

Peer-To-Peer (P2P) Violence Prevention Learning Academy and Network

Summary Report

A Project for the Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI) of the Los Angeles
County Department of Health, Injury and Violence Prevention Program

September 2018

Introduction

In the spring of 2018, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) contracted with a consultant team from Lumos Transforms and the EdWorks Consulting Firm to begin the initial phase of planning for a Peer-to-Peer Violence Prevention Learning Academy (P2P) as part of the Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI). DPH assembled this consultant team of adult learning and trauma-informed specialists to conduct a landscape analysis, develop curriculum, recommend structure, and draft a 2-year implementation plan. Collaboratively and in parallel, the consultants conducted interviews and focus groups and performed a literature and curricula review to better understand available theory, guidelines, needs, and practices related to trauma-informed peer support worker (PSW) education and training in the areas of violence prevention and intervention. This report summarizes these findings, highlights lessons learned, and includes recommendations for the P2P curriculum, structure, implementation, and evaluation. DPH is utilizing this plan to evaluate appropriate next steps, which may include piloting curriculum and system navigation with PSW's and developing formal contract(s) to implement P2P.

Background

DPH, in partnership with the Department of Health Services (DHS) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and with funding support from Measure B, seeks to reduce disparities in trauma visits in Los Angeles County through the implementation of TPI. Established in December 2015, the Initiative is initially focusing on reducing the number of violence-related trauma visits and deaths in communities experiencing the highest levels of violence, which are located in South Los Angeles (Service Planning Areas 6 and 8), more specifically Westmont West Athens, Willowbrook, Florence Firestone, and Unincorporated Compton, collectively identified as the *TPI Communities*.

TPI is partnering with community residents and stakeholders, and with county services and initiatives, to build a comprehensive approach to violence prevention and intervention by coordinating successful strategies and initiatives across multiple forms of violence, leveraging local leadership and existing strategies, and developing innovative programs, policies, and partnerships. TPI is building a model through community empowerment and systems change that includes intervention, capacity building, and prevention strategies. A key component of TPI is establishing a P2P Violence Prevention Learning Academy focused on violence prevention using a trauma informed approach. The target population for P2P is Peer Support Workers (PSW's), including community intervention workers, promotoras, community health workers, and other PSWs who provide services in the TPI Communities. The goals of P2P include building capacity of peer support workers to prevent violence and address trauma through cross-training, development of a network of peer systems navigation teams, developing career

pathways for peer support workers, and using this model to advance systems change among county departments.

DPH assembled a consultant team consisting of adult learning and trauma-informed specialists to conduct a landscape analysis, develop P2P curriculum, recommend structure, and draft a 2-year implementation plan. DPH will utilize the 2-year plan to evaluate appropriate next steps, which may include piloting curriculum and system navigation with PSW's and developing formal contract(s) to implement the Academy.

Landscape Analysis Summary of Findings

- ***Role definition of peer support is necessary, especially in multidisciplinary teams, programs, and collaborations.***
 - “Peer support is a non-hierarchical interpersonal process promoting mutual healing in the context of community, characterized by equitable relationships among people with shared experiences” (Penney, 2018, p. 8).
 - Within systems and agencies employing PSW's in LAC there is general confusion about the peer role, and often conflation of having “lived experience” with functioning in a PSW capacity.
 - PSWs often work as paraprofessionals or are co-opted into clinical roles, while simultaneously being devalued for their lived experience and lack of formal education and licensure.
 - While in the minority, there are supervisors and agencies that recognize the PSW role, value their contributions, and create supportive organizational cultures.
 - Training PSWs to strengthen their role definition, educate multidisciplinary team members, and utilize self-advocacy to resist co-optation and improve their work experience and the support shared with clients.
- ***PSWs need training in the intersection of multiple forms of violence, systemic oppressions, and their impact on individual and collective trauma so that they can effectively work with high need populations.***
 - Public health theory and research clearly state that the most effective way to prevent violence is to develop strategies based on a nuanced understanding of the numerous overlapping and multi-directional connections between various manifestations of interpersonal and structural violence and oppression.

- Very few PSWs indicate that their trainings were grounded in an anti-oppression framework or included any content on the connections between multiple forms of trauma and violence.
- Less than a handful of the reviewed PSW training curricula made mention of group, community, and collective trauma responses; structural violence; violence co-occurrence; or the connections between multiple forms of violence including shared risk and protective factors.
- ***Trauma informed approaches must incorporate healing and resilience to be effective.***
 - Ultimately “any conversation about trauma should be linked to a conversation about resiliency” (Los Angeles County Trauma- and Resiliency-Informed Systems Change Initiative, 2017, p. iv).
 - The relationship between trauma and resilience exists on both theoretical and personal levels.
 - An expansive interpretation of resilience, sensitive to social-ecological dimensions, is most useful for the Trauma Informed approach
 - Promoting recovery and empowerment is central to trauma healing, and it reconnects trauma survivors to their individual resilience
 - The Trauma Informed approach is not simply a program model but rather a “profound paradigm shift in knowledge, perspective, attitudes and skills that continues to deepen and unfold over time” (Missouri Department of Mental Health and Partners, 2014, p. 1).
 - A Trauma Informed approach is the application of that knowledge into processes that resist re-traumatization and ideally promote healing and resilience and requires the creation of Trauma Informed learning and training environments.
- ***Cross-sector collaboration supports PSWs in their work.***
 - The literature is straightforward that breaking down silos through collaboration and exchange of information between people and agencies working on different forms of violence promotes the development of unified messages and shared goals and visions, expands referral and resource networks, and nurtures the creation and sharing of tools across sectors that support a cross-cutting approach to violence prevention (CDC, 2016).

