Parallel Process: Any Positive Change for Organizations and Systems

9th National Harm Reduction Conference
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Outline

• Overview of our organization and our work
• How do systems and organizations change?
• The importance of parallel process (any positive change for systems and organizations)
• Examples and lessons learned
Heartland Health Outreach (HHO)  
(Founded 1985)

• Affiliated partner of Heartland Alliance for Human Need & Human Rights (founded 1888)

• Nonprofit organization providing primary care, dental, mental health, and substance use treatment for over 2,000 disenfranchised Chicagoans per year – especially individuals who are homeless and refugees
Midwest Harm Reduction Institute (MHRI)
(founded 2004)

Through provision of Training and Technical Assistance:
• Increase understanding of the harm reduction philosophy.
• Build the skills necessary to implement harm reduction strategies.
• Strengthen harm reduction leadership across a diversity of disciplines and communities.
• Develop an awareness of the attitudes that contribute to discrimination against drug users and other marginalized groups.
Midwest Harm Reduction Institute
Midwest Harm Reduction Institute

City of Chicago History with Housing First & Harm Reduction

• **2002:** Chicago Continuum of Care (CCC) adopts “Housing First” approach
  – Evidence-based model that emphasizes permanent housing with supports (Tsemberis, et al, 2004)
    • Chicago’s 2004 homeless count:
      – 31% of those surveyed reported a substance use problem
    • Chicago’s 2005 homeless count:
      – 36.8% of sheltered individuals reported a substance use problem
      – 74.4% of unsheltered individuals reported a substance use problem
  – 2006 CCC survey found that approximately 80% of housing providers required abstinence as a criterion for admission
MHRI’s Role in Chicago’s Transition to Housing First

- **2006** – MHRI Prince Charitable Trust funded Training and Technical Assistance project (2 orgs)

- **2009 - Present** – MHRI Chicago Community Trust funded Training and Technical Assistance project (9 orgs so far…)

  - 2011 CCC survey found that 94% of housing providers accept individuals regardless of sobriety and history of substance use
Midwest Harm Reduction Institute (MHRI): Harm Reduction TA Project

• Organization selection
  – Self selection
  – Outreach

• Establishing a baseline
  – Harm Reduction Housing Fidelity Scale (HHO, 2008)

• Ongoing evaluation
Strategies for Learning New Methods (Miller, et al., 2006)

1. Reading, verbal instruction, observation

2. Practice with feedback

3. Ongoing coaching and supervision of practice
MHRI: Harm Reduction Technical Assistance Project

• Technical Assistance
  – Phase I: Knowledge (Training of Trainers vs. All Staff)
  – Phase II: Practice
  – Phase III: Follow-up & continued support
    • Harm Reduction Roundtable
    • Harm Reduction Champions Group
How do organizations and systems change?

• Like individuals, organizations and systems change slowly and incrementally
• Like individuals, they must first be convinced of the need for change
Systems Change

• Carrots
  • Local foundation community focus
  • Collective recognition of peers
  • Future prospects (bonus projects)

• Sticks
  • Continuum Evaluation Tool
Assessing Organizational Readiness to Change
(Lehman et al, 2002)

• “Motivational Readiness”: Perceived need & pressure for change
  – Subject to external influences from funding agencies and peers

• Organizational Climate factors
  – Diplomats
  – Warriors

• Institutional Resources
Adopting a New Practice: Practitioner Stages (Rogers, 2003)

- **Knowledge**: Learning about a new practice
- **Persuasion**: Developing a positive attitude toward the new practice (finding “the hook”)
- **Decision**: Agreeing to try the new practice
- **Implementation**: Learning how to use it
- **Confirmation**: Experiencing success; integration and consolidation
Barriers to Change (Miller, et al., 2006)

- Inertia of clinical practice
- Inaccessible (or irrelevant) research
- Structure of service delivery
- Resource limitations
- Limited support for training & supervision
- Insufficient incentives
Education: The need for evidence

• To the extent possible, find relevant evidence for the community of workers you are working with

• Remind them that they are pioneers on the cutting edge, and they must contribute to evaluation as well!
• “Ram Dass advised him (Ethan Nadelmann) that in order for us to progress further in this movement, we had to learn to love people with whom our ideas were in conflict, as well as people who were “in the choir”.

Harm Reduction Communication: Talking to each other when it matters”

Pam Lynch

Midwest Harm Reduction Institute
Be curious. Not judgemental.
Practice what we preach

• “..build bridges of unity while at the same time respecting each others’ boundaries”
• “It is not our job to judge. We need to view difference in a constructive way, and strive to find our common bonds”

HRC Communication Vol. 3
“Harm Reduction and the Twelve Steps”

• “Do we enforce a tyranny of political correctness? (judgment, bias, superiority, smugness?)”

HRC Communication Vol. 3
“The Spectrum of Harm Reduction”
Founders of AA had this right…

• “We surely have no monopoly…”
• “If he doesn’t want to stop, don’t waste your time…never force yourself upon him…Let him draw his own conclusion.”
• “Progress not perfection”
• “Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly”

Alcoholics Anonymous
DISLIKES JUDGEMENTAL ATHEISTS

JUDGEMENTAL ABOUT ATHEISTS

Midwest Harm Reduction Institute
“Harm reduction and drug treatment can coexist on a continuum, and as complementary parts of a pluralistic drug service system”

Harm Reduction Communication, Vol. 4
“Integration of Harm Reduction and other Treatment Approaches”

Midwest Harm Reduction Institute
Bloom and Farragher, *Destroying Sanctuary: The Crisis in Human Service Delivery Systems*

Midwest Harm Reduction Institute
“As proponents of harm reduction, we must be certain to practice it among ourselves, to courteously allow our differences without harsh judgment.”

Harm Reduction Communication Vol. 5
“Do unto others”
Examples from our experience in Chicago

• Systems level
  – Continuum Evaluation Tool
  – Education of funders/politicians (Harm Reduction Breakfast)

• Organization level
  – AIDS Foundation of Chicago Systems Integration Team meetings
  – Organizations broadening their continuum of services to include harm reduction housing
Lessons Learned

- Addressing clinician attitudes, beliefs, and values re: substance use
  - Bottom up vs. top down
- Board involvement
- Client involvement
- Relevance of TA tailored to staff SOC
- Utilizing hiring process
- Establish criteria for evaluating staff
Lessons Learned (continued)

– Knowledge: Necessary, not sufficient
– Working with staff ambivalence
– Managing interactions with non-HR programs
– Defining/operationalizing HR
– Need for more empirical evidence
– Need for ongoing follow-up and discussion
– Parallel process (i.e., harm reduction informed supervision)