



# Innovations in Consumer-Centered, Recovery-Oriented Care

“Current services are boring: day treatment, watching TV, bingo— who ever reached recovery through bingo? We need innovations that empower. We need skills that instill resiliency. We need connections that are human.”

— Optum Consumer Advisory Board

## Shifting the Recovery Paradigm Toward Empowerment and Strength

Optum™ has recognized and acknowledged that integrating the current medical model of treatment with consumer-centered approaches (recovery-oriented care) has enormous potential. Where the medical model of treatment tends to focus on symptoms, illness, and individual deficiencies, the recovery model focuses on strengths, shared power, and personal achievement. Simply put, the recovery paradigm empowers those who live with mental health or substance abuse conditions to recognize they can live purposeful lives. This reframed model uses tools such as WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan®), goal setting, mood charting, and consumer-centered treatment planning. Additionally, support from peers who have “been there” helps reduce isolation and creates hope.

## Optum Leads the Way in Partnerships for Recovery

Optum is leading the way for consumer-centered, recovery-oriented mental health and substance abuse recovery by partnering with those closest to the consumer—peer and family support programs, community-based organizations and advocacy groups. Through these partnerships, we are able to achieve impressive results, both in terms of faster consumer recovery and reduced hospitalization rates.

Optum’s approach to Consumer-Centered Recovery stems from meaningful partnerships with:

Individuals and Families to Empower Recovery

Communities to Improve Awareness and Support Recovery

Consumer-Run Organizations and Provider Systems to Promote Recovery

Systems of Care to Foster a Whole-Health Approach to Recovery

*Peer support plus a strength-based approach, plus consumer empowerment, lead to tangible results for the consumer and cost savings for mental health systems.*

## Living Room Crisis Model Saves \$7.3 Million<sup>1</sup>

At the Recovery Response Center (RRC) in Pierce County, Washington, consumers in crisis find a marked contrast to a sterile bed at the state or county hospital. In this safe, humane “living room” model, consumers are welcomed into an environment that feels more like a home than an emergency room or hospital, with comfortable lounges, colorful consumer-created art, affirming messages, and private areas where consumers can receive care and support from both clinicians and peer counselors who have experienced similar conditions.

The multidisciplinary RRC team—including a doctor, nurses, mental health professionals, behavioral health specialists, and peer support specialists—works with the response team to make a plan for future recovery. The RRC accepts referrals 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Some consumers may be referred to community resources, some may stay voluntarily for up to 23 hours, while some may choose 3-5 days of overnight hospitality.

## Peer Support Reduces Inpatient Days by 30% to 63% and overall behavioral health costs by 24% to 47%<sup>2</sup>

In Wisconsin, New York, and Washington State, peer specialist support programs connect a hospitalized or newly released consumer with a peer in recovery. The peer offers a “soft landing” and stays connected for six months, helping the consumer set and work on recovery goals and connect with community resources.

Optum created and participates in over 50 pioneering programs, including:

- Free training to consumer- and family-run organizations so they can become a part of a managed care network. We can also expand access to these innovative and low-cost services.
- Creation of a peer-run respite program how-to guide, in partnership with PEOPLE and Steve Miccio, who runs the nationally known Rose House (<http://projectstoempower.org>).
- Pillars of Peer Support Initiatives I, II, III, and IV with the Carter Center® and the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) (<http://www.pillarsofsupport.org>).
- Traveling exhibit in support of the National Memorial of Recovered Dignity, honoring consumers who died and were buried in unmarked or unnamed graves ([www.memorialofrecovereddignity.org](http://www.memorialofrecovereddignity.org)).

To ensure our policies and materials are as consumer-based and recovery-oriented as possible, we have created a powerful new Consumer Advisory Board, an unprecedented coming-together of front-line supporters and experts who are closest to the consumer. These nationally respected Board members include the leaders of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), Faces and Voices of Recovery (FAVOR), Mental Health America (MHA), New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS), the Federation of Families, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, and other national consumer advocates.

## Services, Skills, and Connections that Work

Optum continues to seek innovations and partnerships that expand the orientation of our systems and support our goal of empowering consumers as they work toward recovery and resiliency.

For further information, contact the Department of Consumer Affairs at [susan.bergeson@optum.com](mailto:susan.bergeson@optum.com).

<sup>1</sup> Cumulative savings resulted from reduction of hospitalizations from fiscal year 2009 to fiscal year 2012, calculated using average length of stay and daily unit costs based upon the fiscal year 2009 experience.

<sup>2</sup> Results within six months after enrollment in peer support programs in Wisconsin (inpatient days reduced by 30%, behavioral health costs reduced by 24%) and New York (inpatient days reduced by 63%, behavioral health costs reduced by 47%), compared to six months prior to enrollment; among a subsample of participants (Wisconsin: 130; New York: 54) with continuous eligibility for six months pre- and post-referral and at least one behavioral health claim during that period.



### **Peter Ashenden, Director, Consumer and Family Affairs, Optum**

Peter Ashenden's childhood home looked like any other middle-class house—but as the child of alcoholic parents, his life was far from ordinary. Without the tools to cope with the violent death of a sibling and his own addiction, Peter became increasingly isolated, unable to process information, listen to feedback, or hold a job.

At last, he unwillingly attended a peer support group. With his chair half in and half out of the room, Peter was astonished. "How did you gather so many people who knew me so well?" he asked. "Peter," replied the facilitator, "It's not all about you." Thanks to the group, Peter learned to talk it out, to chip away at the problem. He trained his service dog Bella, who supports him if he is anxious, reminds him to take his meds, and makes sure he gets where he needs to go.

For Peter, peer support was the beginning of recovery, and it has become his passion, leading to a career in the behavioral health arena that spans almost three decades. Peter has held positions with the Mental Health Empowerment Project, Inc. and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance before joining Optum. As Director of Consumer and Family Affairs, Peter's work includes examining all of the mental health services we offer to ensure they are person centered, recovery focused and goal oriented.

"I never want anyone else to be thrown into a room with a plastic-covered mattress for 72 hours," says Peter. "I've learned that I cannot maintain my recovery unless I am giving it away."