- Community intervention workers have the most experience in this type of collaboration, but there is general acknowledgement of a great need for collaborative PSW cross-sector work in the Los Angeles area.
- Ultimately bringing PSWs together across sectors for interdisciplinary training “is essential for the kind of cooperation needed to provide adequate services to people impacted by multiple issues” (Edmund & Bland, 2011, p. 157).
- There is, however, an almost complete lack of cross-sector training opportunities available for PSW’s.

Recommendations

Based on the lessons learned and detailed findings of the landscape analysis, the consultant team developed a series of recommendations for the Academy curriculum, structure, recruitment, implementation, and evaluation.

Academy overarching goals:

The Academy is designed to influence the beliefs, knowledge, and skills necessary for PSWs to implement effective violence prevention strategies through a Trauma Informed approach. The Academy’s goals are:

- To increase knowledge about trauma and resilience on the individual, community, and systems level through an intersectional and culturally-sensitive lens.
- To improve Trauma Informed communication and advocacy competence for PSWs to respond to county residents experiencing trauma.
- To develop PSW capacity for self-awareness and self-regulation to prevent secondary trauma and improve the capacity to access mutual support.
- To strengthen PSW cross-sector collaboration and support the development of an organic PSW referral and systems navigation network.

Academy learning and behavioral objectives:

- Implement and promote Trauma Informed principles with clients and peers.
- Analyze the connections between multiple forms of violence and trauma on the individual, community, and systems levels highlighting the local context.
- Recognize the holistic impact of trauma on individuals and communities through a culturally sensitive perspective.
- Recognize traumatic stress responses and confidently respond with a Trauma Informed communication and advocacy approach.

- Identify factors that support resilience and their role in preventing and recovering from trauma.
- Apply strategies to strengthen the PSW role in trauma prevention and intervention, especially in multidisciplinary contexts.
- Utilize self-awareness to improve capacity to self-regulate stress responses and access mutual peer support.
- Create an organic peer referral network to strengthen cross-sector collaboration.

Academy Structure:

- Curriculum is constructed to foster a safe, interactive, and collaborative learning environment through Trauma Informed pedagogical approaches and the application of adult learning and popular education principles.
- Training activities primarily involve structured individual reflection, group sharing, role play, and/or creative expression to access and grow participants' collective wisdom.
- *Minimum* 8-week program for 25 PSWs meeting weekly for 3-hour sessions. The length of the program provides sufficient depth to achieve program objectives while supporting peer relationship development and opportunities for intersession knowledge and skill integration.
- A training team, comprised of a Lead Trainer and Co-Trainer, will facilitate curriculum activities which are structured to scaffold participant learning. Training content is frontloaded in the initial sessions, and later sessions provide ample opportunities for skill practice and integration.
- A coaching circle model is used to nurture organic peer-to-peer mutual support during the final third of the program and continuing post-graduation with independently organized ongoing circles to ensure the sustainability of the peer-to-peer network.
- Dissemination of learning is promoted by participant-facilitated sharing sessions with staff at their sponsoring organization.
- A certificate from DPH will be awarded to participants upon successful completion of the Academy.

Academy Recruitment and Selection

- Recruitment strategies involve online, community, and targeted outreach to individuals, organizations, and agencies working in the TPI Communities.
- Participants work release and their usual compensation from their employer during training sessions, plus cash incentives for attendance and successful Academy completion.
- Strategies for obtaining support of sponsoring organizations include cash incentives and dissemination of Academy learning to their non-peer staff via Academy participant-facilitated sharing sessions.
- Applicant qualification and selection criteria include that participants be PSWs from the TPI Communities. Participant level of interest and capacity for commitment will be

considered along with efforts to create a balanced cohort reflecting diversity in identity and work experience; especially important is the inclusion of PSWs in at least three different sectors (e.g. community intervention, community health, sexual/domestic violence).

- Participants will be selected through a tiered two-step process including submission of an application packet and a Meet and Greet session.
- PSW Application review, Meet and Greet sessions, and final participant decisions will be conducted by the 5-person Academy Application Reader Group composed of the training team and three PSW representatives.
- The entire process will be supported by an Outreach and Program Coordinator.

