PEER LEADER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION GUIDE

This guide outlines best practices and tips from Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative (WNYICC) on how to recruit new Peer Leaders for the SMRC Evidence-Based Programs, as well as how to retain Peer Leaders and keep them engaged once they become a certified Peer Leader.

RECRUITMENT IDEAS:

• **Recruit From Workshops:**
  - WNYICC trains our current Peer Leaders to ask workshop participants if they would be interested in becoming a Peer Leader at the end of the Final/6th Session.
  - Peer Leaders notify their Program Coordinator of any very engaged participants they think might be a good potential Peer Leader.
  - The Program Coordinator then reaches out to that individual.

• **Personal Acquaintances:**
  - Implement a Peer Leader referral program, so current Peer Leaders can refer their peers and be rewarded (if funds allow).
  - Network/Program Delivery Partner Staff could be trained as Peer Leaders

• **Promotion through Various Media Avenues:**
  - **Owned Media:** Your organization website and social media (use any and all platforms.); Email blasts
  - **Earned Media:** 3rd Party endorsement. Example: Request someone to write an article.
  - **Paid Media:** Pay for promotion (ex: boost your Facebook post, pay for ad, etc.)

• **Recruitment Video:**
  - Showing real Peer Leaders leading a workshop and interview on what they love about it.
  - For an example check out WNYICC’s here: [https://www.wnyicc.org/Trainings](https://www.wnyicc.org/Trainings)

• **Flyers:** provide flyers to:
  - Network Partners and ask them to send out and/or hang up in the office.
  - Volunteer agencies to provide as a volunteer opportunity in your area (example: local RSVPs, Volunteer Match, and Compeer).
  - Send information to local Retired Teachers Associations.

• **Question and Answer Interest Sessions**
  - Potential Peer Leaders can learn more about the program and what their role would be.
  - Ask Guest Speaker from the Community to introduce you and the program

• **Provide opportunities to shadow** or sit in on a workshop.

• **Highlight achievements of current Peer Leaders** and/or workshops on various media with contact information on how to get involved for those who are interested.

• **Offer opportunities** for friends and/or family members to work together to lead a workshop.

• **Recruit from Diverse Communities**
  - Reach out to agencies working with diverse populations.
  - Reach out to faith-based organizations, barber shops, pharmacies, etc.

• **Schedule Trainings months in advance to avoid Scheduling Conflicts**

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RETENTION/ENGAGEMENT IDEAS:

- **Create Opportunities for Peer Leaders to Stay Connected:**
  - Network Partners host Quarterly Meetings to get Peer Leaders together, keep them updated, and provide them a nice breakfast or meal. *(In 2021, WNYICC held meetings virtually due to the public health emergency).*
  - Provide education and fun activities at these events. Example: Cooking Demo, Ice breaker games, etc.
  - Provide team building opportunities for Peer Leaders to interact with each other, share stories, and ask each other questions.

- **Show Appreciation:**
  - Fun annual awards (Examples: most workshops led, best attendance in workshops, most completed surveys).
  - A small gift of appreciation (if funds allow) or a thank you card.
  - Send messages to let them know they are doing a great job.
  - Yearly luncheon or brunch (if funds allow).

- **Show the Impact:**
  - Let Peer Leaders know how they are helping the community by providing outcome data.
  - Share comments from surveys completed at the end of the workshop to show Peer Leaders the impact they have on their participants.

- **One-on-One Office Hours**
  - Be available in case Peer Leaders have questions or need assistance.

- **Check in with Peer Leaders Consistently:**
  - Ensure they are enjoying their position and address any barriers.
  - Seek Peer Leader advice on programs, rewards, and workshops.
  - Keep open communication.

- **Make things as Easy as Possible for your Peer Leaders:**
  - If possible, create training they can take on their own time (example: Videos to watch).
  - If must be a live training (ex. An update training), provide a couple options/dates to choose from.
  - Provide workshop calendar in advance to allow them to sign up before they have conflicts.
  - Schedule weekend and evening workshops around their schedules.

- **Provide Resources they need to be a better Peer Leader.**
  - Example: Providing training on working virtual platforms
  - Provide extra training on activities they have most questions on.
    - Example: WNYICC provided training on the DSMP Meal Planning activity due to many requests
    - Provide role playing opportunities for practice with certain activities.

- **Provide Opportunities for Peer Leaders to Take on more Responsibility,** if desired.
  - Example: Several of WNYICC’s Peer Leaders are on our Quality Assurance Committee.
  - Create Wellness Ambassador Program and ask Peer Leaders to volunteer to lead.