

# **The Consumer As Provider Project**

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## **Report of Activities**

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## The Consumer as Provider Project

Consumers working as providers in the last few years have attained prominent attention in the field of mental health by enhancing the context of consumer-centered services and paving the path to self-recovery. The growing tide of consumerism and empowerment activities is rapidly changing the complexion of service provision. Consumer providers have many attributes that positively affect the work, such as their knowledge and wisdom of surviving the system, their first hand experience in the journey of recovery from mental illness, and lastly, their positive role modeling for other recipients of mental health services.

The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare designed and launched a pilot training initiative in the spring of 1999 to create opportunities for consumers from Wyandot and Johnson County Mental Health Centers to develop knowledge and skills to be effective as service providers. The initial results from this pilot were very encouraging. Of the 12 students graduating, 5 were hired in mental health services within 2 months from graduation, and 2 other consumers as providers (CAP) graduates continued their education in post-secondary settings. The knowledge and skills gained by the students through the CAP project enhanced their marketability and their quest to pursue employment and further academic pursuits. Another profound effect found in the pilot project was indicators of rising student self-esteem and self-confidence.

This report will describe the Consumer as Provider training project activities since the initial pilot. This report will focus on the CAP partnership with: Wyandot CMHC; Breakthrough -Topeka; Franklin CMHC; Bert Nash CMHC; & Johnson CMHC, in 1999 & 2000. The report will overview Consumer as Provider classroom, group supervision and internship activities, which prepare students with severe psychiatric disabilities to become consumer providers in mental health and other social service agency settings.

### **Consumer as Provider Project Purpose:**

The CAP training is seen as an opportunity for persons to utilize their vast experiences and wisdom as recipients of the mental health system and to gain and enhance their helping skills. The Consumers as Provider (CAP) training project has three purposes:

- The employability of people who have a severe and persistent psychiatric disability in community support programs and other human service settings.
- Create the supports and mechanisms to assist community support services (CSS) to hire consumer-providers in their agency.
- Build a base of knowledge about mental health services in order to enhance consumer's personal journey of recovery.

### **CAP Changes-Project Enhancement**

Based on recommendations from the pilot training project, new innovations and solutions have been implemented:

- Active research to define outcomes, motivation and hope associated with CAP was mounted
- Supported Education Liaisons were hired
- Additional CAP orientations and trainings provided to mentors and coordinators
- Increased normalization of the CAP experience, i.e.
  1. continue to adhere to a university schedule
  2. pre-screening applicants prior to entry into the CAP program
- The Consumer as Provider program replicated by Wichita State University
- Increased focus on job readiness of CAP graduates
- CAP as a “stepping stone” to other educational endeavors.
- Increased public relations and public awareness of CAP
- Implementation of CAP in urban (Wyandotte Co. and Breakthrough), suburban (Johnson Co. and Bert Nash) and rural (Franklin Co.) areas

## **Student Interviews**

Following the student orientation, held at CSS programs, the education liaisons contacted each CAP applicant to schedule an interview. The liaisons explained to the applicants that the interviews would be informal and would include the agency coordinators and supported education liaisons from the university.

Before the interview took place students were requested to sign a set of releases. The parties involved in the interview (agency coordinator and liaison), explained the reason for the release. Releases enhanced communication between the centers and KU. The liaison presented each student with an additional release for the research aspect of the CAP program. Every applicant was willing to sign both sets of releases and was excited about the research aspect of the program.

During the interview applicants responded to questions concerning motivation, skills and desires for participation in the CAP program. Notes were taken on the applicant's responses and it was explained that this was to capture their answers word by word for the research. The interview provided a good time to describe the program in greater detail, discuss possible internship tracks with the student, and answer applicant questions.

The majority of applicants were accepted, but a few were turned away for various reasons. Those who were not ready for the CAP program were encouraged to build skills and to continue their interest in the CAP program. The applicant was encouraged that their name would be placed on a waiting list for the next time that CAP was in that area.

### **Strengths**

- Student interview process enhances job readiness
- Applicants in the interview process have the opportunity to gather more information about the program
- Supported education liaisons able to explain and reiterate expectations of CAP participants

- Further discussion about internship tracks, i.e. what the applicants work related desires are and options offered by the agency

### **New Products**

- Research Program design approved
- Student interview questions designed to address areas of the research
- Research instruments, consents, scales mounted
- Data analysis program designed and set up
- Pre-screening and interview of all CAP applicants with agency coordinator and supported education liaison
- Research consent form

### **Recommendation**

- Calling applicants about acceptance the week following the interview

### **Motivation for applying to CAP**

As part of the research design, the student interview process incorporated several motivational questions. The following is a sampling of CAP applicant responses to questions:

#### 1. Recovery/self-help

- *“I want to learn more about my mental illness and the illnesses of others, it will help me grow and understand more.”*
- *...will help (me) learn how to be around others and be a part of groups.”*

#### 2. Desire to help others

- *“I have real heart for people who have problems that are similar to those I have.”*
- *“...always wanted to learn what case managers do, so I can help others.*

#### 3. Apply life experience

- *“I want to prevent any person from going through what I have gone through myself, I would go to any lengths to keep someone from going through what I have.”.*

- *“I feel that (being) over 12 years disabled with mental illness, I have learned a lot from other people and seen their accomplishments.”*
4. Enhance future goals-educational or vocational
- *“I would like to go on to school and hopefully get my foot in the door at KU.”*
  - *I have “got to start using my brain.” I “would like to work with A/D abuse people... juveniles...(haven’t) gotten to be around my own kids.”*

## Consumer as Provider Training Description

### **Classroom Component**

During the Fall of 1999 and the Fall of 2000, the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, conducted CAP with five agencies at three sites. CAP training was held in academic settings at the KU satellite complex in Topeka, KU Regents Center: Edwards Campus in Overland Park, and the KU main campus, Lawrence. The following agencies partnered with the KU CAP project:

- Breakthrough in Topeka
- Franklin County Mental Health and Bert Nash (Douglas County)
- Johnson County Mental Health and Wyandot County Mental Health

A total of 46 students began the program. At all sites, students attended classes for 3 hours one afternoon a week for 15 weeks. In efforts to further normalize the CAP experience, all classes were held in a post secondary academic setting and the time frame reflected that of the usual college semester.

