

Exercise I. On Target with Advocacy

Introduction:

This is a scenario based exercise. It can be done alone or in partnership with others. Advocacy is one of the most important roles you will fill as a Peer Support Specialist. Remember that when advocating, is imperative that you do not do *FOR* another person but do *WITH* them. Effective self-advocacy and peer advocacy requires building and practicing skills to help you feel comfortable and confident in reaching identified advocacy goals.

Purpose:

The purpose of this exercise is to assist Peer Support Specialists learn how to advocate in different situations that may come up in working with peers on advocacy. The first three scenarios have suggested action items and the last two do not and are intentionally left blank so you can come up with solutions on your own.

Directions:

Read the scenarios carefully and follow the directions given in each one. Below are several brief vignettes of common unmet needs that we advocate for all the time.

Scenario 1: Insulting, Disrespectful Comments from Therapist

Betty believes that the social worker made negative, judgmental comments about her and her daughters during meetings. Instead of working in a supportive, therapeutic way with the family, Betty felt that the social worker was “blaming the victims” who had sought help from her.

Pretend you are Betty

Think about:

- What additional information do you need?

- Where can you get more information?

- What outcome(s) do you want to achieve?

- What rules govern this situation?

- Who are some of the key decision-makers?

- What strategies could you use to achieve the desired outcome(s)?

- What barriers might you encounter/have to overcome?

Possible Actions:

What do you think about the possible actions Betty could take?

- Betty could decide that meeting with the social worker and discussing her concerns about the social worker's behavior might be useful.
- Betty could file a patient rights grievance regarding these comments, as a violation

of her right to be treated with dignity and respect.

- If the therapist failed to address Betty’s concern, she could contact the Grievance/Complaint manager in the correct state agency, who monitors any problems or complaints that cannot be resolved because a program’s grievance procedure is deficient.

- The Department of Licensing could be called to determine if the social worker involved has violated a provision of the Social Work Administrative Code.

What else might Betty try to do in this situation?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Scenario 2: Landlord/Tenant conflict

Angela has concerns about the fact that the windows in her first floor apartment don’t lock. She didn’t notice that the windows didn’t lock when she viewed the apartment before signing her one-year lease. She recently talked with her landlord and he promised that her windows would be replaced. Three months have gone by, and still the windows haven’t been replaced. Pretend you are working with/for Angela as a peer advocate

Think about:

- What additional information do they need?

- Where can they get more information?

➤ What outcome(s) do they want to achieve?

➤ What rules govern this situation?

➤ Who are some of the key decision-makers?

➤ What strategies could they use to achieve the desired outcome(s)?

➤ What barriers might they encounter/have to overcome?

Possible Actions:

- Angela could set up a meeting with her landlord, you as the peer advocate, and herself to talk over her concerns.
- You and/or Angela could write a letter to the landlord.
- Angela and/or you could file a complaint with the housing authority and copy the landlord.

What else might you/Angela try to do in this situation?

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- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Scenario 3: Sexual abuse

Karen is an incest survivor who was in therapy with a psychologist who told her that he was attracted to her. He told Karen that he needed to “bring that out in the open so that they could move on from there”. Karen got involved with support groups and read books on the subject of sexual abuse. As time passed, she realized how inappropriate it was for her therapist to tell her he was attracted to her. Karen would like to file a complaint. Remember that as a peer specialist you never give advice or play the therapist. The proper incident reporting within the agency you work for is assumed in this scenario.

Pretend you are Karen

- What additional information do they need?

- Where can they get more information?

- What outcome(s) do they want to achieve?

- What rules govern this situation?

- Who are some of the key decision-makers?

- What strategies could they use to achieve the desired outcome(s)?

- What barriers might they encounter/have to overcome?

Possible Actions:

- Given Karen’s desire to have a record of her complaint on file, she should contact the Department of Licensing in her state, which licenses psychologists.
- If Karen decided to pursue action against her psychologist within a certain number of days of the incident, she could file a grievance with the agency or business where the psychologist is employed.
- Karen could also contact the state or federal Psychological Association to file a formal complaint against her former psychologist for an ethics violation.
- If the incident took place in a state mental health certified clinic, Karen has the option to contact the appropriate state agency to file a complaint.

Karen has stated the outcome she wants to achieve. If she hadn't wanted to file a complaint, what other self-advocacy strategies might Karen try to do in this situation?

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- _____
- _____
- _____

Scenario 4: Medications

John talks with you about helping him resolve some concerns he has about his medications. He feels like he's not being listened to, and he wants your help as a peer support specialist. John has been put on a new medication, and has been experiencing blurred vision for the last several days.

John believes that there is something wrong with his vision and that he may be losing his eyesight. John talks with his physician about his vision on several occasions and is told that his vision is fine. John continues to experience blurred vision and is very concerned about it.

When he went to see the doctor about the medication and his vision, the doctor was rushed and did not have time to discuss John's concerns. He doesn't know what to do and hope that you, can be of assistance.

Pretend you are John's peer support specialist:

- What additional information do they need?

- Where can they get more information?

➤ What outcome(s) do they want to achieve?

➤ What rules govern this situation?

➤ Who are some of the key decision-makers?

➤ What strategies could they use to achieve the desired outcome(s)?

➤ What barriers might they encounter/have to overcome?

Possible Actions:

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- _____
- _____

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- _____

Scenario 5: Overwhelmed

Malila has been in the hospital for the last two weeks. She was living in a shelter prior to her hospitalization because she lost her apartment due to not being able to pay her rent. Malila’s immediate plans are to stay with her sister upon discharge, but she can’t stay with her long. She needs a longer-term housing solution. Malila would like assistance in finding housing and also would like to receive a referral to an outpatient program, information on employment opportunities and emergency income assistance. She feels overwhelmed with all of the issues that she feels need to be addressed. She doesn’t know where to begin or where to go. She asks you to assist her as a peer support specialist.

Pretend you are Malila’s peer advocate

Think about:

- What additional information do they need?

- Where can they get more information?

- What outcome(s) do they want to achieve?

- What rules govern this situation?

➤ Who are some of the key decision-makers?

➤ What strategies could they use to achieve the desired outcome(s)?

➤ What barriers might they encounter/have to overcome?

List Possible Actions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____