

Do It Yourself Consumer-Run Crisis Alternative Center

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This material will be expanded into a manual in 2009-10.

So You Want To Start A Consumer-Run Crisis Respite Center?

The following material will afford a brief description of steps to being the organization of an independent, peer-run, crisis respite center.

What are some of the things needed to begin?

1. ***Set up a not-for-profit charitable corporation.*** In this context, it would be a 501(3). Call your Secretary of State office to obtain the proper forms, instructions, and regulations. This is your first step because this is where you will learn about your State's rules for operations including Board requirements. This process takes time to complete. Begin right away!
2. ***Develop a Board of Directors.*** There are different structures and ways in which Boards operate. You will find these on line. Choose one that meets the needs of the organization you envision. It will be important to have a minimum of 51% Consumer membership on your Board. With that, it is imperative to have Board members with different skill sets. These may include a teacher, a lawyer, a local businessperson, financial expertise, fund raising expertise, and others who are able to actively participate as a Board member. Develop a clear job description for the Board members, which include expectations. All Board members must understand their job is to create and set policy, fund raise, oversee the Executive Director, and be responsible for the proper use of funds. To insure these things, all Board members should receive Board Training and Peer Support Training.
3. ***With the Board of Directors, create policies and a Mission Statement.*** Policies will include all necessary employment/personnel contracts, Personnel Policy, Volunteer Policy, Code of Conduct, and others.
4. ***While doing all of the above, investigate the different types of Respite and define what kind of Crisis Respite you want to provide.*** As stated above, there are several different types of Consumer-run Crisis Respite programs. We highly recommend investigating the Crisis Respite Program at Stepping Stone Peer Support & Crisis Respite Center, Claremont, NH.
5. ***Knowing Consumer-run Crisis Respite Programs are an alternative to psychiatric hospitalization, listed below are a few questions you may begin to think about:***

- a) What is it that you want to do?
- b) Where is it that you will provide respite?
- c) How will you be different from the medical, hospital model?
- d) Who will be doing the respite?
- e) How will paid peers be trained?
- f) After training, how will you maintain supervision?
- g) What are your program details? Who is eligible and what is the maximum length of time a Respite Guest may stay?
- h) How will guests keep their prescriptions safe from others?
- i) Will you welcome pets?

6. ***Where and how will you set up your program?*** How many bedrooms will you have? Please note ‘bedrooms’, not ‘beds’. This is important because we always want to be thinking in the mode of non-medical model. Ideally, it would be terrific to have your own building/house from which to run your program. Consumer-run alternatives to crisis response are best achieved by being something other than a less expensive copy of the medical model. Crisis is a wonderful opportunity for people to change their “mental illness” story to a story of moving toward what they want in life. Respite is a safe place, with the support of peers, to discover and understand how they experience the world and relationships, unlearn learned helplessness, experience the satisfaction of being in a mutually responsible reciprocal relationship, feel respected, valued, and empowered. In order for this to occur, the environment must be one that is home-like and comfortable and as far away from the institutional type as possible. Talk to a real estate agent for information about possible rental or for sale properties, in your area. It is not necessary to have the Crisis Respite Center in a particular town or city. Guests may be transported to the Center, wherever it is. This may enable you to locate a property in a more affordable area. Keep in mind; zoning will probably restrict you, as your use will be somewhat commercial.
7. ***Develop a vision of staffing needs.*** Will you have an Executive Director reporting to the Board of Directors, an Assistant or Deputy Director, Program Coordinator, Bookkeeper, or Office Manager? How many individuals will be on the Respite Team?
8. ***Estimate equipment needs and the related costs.*** Here is a partial list of items you will need.

- Telephone
- Copy and fax machines
- Locking file cabinets
- Desks
- Computers and printer
- Office supplies
- Kitchen and laundry room appliances
- TV
- Bedroom furniture

- Linens, blankets, pillows,
- Living room furniture
- Outdoor furniture (if applicable)
- Automobile

9. *What about Insurance?* Now that you know the building that you'll occupy, number of bedrooms, furniture and equipment, and possibly a vehicle, you'll need to buy insurance. Becoming acquainted with an insurance agent is a good thing. This person can do all the footwork and will keep you aware and up-to-date on all your policies. Getting insurance for liability coverage, for over night guests is a bit difficult to obtain. Know, out-of-the-shoot, it's expensive. An insurance agent will know where to find the least expensive coverage for you and also advise you as to the different kinds of insurance you require.

10. *When you have gotten to this point, put together a budget.* You will need a budget for initial start-up costs and one for an operating budget. Hot tip- Local colleges and universities often have used office furniture and file cabinets in storage, which they donate to non-profits.

11. *How do I fund this incredible vision?* Contact someone who knows how to put a business plan together. SCORE, a retired businesspersons group, may have just the person you need. When your business plan is completed, you are almost ready to go to your State's Behavioral Health bureau!

Before doing that, make dates to meet with different State Legislators. Get their name and numbers from your state's general information number or go online. These Representatives are YOUR representatives. They serve you. They want to know what you want. When you meet with them to present your vision, be prepared! Know your budget. Be able to tell them why Consumer-run Crisis Respite is so important to recovery from trauma and mental illness. Show them a chart comparing costs for one individual to be in a psychiatric hospital for 10 days, 1 month, and 1 year, to the costs for a person to be in your proposed Respite Program for the same corresponding periods. These numbers will quickly gain their attention.

Example- 1 day in a peer-run CR program = \$300 or less
 1 day in a hospital = \$1,500 or more

10 days in peer-run CR program = \$3,000 or less
 10 days in a hospital = \$15,000 or more

30 days in a peer-run CR program = \$9,000 or less
 30 days in hospital = \$45,000 or more

365 days in a peer run CR program = \$109,500 or less
 365 days in a hospital = \$547,500 or more

After gaining the support of your Representatives, approach your state's Bureau of Behavioral Health. This department is within Health and Human Services and may be called by a different name.

- 12. *You want an additional source of funding?*** Go for it! Every bank has money they give to the community for worthy causes. Visit each and every bank in your area. Ask them about their grants and other opportunities to apply for funding. Once you fill out forms and answer one bank's questions, the same materials and information will apply to the others. If your Respite Center offers respite to the whole state, you can go to all the different banks in the state.
- 13. *You've gotten funding!!*** Great! Now what do you do? Advertise for employees and set up training. When advertising for Executive Director, Coordinator, or Respite Team members, always include language such as "experiential knowledge of mental health issues a plus." All your staff must be current or former consumers of mental health services. You must also always include "EOE" (equal opportunity employer) in your job advertisements.
- 14. *Before you hire personnel, KNOW employment laws.*** You will save yourself and your organization huge problems by knowing the law. Please be sure that not knowing the law will not protect you or excuses you in a hearing or in court!

The National Empowerment Center recommends the leading authority in the nation, Shery Mead, for all Consumer-run Crisis Respite Program Training and Supervision Training. Ms. Mead has written extensively about peer support and crisis alternatives. She consults and trains throughout the United States, Ireland, England, New Zealand, and Australia. Shery Mead may be contacted through the National Empowerment Center or on line at www.mentalhealthpeers.com.

These 14 steps are provided by the National Empowerment Center in order to help you to begin to plan your vision of a peer-run crisis alternative. We wish you the best of luck and welcome you to contact us for further information at info4@power2u.org.