Classes provided a wide spectrum of learning opportunities, using a variety of teaching methods; e.g. lecture, group discussion, in-class exercises, role play and guest speakers. Students were given exposure to an array of topics applicable to attendant care and provision of human services. Students gained a working knowledge in the following core objectives of the training.

- Basic helping skills

- Ethics and confidentiality
- Strengths model
- Documentation and goal setting
- Medical aspects of mental illness
- Cultural competence
- Crisis and emergency intervention
- Group supervision and resource acquisition
- Recovery paradigm and consumer movement

The students followed a syllabus in their training manual, which laid the groundwork for the following areas:

- **Educational Outcomes**, i.e. goals concerning student skills in basic helping skills, the Strengths perspective, medical aspects of mental illness etc...
- **Expectations of Students** including attendance and assignments
- **Instructor and Supported Education Liaison expectations**, i.e. measurement of student learning, support, etc...
- **Student Rights and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**, i.e. the right to be informed of academic progress, supports needed to accomplish course requirements, etc...
- **Confidentiality**

The students related that material covered and knowledge gained in such areas as; history of mental health systems, helping skills, documentation and goal writing, etc...were essential to the transition into internship activities.

*“...the materials that were supplied to us, the training and the teaching materials, were very comprehensive.”*

*“They hit on aspects of providership that were essential to being able to hold a job down.”*

-Student feedback

During the lecture portion of class, students were very open to discuss their own experiences and what was beneficial for them.

A textbook and training manual were provided for reading, homework and additional information. The textbook, “The Strengths Model: Case Management with People Suffering from Severe and Persistent Mental Illness”, was written on a college level. This text proved to be a challenge for some students. A few students commented that the book was wordy and hard to understand. Students had a hard time recognizing words that were used in the textbook. This became a growth experience, however, because they went out and bought a dictionary to increase their knowledge. KU has since purchased dictionaries for the CAP class students to check out.

*“ (I was) reading something the other day and it made sense”*

*“I thought it was an excellent book to be able to understand and ... look at yourself and to be able to look at others.”*

-Student feedback

Students who had previous college course work (or a degree) came into the training expecting a college level course and seemed to handle the stress better. As with all students that go on to college; time management and stress (regarding the student role and expectations) became barriers to be addressed. Homework, reading the text and doing papers, was a struggle for some students. A few students froze in response to the assignments. One student observed that being indoctrinated in the medical model tended to make them focus on pathologies, which made it feel “unnatural” to relax and believe in their own ability to rise to a challenge. During one-on-one meetings with the supported education liaison, students were able to express their frustrations, problem solve and gain support.

There was a significant disparity in the learning abilities within each class. One student had a self-disclosed learning disability, but was very resourceful and was willing to utilize the combined skills of the other students. Students formed study groups to support each other outside of class.

Overall attendance remained high throughout the classes. Students could only miss three classes during the semester and were expected to call the education liaisons or instructor when class was missed. Students did a good job notifying both the education liaison and

instructor when they needed to miss class. Absent students were able to get notes from fellow students. Two students volunteered to take notes for each class to help those who were having a difficult time note taking and listening.

Homework was a learning and growth experience during the training, especially writing the two papers. There was a lot of anxiety about expectations regarding the first paper. For some of the students this was their first attempt at writing a paper and for the others it had been many years. The assignment was given in the first month of class, which added to the anxiety of some students.

The students were very reserved during the first few weeks of class but soon became more out spoken and comfortable with their setting. Students advocated for themselves and let the instructor know when their needs were not being met. Some examples:

- Students let the instructor know that they were not getting called on when they had their hands raised
- When the instructor was speaking too fast students were not afraid to let her know to slow down
- Students asked questions when material was unclear

Within the first month and throughout the semester, personalities began to shine and natural roles emerged. During small group discussions natural leader roles helped keep the discussion on track. Laughter and joking was common during each week of class. A connection began to form not only with the students and their own peers but also with the students and the instructors. CAP students made the following statements.

*“Haven’t you noticed that we are flowering and growing all over the place?”*

*“I seem more confident now”*

-Student feedback

## Classroom

### **Strengths**

- Normalization of the academic setting
- Materials supplied by the CAP project
- Instructional support, i.e. no one was ever made to feel as though his or her question was “stupid”.
- Comprehensive nature of the curricula
- Meeting with the supported education liaison for support, identification of educational goals and confidence building
- Increased self esteem
- Group cohesion
- Emphasis on the Strengths Model

## Classroom

### **New Products**

- Resume and career building segment added to course work
- Classes held on academic time table (15 week- semester)
- Hired two Supported Education Liaison’s
- Note takers during class and group supervision
- Additional supplies for students (dictionaries for check out, highlighters, etc.)
- Educational goal plans for students in the training manual
- Time management schedule included in manual
- Student interviews

## Classroom

### **Recommendations**

- Read material before covering it in class

- Follow syllabus with more structure and consistency
- Cover documentation earlier and with more emphasis in the course
- Do a strengths assessment earlier
- Do a class on writing papers
- More homework and quizzes to enhance normalization
- More emphasis on time management, study habits and stress reduction
- More breaks during the class
- Go over the material slower
- Have two CAP classes i.e. “Introduction to CAP” and “Advanced CAP”

### **Group Supervision**

In addition to class, students were required to participate in group supervision once a week for three hours. Group supervision provided time for the students to explore and process several elements of the consumer provider role and the student role. The three hours were divided into two main categories:

- First 1 ½ hour focused on internship activities and provision of services
- Second 1 ½ hour focused on education and personal support

During this time the students were able to discuss anything relating to the CAP and how the students were doing overall in the program. This was a very important time, where problem solving and support were always available. Several topics were discussed:

- Confidentiality
- Boundaries and ethics
- Crisis intervention
- Dual relationships
- Resource acquisition
- Internship matches
- Communication skills

These meetings were held in a community setting. Due to the number of students, there was a morning and afternoon session for the Kansas City area, which was a mixture of

Wyandot and Johnson County students. The Franklin and Douglas County students were in one group. Breakthrough met as one group in the community at a Public library.

