor). *From the Workers' State to the Golden State: Jews from the Former Soviet Union in California*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1995.

Govorchin, Gerald Gilbert. *From Russia to America With Love: A Study of the Russian Immigrants in the United States*.

WARM LINE của CVAB

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