Academy Implementation

- Active participant recruitment and selection periods will run in 3-month cycles alternating with a minimum 8-week training period.
- Pilot phase:
 - Initial step will be a pilot implementation of the curriculum and will be formally evaluated by the Evaluation Consultant.
 - The Instructional Design Consultant will utilize the evaluation findings to revise the Academy curriculum and submit to DPH for final approval.
 - Recruitment and Selection evaluation findings will also be reviewed, and processes refined as needed and submitted to DPH for final approval.
- In the second year of the program, there will be two additional training cycles with independent coaching circles running throughout.
- Two participant-alumni gatherings will be convened in the second month of each training cycle in year two. These gatherings will inspire current participants, re-invigorate graduates, and connect peers across cohorts, encouraging wider collaboration and expansion of the organic peer-to-peer referral network.

Academy Evaluation

- The Academy evaluation is designed to measure to what extent program goals and curricular objectives were achieved and to gain insight into program implementation and participant engagement and perception of program content and delivery.
- The Academy evaluation utilizes a mixed methods retrospective pretest and post-program evaluation design with post-session evaluations to measure outcomes in real time.
- Key metrics and indicators include attendance records; trainer-rated level of participant engagement; participant satisfaction with program content, peer learning, learning environment, and training delivery; and change in participant knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.
- The information gleaned from the pilot evaluation will be used to measure impact and improve future iterations of the Academy. In subsequent training cycles, it is

recommended that trainers conduct anonymous data collection and review the raw information for insight into ways to improve each iteration.

Additional General Academy Recommendations

Organization and Non-Peer Education and Training

Prior to Academy implementation, a series of educational programs targeted to organizational leadership and non-peer professionals be presented to:

- Address general confusion about and devaluation of the PSW role.
- Clarify the PSW role and provide research on the value of lived experience and peer support efficacy.
- Recommend a peer systems integration learning network modeled after the 2017 pilot of the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care's Trauma Informed peer integration virtual learning network (Harris & Riefer, 2017).

Career Ladder

The landscape analysis also identified inadequate growth and lack of career ladders for PSW's.

- Investigate the feasibility of initiating a regional or state effort to standardize PSW core competencies, create a widely recognized certificate program, and encourage a PSW career ladder.
- Strategize how an Academy certificate could meet some of the PSW current training requirements, certification programs, etc. thus lending support to PSWs in their career advancement.
- Identify existing systems to coordinate and sustain P2P and potential career pathways, for example in collaboration with Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, which oversees the countywide workforce and employment plans and services.

Train-the-Trainer

The landscape analysis also identified the train-the-trainer model as a solution to the problem of inadequate PSW career ladders.

- PSWs shared that learning skills which could help them become trainers would be very helpful for them both individually and for career sustainability.
- Move the Academy towards the development of an Academy train-the-trainer program so that PSWs would constitute both the Lead and Co-Trainer positions to address inadequate PSW career ladder opportunities.

Spanish Language Translation

Limiting the Academy curriculum to English decreases accessibility.

- Considering the language needs of members of the TPI communities and LA County overall, translate Academy curriculum into Spanish.

Next Steps

- A **Pilot Cohort Development Lead** will build on previous Academy work to develop a plan for a multidisciplinary pilot cohort for a minimum of 25 participants and two training cycles (minimum of 50 participants total) which will be recruited for the July 2019 – June 2019 year.
 - Preparations and recruitment of a pilot cohort of the Peer to Peer Violence Prevention Learning Academy participants to take place between January and June 2019.
 - Pilot cohort development will include recruitment, logistics, pilot curriculum, training and peer learning schedule, and evaluation activities and protocols.
- Create a forum to network, explore best practices and discuss strategies for connection in the peer support field through a **Peer Support Worker Event Coordinator** with expertise in the origins, history, evidence base, roles, training, and utilization of Peer Support Workers.
 - Address the role confusion around peer support worker roles and to highlight peer support worker programs in Los Angeles County.
 - Convene a Summit with a multi-sector audience of PSWs and employers of roughly 150 participants in early 2019 to create a common foundation and shared learning about PSW models
 - Develop a report based on the Summit findings including strategies to support a more standardized and regional approach to implementing PSW models and create a structure for an ongoing and linked PSW community network to lift best practices, address challenges and share resources.

P2P Implementation Timeline

P2P Phase	Component	Timeframe
Landscape Analysis / Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape analysis: existing trainings, PSW models, literature and curricula review 	Jan 2018 – Jun 2018
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Support Worker Summit: multi-sector audience of PSWs and employers create a common foundation, build a learning community, develop an action plan Planning for Pilot Cohort: finalize recruitment plan, curriculum, logistics Coordinate with county departments 	Jan 2019 – Jun 2019
Pilot Cohort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit and implement 2 training cycles of P2P Pilot Cohort in South Los Angeles (50 participants total) Train multi-sector county departments in best practices for working with PSWs 	Jul 2019 – Jun 2020
P2P Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-year training cycle; Evaluation Develop system navigation team strategy Identify sustainable career pathways 	Jul 2020 – Jun 2023