The supported education liaison facilitated group supervision the first month. After the first month, the KC area liaison asked for volunteers to help with co-facilitating. This provided the students a “hands on” experience with facilitating groups and also it appeared to boost their confidence. Not all students volunteered but those who did gained additional experience. Co-facilitation with an intern student from Wichita State University was also cited as a very positive experience for the Lawrence/Ottawa group. This partnership for group supervision was an element of the technical assistance extended to WSU to aid in their replication of CAP. In addition, WSU sent representatives to audit the CAP class for the same purpose. These replication efforts correspond to recommendations from the report on the initial pilot project, *“Consumer As Providers: An Overview of a Pilot Training Initiative.”*

At the end of each meeting the students did feedback forms for the supported education liaison. The feedback gained was somewhat repetitive and didn’t prove too helpful for the liaison. However, these forms may have been helpful to the students as re-enforcement of the example given in the textbook regarding group supervision. The liaisons took notes during the group supervision and these were shared with students. The KC area liaison compiled notes and distributed them to students at the end of the semester.

Continual education and “teachable” moments occurred frequently during group supervision. Topics from class were often extended to this time and questions were answered and clarified. This was valuable, especially when individuals were having a hard time writing a paper or doing a homework assignment. The supported education liaison and other students provided additional material for the training manual, to be read at a later time.

Emphasis was given to resource acquisition. Students in the KC area were asked, after the first month, to find an assigned resource each week. This promoted resource

acquisition, since little was done during the internship. At the end of the training the liaison compiled the resources and produced a resource book for the students to be used as an additional tool.

Friendship and support became a key element of group supervision. Students began developing very natural supports and friendships during this time and these continued in the classroom and internships. Carpooling to and from meetings and class helped contribute to this growth. The students exchanged phone numbers and addresses, they gave each other cards in times of illness and death and they laughed, hugged and patted each other on the back each week.

*“I feel like losing part of my family now”*

*“I have obtained a different group of friends”*

*“It’s great that we have a camaraderie”*

-Student feedback

## Group Supervision

### **Strengths**

- Students co-facilitate
- Augmented learning
- Increase in friendships and support outlets
- Encouraged independent study groups
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Resource book produced from material students gathered
- Combination of students from different mental health centers
- Feedback forms to combine contextual aspect of training
- Co-facilitation with MSW student from WSU

## Group Supervision

### **New Products**

- Group supervision
- Students co-facilitating

- Resource notebook
- Co-facilitating with master student for the purpose of replication
- Combination of students from different centers to normalize friendships
- Feed back forms mirror group supervision process described in the text

## Group Supervision

### **Recommendations**

- Keep time structured
- Continue student co-facilitation
- Emphasize crisis management from a strengths perspective
- Continual emphasis on confidentiality and ethics
- Continue resource books to enhance resource acquisition during the program.
- Continue group supervision

## **Internship**

After going to class for a month, students began their internships at the various community mental health centers (host agencies). The internship hours were gradually faded in from 4 to 16 hours, within a 9-week period. A total of 106 hours were to be completed.

The internship proved to be a great experience for “hands on” training. Host sites differed in their approach to the internship. Some sites were more structured with what was available for internships, while other sites were able to provide several different internship tracks.

There were 7 internship tracks offered by the various agencies. An effort was made to match student interns to their areas of interest and availability of internship offerings:

- Case management
- Attendant care
- Wellness team
- Crisis services
- Homeless outreach
- Medication clinic
- Psychosocial groups
- Dual diagnosis

In recognition of dual relationships that can exist among providers, efforts were made to educate and offer solutions to this potential barrier. During the student interview process, applicants were asked situational questions regarding dual or multiple relationships. This provided applicants an opportunity to discuss and explore the challenge of boundaries and dual relationships. The applicant was able to make a more informed decision about the CAP training, as well as internship placement options. To alleviate role confusion and conflict, interns were given the option to complete their internship at a site other than where they received services. Only one student completed their internship at an alternative site.

The internship provided the students a working outlet to practice skills and knowledge learned in class. Some student-interns had the opportunity to experience more than one internship track. Students were able to attend weekly team meetings, complete documentation and perform one-on-one services at the host agencies. Interns were required to adhere to agency policies and practices.

Before students began their particular internship, they were required to attend an agency orientation for four hours. During the agency orientation, students became oriented to each center's policies, procedures and documentation. Like any other interning students, the CAP students were familiarized to the organization, i.e. received a tour of the agency, introduced to staff, shown where supplies were, etc.

It was noted that these agency orientations were not long enough. Students favored an increase in hours to be oriented to the agency. This reflected their desire to have more training in documentation and knowledge of agency practices.

As the internship hours increased there appeared to be a natural increase in anxiety and stress. For a few students the increase in hours became a trigger for onset of symptoms, which they were able to cope with through CAP supports and natural supports. Those who experienced symptoms were reluctant to let their mentors know because of the fear of letting them down. It was through CAP supports and continual encouragement that they changed their mind.

*“Takes a lot to stick through when you are having problems in the middle of it”*

-Student feedback

Students enjoyed their internships and the practical experience so much, that they tended to do more hours than required. Some of the students even did hours during the mid-semester break. During the internship, students began to advocate for themselves when they felt they were not being treated as equals. At one point, the internship experience facilitated a change in policy regarding students (particularly consumer-providers) being allowed to go back to an office supply room and administrative offices. The students

went to team meetings and other staff functions. CAP students became a valuable member of the teams they worked with. Agency staff recognized the knowledge and life experiences of the CAP interns and a partnership attitude emerged between consumers and staff. The agency feedback clearly shows an acceptance and blending of the skills and abilities of the student interns with those of agency staff.

*“...a pool of individuals who not only comes to us already trained, but also with life experience.”*

*“There was one student (who) said toward the end she...felt that...her views were held in almost higher regard because of her experiences in this area”*

-Agency feedback

Satisfied students repeatedly got the message that, ultimately, their internship would be whatever they made of it. One student had this to say;

*“First time that I have been on a team and have felt like a human person, I felt like I was helping consumers even by listening. I felt like I...belonged”*

-Student feedback

## Internship

### **Strengths**

- Students did not want the internship to end
- Students enjoyed the practical nature of the internship experience
- Students became an integral part of the teams that they interned on
- CAP students and mentors advocating for equality, i.e. able to go back into medical records, gaining access to supply rooms etc..
- Positive feedback from the centers about the importance of having the students at their centers

## Internship

### **New Products**

- WRAP training as part of internship activities

- “Customized” agency orientations in response to the needs of specific agencies, i.e. Bert Nash received additional trainings, which included one that focused entirely on boundary issues and dual relationships.

