

**Access for All**  
**FY 18-19 CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The project began in Fall of 2019 and was conducted in four phases. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many of the project activities had to be changed into alternative formats due to stay at home orders and changes to the availability and willingness of community participants. Peer Mentor training sessions were held in order to recruit and educate peer mentors with lived experience to be able to present similar information back to their own community groups.

The Access For All subcommittee was involved in giving feedback on the training curriculum. They also suggested potential co-facilitators, expressed interest in attending the project presentations, and offered to assist with outreach for the project by circulating the approved flyers.

Meetings were held with the DMH team: August 2019, September 2019 (Access For All Committee), February 2020, April 2020, July 2020, November 2020 (Access For All Committee), and the Virtual Symposium on 12/22/2020.

**PROJECT RESULTS**

The training curriculum for the Peer Mentor Training Program was developed and the first training was held in-person in February of 2020 prior to stay at home orders went into effect. Two co-facilitators with lived experience were initially recruited and assisted with the February training who later informed us that they would be unable to continue in their roles. Peer Mentors who were recruited for the training session later declined to host any community presentations of their own citing personal reasons related to the pandemic. Wayfinder continued to advertise community presentations and educate our many community partners about the work of the Access For All committee and DMH resources.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

An additional peer mentor training was scheduled and held in October at the request of DMH in order to increase recruitment of participants. However, the new pool of participants consisted of paraprofessionals working with disabled populations instead of individuals with lived experience. These individuals also declined to conduct any community presentations. Despite extensive outreach and confirmed interest in attending training, day-of training turnout was less than expected. Participants cited personal reasons due to the strain of the pandemic on their personal and family lives. While professional organizations were able to pivot activities in response to the pandemic, it was observed that impacts to individuals within the target populations of this project may have been underestimated. Return of surveys and evaluations was also significantly impacted by use of Zoom, resulting in incomplete or no returns for some presentation sessions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

While it was beneficial that community presentations could continue by using the Zoom platform, it is recommended that future efforts be designed in a hybrid format so that in-person attendance be maximized while virtual streaming of the meeting also be made available for people who cannot travel. The combination of peer advocacy leadership training with basic mental health knowledge in the 6-hour one day training proved to be overwhelming for some participants per feedback received. It is recommended that future content be more spread out, or that expectations placed on community participants be reduced in order to improve their participation.

## **OUTCOMES**

A final report was submitted detailing all information collected for the project. A pre and post test, community survey, and Peer Mentor Training Curriculum were developed and approved in the initial phases of the project. Two co-facilitators with lived experience were recruited who assisted with the first Peer Mentor recruitment training prior to leaving the project after stay at home orders were implemented. Two (2) Peer Mentor recruitment trainings were held: one on February 5th, 2020 with 28 RSVPs and 21 attendees, the second was held on October 5th, 2020 with 5 RSVPs and 5 attendees. For the results of the pre and post tests from the trainings, on average the scores reflect an increase of 0.83 on a 5-point scale across all questions. Once the peer mentors and co-facilitators declined to continue the project, Wayfinder took up the efforts to continue holding the community presentations. Eleven (11) Peer Mentor project community presentations were able to be scheduled, and were advertised and offered via Zoom. The project resulted in extensive community outreach to disability community partners including:

Los Angeles Department on Disability, Braille Institute, Guide Dogs of America, Access Services, Los Angeles Trade Technical College, Lo Angeles Worksource Centers, Jay Nolan Community Services, Tierra del Sol, Pacific Clinics, Los Angeles Metro, California State University Los Angeles, Blind Children’s Center, Mobility Management Partners, Dayle McIntosh Center, East Los Angeles Disability Collaborative, and Southern California Independent Living Centers. Perhaps the most important outcome of the project is the expanded knowledge that was created by these outreach efforts throughout our local disability services community of the Access For All committee. All participants and community partners expressed that they support the importance and timeliness of this project, which bears a positive outlook on continued interest in similar future projects.