## Internship

### **Recommendations**

- Longer internships
- More time for the agency orientation, possibly 8 hours versus 4 hours
- Encourage students to do internships at another agency to reduce the complexity around dual relationships

### **WRAP Training**

Students attended a two-day WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) training to fulfill the last 16 internship hours. For the Fall 1999 project, WRAP training was incorporated within group supervision sessions. For the Fall 2000 class, interns from all sites came together at KU for the WRAP training. The students believed that the material covered was somewhat redundant and viewed it as a refresher course. The students had better feedback the second day of WRAP when more of the planning took place. There were differences in response from day one to day two. The first day was lecture oriented and less interactive and day two was more interactive and generated more feelings and sober reflection of life experiences

## WRAP

### **Strengths:**

- Opportunity for students at different sites to come together
- Reflections and sharing of students’ experiences and recovery

## WRAP

### **Recommendations:**

- Instructors and supported education liaisons need to evaluate the groups level of experience and sophistication within wellness and recovery; WRAP may be unnecessary due to knowledge and skills gained through CAP
- Provide evaluations for students to fill out at the conclusion of WRAP workshops

### **Transportation**

From previous CAP experience, transportation could be a barrier for some students. For those who had cars; mileage was reimbursed when they drove to internship sites and carpooled other students to class or group supervision. In all sites, applicants with cars were willing to help their peers with transportation if needed.

For those students who didn't have transportation, they were encouraged to carpool with those who had vehicles. If this was not possible they were assured that the centers would provide transportation in some manner. Having this assurance appeared to reduce the anxiety that went along with not having transportation.

### **Mentors**

Each agency involved provided mentors for the students. Every student had one mentor, however; due to a lack of mentors some students had to share a mentor. Mentors were either recruited via the agency CAP coordinator or volunteered. The student-mentor matches were handled differently for each agency.

Some centers waited to match students to their mentors until after a few weeks of the training. This decision appeared to create some stress in a few students since they did not know who their mentors were until the week before the internship. Other agencies matched students to their mentors within the first month of the training, which decreased the stress of not knowing who their mentor was. One agency held a "job fair" type of matching, which was a whole different approach, but gave the students and mentors a

chance to meet and see what was available. Students and mentors then listed their top three choices for a match and were paired accordingly. Student and mentor matches were an important aspect of the internship experience.

Mentors were required to attend a two-day orientation. At this training, KU CAP staff presented an overview of Consumers As Providers, the consumer movement and the Kansas CAP initiative. The mentors were familiarized with the class syllabus, and the roles and expectations of the mentors, students, coordinators and liaisons. Hope and enthusiasm were also addressed at the end of the two-day orientation. Agency feedback has shown that staff, as well as consumers, experienced the motivational nature of CAP.

*“...to see consumers make significant changes. I think it’s energizing the staff.”*

*-Mentor feedback*

This aspect of the benefit to agency staff is emphasized at this point in the presentation. Feedback from the orientations was useful for KU CAP staff. It provided additional avenues of support and a better understanding of the mentor’s motivation:

*“Be a sounding board to me for boundary questions with my intern”*

*“Be supportive...open ears and open mind.... be available”*

*“Assist student in developing exceptional skills as human services professionals...”*

*“Being a part of helping break down the stereotypes of (mental illness)...”*

*“...the joy of helping someone to reach his or her goals...”*

*-Mentor feedback*

A past CAP student came to one of the mentor orientations to describe her experience as a student intern. Having her at the orientation was a valuable tool, but it was suggested that we have a past mentor attend the orientations. This would allow the new mentors to ask specific questions to someone who has had experience as a mentor.

During one of the orientations, an open forum and group discussion was held. This proved valuable, because participants could brainstorm with regard to questions and

concerns. Having the open discussion time during orientation was noted as an improvement to take place in the next CAP training.

Mentors were generally very supportive of their student/intern. A positive professional relationship was formed during the internship. It proved to be very helpful for the mentor and student to sit down and write out goals and expectations of their internship. This was done prior to the commencement of internship activities. Once the internship activities began, students quickly became anxious to get “hands on” experience. Even before the increase in internship hours students were ready to take on more than just shadowing (going with their mentor to provide services to consumers, rather than the student having individual time with consumers).

*“I feel like I don’t have to be on disability the rest of my life”*

*“We were really doing something”* -Student feedback

Mentors gauged their student’s progress carefully in order to determine when “hands on,” or individual time with consumers would occur.

Mentors became wonderful resources for the students when questions arose about the internship. Some mentors were able to share their student with the rest of their team or with other mentors, to give the student a broader sense of services:

*“I felt my mentor was very encouraging in my role as a student, he showed respect and was non-judgmental”*

*“He was very approachable when I came to him with things I did not understand...I have a lot of respect for him”*

*“My mentor treated me as an equal and staff person. She was respectful of my limitations and available for whatever I needed.”*

*“She was professional and considerate. She explained the work with a great deal of competence and knowledge”*

-Student feedback

Midway through the internship, mentors were responsible to fill out an intern evaluation. This evaluation was similar to an employee evaluation. CAP students were involved in their own evaluation and received copies. The original was turned in to CAP staff. The students responded positively to the evaluations and were able to see their strengths, as well as address areas they needed to work on.

The mentors communicated with the liaisons when questions arose and were very open to feedback and ideas. Mentors were comfortable meeting with the liaison once a month to address their student's strengths and possible changes to facilitate the student's learning experience. This was also a time for mentors to gain additional support. It was observed that the one-one meetings with mentors would be more beneficial if done in a group setting with other mentors, similar to mentor orientations. This would provide better support and increase ideas for problem solving.

Following the end of the internship, all sites were given the opportunity to fill out a mentor evaluation. One site had struggles with the mentors' relationships with the students and this is pictured in the students' responses in the evaluation. This evaluation proved to be a good tool when describing the importance of the mentor position. Feedback gained, expressed areas of struggle and need for improvement from the students' perspective:

*"I was bothered that it wasn't explained to me how to fill out the mileage sheet or when it should be turned in..."*

*"I wasn't informed about progress reports/ attendant care paperwork until a few hours prior to my first attendant care session"*

*"She wasn't always on time or called in sick without me knowing..."*

-Student feedback

Other students had wonderful feedback about their mentor. Some mentors became positive role models for students and helped them through the internship portion of the training. The mentors were helpful to students; increasing their self-esteem and knowledge about the internship:

*“We started off with a great rapport and trust. She helped me sort through negative feelings and spent a lot of energy in encouraging me and making me feel worthwhile and competent”*

*“ (the mentor had) a positive attitude, a deep commitment to provide quality mentorship”*

-Student feedback

## Mentor

### **Strengths**

- Good communication with students, liaison, and agency coordinator about strengths and needed changes
- The majority of mentors were supportive of students
- Positive working partnership between the student, mentor, and liaison

## Mentor

### **New Products**

- Individual meetings with supported education liaison once a month
- Mentor evaluations at one site
- Increased amount of mentor orientations offered

## Mentor

### **Recommendations**

- Continue mentor orientations and training
- Having a portion of the mentor orientation an open forum or group discussion
- Have mentors meet in a group workshop style once a month to enhance problem solving and support
- Mentor evaluations for the students at the end of the internship
- Only one mentor per student.

## Graduation/Alumni

### **Graduation**

Graduation was a very positive experience for students, agency staff and student's family and friends. After 15 weeks and over 106 internship hours, CAP graduation was underway. Students thoroughly enjoyed the formal experience of graduating on site at the University of Kansas campus. Students were given invitations to invite friends, family, mentors and other supports to their graduation and to be a part of their success.

Upon graduating from CAP, students were honored with 2 certificates. One was to officially announce that they had graduated from a Consumer as Provider training. The other certificate was broader and announced that they had graduated from a Community Support Services training. Having two certificates empowered the students to make the choice to self-disclose or not, when presenting the certificate to future employers or educational institutions.

Prior to CAP graduation, CAP staff mailed public service announcements to various local newspapers to announce the special event. The Kansas City Star published photos and newspaper articles about the CAP program and interviewed a student and CAP staff. A television station covered the CAP graduation, as well. Public relations such as this enhance community awareness of the CAP program and it's purpose and helps reduce the stigma attached to mental illness. From this publicity CAP staff have received considerable inquiry from individuals requesting applications and additional information.

The graduation was video taped by a family member of one of the CAP students and is available for viewing. Several CSS programs have requested and received copies of newspaper articles and videos. Each student had the choice to be photographed in a cap and gown. This request came directly from the students. Group photos of each class were taken and distributed.

Students also had the opportunity to say something during the graduation ceremony. One student played his guitar and sang a song he had composed, another student read a short poem he had written, and several students got up to give a statement about their future plans, dreams and goals. The effect was very inspirational to the audience.

## Graduation

### **Strengths:**

- Graduation was held in a traditional academic setting
- Each student received 2 certificates of course completion
- Newspaper and T.V. publicized the graduation
- Family members, friends and other individuals video taped and photographed the event
- Students were given the opportunity to make a speech upon receiving their certificate
- Each student had the opportunity to be photographed in cap and gown
- Red and blue tassels were given for the Fall 2000 group
- Follow up letters were sent to thank the students for their participation. These included class photos and individual photos

## Graduation

### **New Products**

- Newspaper and T.V. publication of graduation
- Caps and gown were available for picture taking
- Tassels were given
- Follow up letters were sent following the graduation

## Graduation

### **Recommendations**

- Continue giving tassels to students
- Provide caps and gowns for post graduate pictures

- Encourage students to give speeches upon receiving their certificates
- Continue giving 2 certificates
- Give certificates of attendance for individuals unable to complete all requirements
- Continue public relations about CAP graduation
- Continue to send out follow up letters thanking students about their CAP participation

### **CAP Alumni Association**

Throughout the semester students were consistently encouraged to get involved with the CAP alumni association and or form one if their area didn't have one. The alumni association became a good transition from the end of CAP and onward. CAP alumni from the Kansas City branch spoke with each class to discuss the role and activities of the alumni association. Students bonded, developed friendships and supported each other throughout the program. The alumni association proved to be a good outlet for these relationships and ongoing support.

### **Alumni**

#### **Strengths**

- KU provides technical support for CAP alumni functions
- Information about the alumni association is shared at orientations and during class by former CAP graduates
- Provides continual support and networking with other consumer providers

### **Alumni**

#### **New Products**

- A new alumni group was formed in the Douglas/Franklin County area following graduation
- Breakthrough established an alumni branch in Topeka

## Alumni

### **Recommendations**

- Continue to have an Alumni representative speak with CAP student about the Alumni association
- Continue to offer and expand Alumni Association
- Have Alumni Association member speak at the CAP graduation

## Educational Outreach to Agency Staff and Consumers:

### **Introductory trainings**

The University of Kansas offered various trainings and workshops to educate mental health center staff and consumers on benefits, barriers and strategies around consumers as providers.

The presentations for staff consisted of an overview of the Consumer As Provider training and a discussion of the expectations/responsibilities of KU and the agency staff. This aided the mental health center in the decision-making process and improved readiness for the CAP initiative.

Another introductory training focused upon student recruitment. The material presented in the CAP overview, addressed the syllabus, the specifics of the coursework, the internship, group supervision and role expectations.

The following is a break down of training and technical assistance provided by KU, in an effort to prepare and educate agencies and consumers for the CAP initiative.

### **Breakthrough site**

- 2 CAP overview: an introductory presentation (for consumers and staff)
- 2 mentor trainings

### **Franklin CMHC**

- 2 introductory trainings
- 2 mentor trainings

\*Additional trainings were offered to Bert Nash, in an effort to inform and prepare for the Fall 2000 class.

### **Bert Nash**

- 3 introductory trainings
- 1 follow up for general staff
- 1 2<sup>nd</sup> general staff overview

- 2 mentor trainings

### **Wyandot CMHC**

- 1 introductory training
- 2 mentor trainings

### **Johnson CMHC**

- 1 introductory training
- 2 mentor trainings

### **Public Relations**

Public relations efforts began in the fall of 2000 and quickly became an important aspect of the CAP program. This answered a need to disseminate information and educate the public about CAP. There have been positive outcomes from these efforts. Public relations has aided in the recruitment of future students to the CAP program. This, in turn, created a need for a waiting list. Mental health centers have become increasingly interested in the program. PR efforts found to be particularly useful are:

- Letters to newspapers and media about CAP
- Updated brochures for staff and students about CAP
- Presentation packets made available for both in and out of state inquiries.
- Public relations notebook

## Outcomes/Evaluations

### **Outcomes:**

Following the CAP program, many students continued their success with either educational or vocational pursuits. The following information is based on current contacts and information gathered from agency coordinators and students.

#### **Breakthrough**

- *Number of Applicants: 15*
- *Number Interviewed: 15*
- *Number Accepted: 10*
- *Number of Students who dropped CAP and reason: 1*  
1 student was from the KC area and had conflicts with transportation and his job
- *Number of Students who graduated: 9*
- *Number of Students who furthered their education: 0*
- *Number of Students who found employment: 7 in the human service field*

#### **Bert Nash**

- *Number of Applicants: 14*
- *Number Interviewed: 13*
- *Number Accepted: 11*
- *Number of Students who dropped CAP and reason: 6*  
5 students personal lives were not ready  
1 student had prior employment conflicts
- *Number of Students who graduated: 5*
- *Number of Students who furthered their education: 0*
- *Number of Students who found employment: 3 in human service field*

#### **Franklin County Mental Health**

- *Number of Applicants: 5*
- *Number Interviewed: 5*
- *Number Accepted: 4*
- *Number of Students who dropped CAP and reason: 0*
- *Number of Students who graduated: 4*
- *Number of Students who furthered their education: 1 post-secondary education*
- *Number of Students who found employment: 2 in human service field*

#### **Wyandot Mental Health**

- *Number of Applicants: 13*
- *Number Interviewed: 12*
- *Number Accepted: 12*

- *Number of Students who dropped CAP and reason: 4*  
3 students personal lives were not ready  
1 student had prior employment conflicts
- *Number of Students who graduated: 8*
- *Number of Students who furthered their education: 0*
- *Number of Students who found employment: 5 in the human service field*

### **Johnson County Mental Health**

- *Number of Applicants: 11*
- *Number Interviewed: 11*
- *Number Accepted: 11*
- *Number of Students who dropped CAP and reason: 1*  
1 student had prior employment conflicts
- *Number of Students who graduated: 10*
- *Number of Students who furthered their education: 1 post-secondary education*
- *Number of Students who found employment: 3 in human service field*

### **Evaluations:**

Several methods were employed to gather information and evaluate the Consumer as Provider project.

1. A pre and post quantitative instrument was administered to CAP students
2. A qualitative evaluation (written and verbal) was acquired from graduating CAP students.
3. A written evaluation from the mentors (internship report)
4. Agency “feedback” meetings were held after graduation. Administrators, staff, mentors, instructor/project coordinator and liaisons attended.

### **Student Evaluations:**

#### *Quantitative Measure*

A consumer administered a quantitative evaluation to the CAP students. 23 students were in attendance at the last class. 4 students did not come to the final class and did not fill out the post-quantitative measure.

Students in attendance at the last class of the CAP session were provided with an instrument to rate satisfaction of the training initiative. The instrument was administered with the CAP instructor off site. 23 of the twenty-eight evaluation forms were returned.

4 students missed the last class and were mailed evaluation instruments to complete. The absent consumers did not return the mailed evaluations.

The Consumers As Providers Evaluation instrument consisted of twenty Likert-scale rating items, and five open-ended questions. Each four point Likert item (rating range: 1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree) was designed to measure student reaction to a statement about one component of the CAP training and internship activities. Of the twenty items on the instrument, classroom and didactic components of the course were covered by twelve questions. The internship experience was reflected by eight questions; and one question focused on the integration of the classroom and internship portions of the training (a copy of the instrument is located in the appendix).

The quantitative evaluation (N=23) revealed high satisfaction with the respect (3.78), support and encouragement (3.87) provided by the instructor. All other aspects of the classroom were rated high as well (ranging from 3.52 to 3.74). When responding to the questions about the internships, students answered somewhat less favorably (ranging from 3.3 to 3.52). However, these answers still demonstrate a high level of satisfaction.

### **Qualitative Measure**

#### *Written Qualitative Measure*

The written portion of the qualitative measure consisted of student responses to four open ended questions. The following shows the individual question and various recurring themes in the written response:

1. What positive changes or benefits have you seen in yourself during CAP?
  - Increased self esteem and confidence
  - More knowledge about mental illness
  - Knowledge about consumers and how to work with them
  - Learned more about my personal recovery
  - More prepared for a job
2. What do you feel are the strengths of the CAP program?
  - Consumer empowerment

- Ability to identify own strengths
  - Instructors knowledge of material that was presented
  - Overall team: Instructor, supported education liaison, agency coordinator and mentor
  - Structure of the program: internship, class and group supervision, textbook
  - Self-esteem and confidence building
3. What specific suggestions could you provide to improve the training?
- Longer internship
  - Longer program or a follow up to CAP
  - Read material before the lesson
  - Spend more time and discuss the reading material slower
  - Follow the syllabus better
  - Better transportation
  - More preparation for the mentors
4. Please specify what was most beneficial to you?
- Support from the instructor and supported education liaison
  - Internship and hands on experience
  - Learning about mental illness
  - Gaining knowledge about specific community support services jobs
  - Ability to identify own strengths and starting over
  - Connectedness and friendship development with other students

### *Verbal Qualitative Measure*

The verbal portion of the qualitative measure consisted of the responses of the students to four open ended questions in a group setting. The following will show the individual question and various recurring themes in the responses:

1. What positive changes or benefits have you seen in yourself during CAP?
- Confidence and self-esteem
  - Motivation/energy increasing
  - More positive attitude/more hopeful
  - Greater insight to my strengths

- Better coping skills
  - Increased skills and knowledge
2. What do you feel are the strengths of the CAP program?
- Support of the instructor and supported education liaisons
  - The educational process and knowledge gained
  - Group supervision-received support and increased skills as provider
  - The internship/being treated as equals
  - Comprehensive scope of the training materials
  - Group cohesion/the power of the group/bonding and friendships
  - The use of the strengths model
3. What specific suggestions could you provide to improve the training?
- Make the internships longer
  - Have meeting at the beginning of the semester between interns and mentors.
  - More training for the mentors, specifically mentioned was the time and effort commitment needed on the part of the mentors.
  - More discussion of the text book and material covered
  - A different text more geared to practical situations, but still strengths oriented.
  - Avoid departures from syllabus
  - Spend only one week on resumes and career building
  - Intern/mentor sharing-create more of a “pool” of available mentors, so that interns get a chance to experience different intern tracks.
  - Make sure that each mentor has only one intern at a time
  - Provide college credit
  - Increase medication training
  - Provide students the ability to evaluate WRAP
  - Make WRAP more motivational and interactive
  - Emphasize and spend more time on the crisis part of WRAP

- Have WRAP at the beginning of the semester based on the knowledge of the group.
  - Clarify role expectations of different roles. Specifically that mentors are not to act as therapists or case managers to their interns.
4. Please specify what was most beneficial to you?
- Experiencing an environment where it was safe to learn and to be vulnerable.
  - The motivational and hope inducing quality of the training
  - Supports i.e. peers, instructors, and supported education liaisons
  - Knowledge and confidence building
  - Broadened perspective gained through internship experience
  - The medical aspects of mental illness

### **Qualitative Agency Feedback/Verbal**

The goal of this meeting was to gain feedback on the Consumer as Provider project from the host agency site perspective. The meeting was held at internship site agencies.

These meetings generally consisted of the agency coordinator, 2-4 mentors, the CAP instructor, and the supported education liaison for that site. The meeting was organized into two main areas:

- Identifying strengths
- Suggestions for improvement

### **There were a total of 7 specific questions asked:**

1. What are the specific strengths of the CAP program?
2. What is the most beneficial aspect of the program for the students?
3. What is the most beneficial aspect of the program for the agency?
4. What specific suggestions could you provide regarding the internship experience at the agency?
5. How have you seen the students change during this experience?
6. Please offer your feedback on areas of improvement for the CAP program.

7. What other suggestions about the CAP project do you have?

Strengths Identified:

Several areas were targeted as being very positive and effective:

- Student experience
- Organizational culture enhanced
- Educational experience and structure

**Student Experience**

Agencies unanimously agreed that the most positive aspect of CAP is what the students experienced:

- **Hope and motivation** are greatly increased, which fosters improvements in every area of life and stimulates the pursuit of vocational and educational goals.
- **Decrease in symptoms** is an effect that was reported by students, especially the symptoms surrounding depression.
- **Increased confidence** and self-esteem
- **Broadened perspective** and greater sense of “professionalism”
- **Improved communication** skills
- **Group cohesion** and bonding with classmates plays a tremendous role in the success of the students.
- **The alumni association** is a valuable transition from CAP; it provides many students with the ongoing support and friendship they had come to enjoy so much as a part of CAP.
- **Improved status** within their natural support system, i.e. family, friends etc.

**Organizational Culture Enhanced**

Organizational culture was positively affected by the presence of CAP interns.

- **Reduced stigma** for consumers and consumer providers within CSS
- **Increased sense of partnership** between interns and their mentors. More feelings of equality that mirror those between co-workers in any work setting.

- **Policy changes** due to the influence of the consumer as provider project at a host site
- **Increased incidence of staffing consumer** providers
- **Shared learning** between the consumer provider, their mentor and other providers and positive interaction between the students and the entire team
- **Agency culture** becomes more positive and strengths oriented
- **Mentor/intern matches** are sensitive to the needs and wants of the student intern and host agency

### **Educational Experience and Structure**

- **The structure of the classroom** experience and the expectations of the internship were beneficial to students to promote job readiness.
  1. **The “academic feel” to the training** was attributed to the comprehensive nature of the curriculum and the blending of the classroom component with the internship

### Suggestions for Improvement:

The agency feedback meetings produced two categories for improvement:

- Student support and readiness
- Agency/mentor support and training, as well as intra-agency supports

### **Student Support and Readiness**

- **Student interviews** should include a follow up call to confirm acceptance
- **More standardized structure** to enhance an understanding of basic expectations in order to graduate and increase the reliability of the project
- **Increased emphasis on documentation**, especially geared to the specific agency involved
- **Increase time spent** on agency orientation for the student interns
- **Mentors provide student intern** with an orientation/internship notebook.

- **Have the agency put on a “job fair”** to address student readiness for internship activities as well as job readiness.

### **Agency/mentor support and training**

- **Use mentors with supervisory** experience
- **Clarification of transportation matters**
- **Emphasize such areas as; billing and productivity** in mentor trainings. Include the mentors in the intern orientation that the agency does.
- **Limit one intern to one mentor**
- **Agency is organized and has a clearly defined plan** for how the mentors will support their interns.

## Internship Reports

**The following addresses the progress of the student interns according to their mentor.**

- 5 students greatly exceeded expectations of the internship
- 5 students were above average for expectations of the internship
- 13 students met expectations of the internship
- 1 student was below average with meeting expectations of the internship
- 2 students had not completed activities to meet expectations of the internship

### **Strengths of the Students**

- Interacting with consumers, connecting with consumers
- Balance of listening and offering information
- Collecting resources
- Finding out consumers goals
- Developing rapport with consumer
- Caring attitude
- Flexibility
- Asking questions in team and with mentor

- Managing self, well organized
- Advocacy skills
- Acknowledged partnership
- Creative with ideas for the team and consumers
- Understanding of consumers needs
- Good boundary setting skills

### **Student Readiness**

- More self confidence
- Over zealousness to “save” everyone
- Response to research and information in particular groups
- Discussing self and own experiences vs. focusing on consumer
- Jumping to far ahead in the future vs. focusing on the here and now
- Transportation
- More assertiveness
- Dual relationship problems
- Not rushing time with consumers
- Better matching when working with consumers
- Not going to mentor as a CM
- Be more approachable in leading groups and with other consumers
- Conflict resolution skills
- Recognizing own recovery

### **Relationship with mentor**

- Good matches
- Support for each other
- Student able to share symptoms and stressors
- Following through with 1:1 appointments
- Bringing up CM issues with mentor
- Brings good ideas to team and mentor

- Good idea to work with other team members
- Confidentiality was a challenge b/c student knew consumers that team served
- Honest and respectful with mentor
- Initially, interactions seemed more like interviews
- Student able to receive constructive criticism
- Able to identify with mentor learning needs and wants

### **Would mentor hire student?**

- Yes: great strengths that an employer would want (flexible, knowledgeable)
- 11 mentors specifically said yes that the student would be desirable to hire
- Caution with overly passionate
- Addressed punctuality and dependability
- Symptoms would get in the way of employability

### **Areas to gain further knowledge**

- Conflict resolution skills
- Dependability
- Facilitation of groups
- People skills and interactions
- Limit setting and boundary setting
- Learning about the various SPMI diagnoses and clinical skills
- Go for BSW degree, attend 3 R's class and other training's in the mental health field
- Paperwork training
- Computer skills
- Active listening
- Social skills and sexual harassment training

## Recommendations

### **Past Recommendations**

The following addresses recommendations from the initial pilot project. These recommendations were suggested by students, CSS staff, mentors and CAP staff of the pilot project.

- **Educational liaison(s) will be hired to work individually with each student, program director/mentor**

This was met in August of 2000 when the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare CAP project director hired 2 educational liaisons to help support students and CSS staff. The educational liaison facilitated group supervisions, met one on one with mentors and students monthly and remained in constant contact with the agency coordinator.

- **Mentors and Program Coordinator should receive additional CAP orientations**

Overall training for agency readiness was increased dramatically in response to this recommendation. Agency staff and mentors are oriented to the overview of the CAP course. In addition, mentors are specifically oriented to their role, responsibility and expectations.

CAP staff were also available for further consultation when requested.

- **Internship site/ mentors should provide each student with a detailed job description and specific expectations as a student/staff team member**

During additional trainings this was addressed to mentors and agency coordinators, as an expectation and responsibility on their part. The students were encouraged to communicate their desired goals and expectations to their mentors

- **Pre-screen applicants for entry into the CAP program**

This was implemented for the fall 2000 project. Applicants had interviews with CAP staff and the host agency CAP coordinator.

Applicants were asked several question regarding:

1. Their motivation for applying

2. Their strengths and abilities.

- **Secure Transportation**

During the student interview, students were encouraged to car pool and find resources for transportation. Also addressed were the expectations and responsibilities of the host agency to provide transportation, if no other options were available.

- **The Consumer as Provider program should be replicated in different sites:**

The Fall 2000 project was completed with Franklin County Mental Health Center. This was the first step in reaching out to rural areas in Kansas. It has verified the flexibility of the program by being compatible with rural areas as well as, urban and suburban areas.

Replication of the Consumer as Provider project began with Wichita State University and the Self Help Network in the Fall 2000 project.

Representatives attended classes and co-facilitated group supervision with the supported education liaison at the Lawrence and Franklin County site.

The University of Kansas has provided ongoing technical support and research assistance to WSU to support replication efforts. A research assistant was hired full time to aid in the evaluation of the CAP project at both universities. The Spring 2001 project will be the first replication of the Consumer as Provider program at Wichita State University.

- **Training coursework should be held during the traditional times as with any other college student**

Classes for the Fall 2000 project reflected the university schedule to enhance normalization. In addition, students were provided with Thanksgiving and winter breaks like other university schedules.

- **Increase employment options for CAP graduates**

During the course work there was a section on career development and resume writing, which continued through out the fall semester.

CAP staff was available to host agencies to address policy development

and changes surrounding the hiring and equal treatment of consumer providers. An outline addressing risks and benefits of hiring and becoming a consumer provider was developed with the cooperation of KU CAP staff, CMHC directors and a member from the BSRB.

KU staff and mental health center representatives continue to meet and consult with BSRB about policies around hiring consumer as providers

- **Consumer as Provider class should provide a stepping stone for students to transition into other training opportunities and classes**

Hope, motivation and increased self-esteem have continued to spur CAP graduates to pursue higher education.

*“Got me right on track again getting up in the morning where I was kind of wanting to lay around. It motivated me.”*

*“I would like to go on to school and hopefully get my foot in the door at KU”* -Student quote

To date several CAP graduates have become involved in post-secondary educational pursuits.

### **Future Recommendations**

- **Increase interactive nature of Group Supervision**
  1. Encourage students to co-facilitate
  2. Encourage resource acquisition, i.e. resource notebook
- **Modifications to the CAP internship**
  1. Expand internship sites and opportunities to alternate Social Service venues i.e. Social Security, food pantries, homeless shelters, developmental disabilities, aging, etc...
  2. Extend internship hours within the host agency
  3. A mentor should have only one student at a time. Having a one to one ratio would allow the mentors to give more time and energy to their student intern.

- **Modify mentor support**
  1. Supported education liaison will present information at monthly workshop to further educate mentors
  2. Mentors attend monthly workshop with the supported education liaison to gain support and problem solve
  3. Mentors continue to receive CEU's for attending the workshops
- **Increased normalization for the student involved in the CAP project**
  1. Continue to adhere to a university schedule for the time frame of CAP, including spring and fall breaks.
  2. Continue to conduct CAP classes in a post-secondary academic setting
  3. Offer college credit
  4. Apply stricter standards to the following areas:
    - Student interviews
    - Requirements to graduate (includes attendance, completion of assignments, etc.)
    - Adhere to syllabus more consistently
    - Reading assignments given prior to class discussion of material
  5. Standardized evaluations of written papers.
  6. Increase focus on writing skills
- **Continued replication efforts**
  1. Encourage expansion of CAP through "training the trainers"
  2. Continue expansion into rural areas
  3. Journal publication of CAP-A Descriptive Overview
- **Increase employment options**
  1. Continue resume and career building class
  2. Increase involvement of Vocational Rehabilitation services with CAP
  3. Continue to clarify hiring policies and BSRB recommendations
- **Community awareness and educational outreach**
  1. Public relations efforts, i.e. media support
  2. Presentation packets to further awareness of CAP
  3. KU provide technical assistance to agencies

- **Modifications to coursework**

Students began engaging and documenting during their internship earlier than expected. Students observed it would be more helpful if the paperwork and documentation portion of class could have been covered earlier in the training.

- **Have an advanced CAP class**

A basic CAP class could be offered for consumers desiring limited exposure to higher education, without the added challenge of an internship and a more advanced version of CAP, including internship, could be offered, as a follow-up. This would help address the disparity of abilities within CAP.

- **Continue to promote supported education as avenue into post-secondary environments**

1. Supply additional materials to students, i.e. dictionaries, college credits, etc...
2. Continue to provide individual support to students in the form of one on one meetings and group supervision
3. Participating site partnership to enable students to take further classes, i.e. the strengthening of the partnership with community colleges

- **Continue to incorporate research into CAP**

1. Outcomes of CAP students will be measured by a longitudinal research design
2. Report findings in professional journal publication

