



Annual Report 2021-2022

FamilyWorx Family Peer Support and Advocacy Program
Montgomery County



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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

FamilyWorx Family Peer Support and Advocacy Program at HopeWorx offers Family Peer Support to Montgomery County families whose children and adolescents have behavioral health concerns, providing them with peer support, advocacy, and education and helping them navigate the public child serving systems, including behavioral health, juvenile justice, child welfare, and education — as well as connecting with each other and community resources. All staff members, including the Program Supervisor and Program Director, meet the nationally recognized definition of a family peer, and are currently raising or have raised a child or youth with emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges. Nationally, family peer support is identified as a key service that enables children with complex needs to remain in their home and community by helping parents to become their own best advocates and find hope and inspiration from others who have been in their shoes.

2021-2022 PROGRAM SUMMARY:

The FamilyWorx Program has been operating at HopeWorx for one year, after the contract was awarded in July 2021. The team has undergone extensive personnel, professional, and community growth during this time. The priorities of this contract year included recruiting, developing, and training staff, building community partnerships, developing our support group, and building structure, policies, procedures, and record keeping systems for the team. The first few months of the fiscal year consisted of recruiting and training staff, outreach to Montgomery County schools and providers, and developing and defining orientation training, service descriptions, and program protocols. The program was fully staffed with 5 full time Family Peers as well as the Program Supervisor by the end of October 2021.

With all staff hired and trained, the second half of the contract year permitted FamilyWorx to grow and develop expanded avenues for family support, support groups, provider outreach and trainings, and the Mobile Crisis pilot program.

Since the contract was awarded in July 2021, the FamilyWorx team has had direct contact with families 8,542 times. Team members facilitated 15 virtual support groups. There were 156 outreach meetings to providers and community partners, as well as attendance at 154 Community meeting/events. The team attended 548 trainings, 69 work group meetings, and 496 separate individual or group supervision sessions.

STAFFING:

Staff Updates

FamilyWorx remained fully staffed with five full-time family peer Support Partners through June 30, 2022. All staff completed at least their first six months of employment by April 2022. All Family Peer Support Partners have been working beyond capacity, supporting the families of between 35 and 50 youth each. The need to institute a waitlist for new referrals has been under serious consideration since April, due to a record number of referrals. In an attempt to mitigate burnout and avoid a waitlist, the Program Supervisor and Program Director are temporarily supporting numerous families as well, which is not sustainable long term. All FamilyWorx staff are also supporting the on-call Mobile Crisis pilot, taking alternating shifts during off-hours throughout the month so that Family Peer is available to families in crisis 24/7. The budget submission for the 2022-2023 contract year included a request for one additional full-time Family Peer Support Partner to meet increased demand for family peer services in the community.

Supervision

Appropriate and adequate supervision is a critical factor to the success of peer roles. We regard supervision as an investment in the FPSP and favor consistent opportunities for mutual reflection focusing on the principles and practice of family peer support. Supervision during this contract year focused heavily on training, education, morale, job satisfaction, and reciprocal learning through shared experiences. It is our goal to use supervision time as an opportunity to build team relationships, decrease job burnout, and work collaboratively to support each other and the families we serve.

Lisa Radcliffe, Program Supervisor, also provides regular supervision reviewing data and record keeping, as well as discussing opportunities for advancement and job diversification. Individual supervision with each FPSP takes place for a minimum of one hour weekly. Group supervision also occurs weekly, for an average of 1.5 hours.

FUNDING DIVERSIFICATION:

VNA Grant

In November 2021, the VNA Foundation of Greater North Penn awarded FamilyWorx a program grant of \$10,000. Through a flexible and partner-centered approach, the VNA grants aim to support the work of nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving health access and outcomes in the North Penn region. The grant funding was used to create on-call stipends for a pilot program with Montgomery County Mobile Crisis. The pilot launched on March 1, 2022 and provides access to 24/7 real time family peer support to families who are utilizing the services of the Mobile Crisis team. 29 Family referrals were received during the first five months of the pilot, resulting in 19 families who continued to receive extended support through FamilyWorx. Satisfaction surveys were sent to all referrals, and 8 families had responded to the survey by the end of June. All survey results will be analyzed and summarized at the completion of the pilot program, which is scheduled to end in August.

PROGRAM EXPANSION:

Youth Support Partner

FamilyWorx and FST worked together to finalize a job description for a youth consultant position on a time-limited basis to help determine what youth peer support could look like within the family and youth programs at HopeWorx. This consulting position may include conducting focus groups with providers and youth who receive peer services to gather information on what advocacy needs are evident within the county, and what youth need to thrive in a youth advocacy role. This is an ongoing priority for FamilyWorx and FST which will carry forward into the next contract year

Additional Family Peer Support Partner

HopeWorx submitted a budget request to increase the contract for FamilyWorx to allow for an additional full-time FPSP in the program. Significant increases in the number of referrals, increased intensity of family need, and concerns with staff retention and burnout were cited as justification for requesting the additional staff. As of June 30, 2022, the additional position was still under consideration.

FAMILY SUPPORT:

Direct Family Support Activity – Extended and Brief Support

Throughout this contract year, families were supported both virtually and in person. Although there was an increase in the number of meetings that Family Peers attended in person as the contract year progressed, the majority of direct support was delivered virtually. Families have expressed that they appreciate the flexibility which virtual support can provide, so FamilyWorx plans to continue delivering support both virtually and in person, as the family prefers, going forward.

Throughout the year, FamilyWorx provided extended support services to families of 285 youth. Brief support, in the form of outreach and supports groups, was provided to families of an additional 152 youth, which brought the total number of families served to 437. Families in 22 school districts and 38 municipalities across Montgomery County received Family Peer Support throughout the year.

Extended support includes one on one communication with families, documentation review, preparation for and attendance at system meetings (such as IEP meetings, Interagency team Meetings, Juvenile Justice hearings, Truancy Hearings, Victim's Services Hearings, and Behavioral Health meetings), and other support as requested from families. In total, there were 3079 Extended Support contacts with families during the contract year. This represents an average of 256 extended contacts with families per month.

As a supplement to extended support, FPSPs also provide brief support in the form of family check-ins, resource sharing, training or webinar opportunities, and warm hand-offs. During this contract year, FPSPs provided brief support to families 5463 times for an average of 455 brief contacts per month.

Primary Reason for Referral

FamilyWorx tracked each family's primary reason for seeking Family Peer Support. This information was captured during the initial intake, where each family self-identified areas of concern. Quite often, once the primary reason a family sought out FPSP services was resolved, other areas where there were opportunities to collaborate with our FPSPs were uncovered. The primary areas where families identified needing support were in education, behavioral health, resources, and lack of access to clinical services. There was also an increase in families seeking support for crisis planning and support group connections. More than half of families we served identified needing support with multiple child-serving systems, often requesting support for multiple children within the family as well.

Support Group

FamilyWorx launched its first virtual support group on 11/11/2021 with 12 attendees. Average group size was 8 participants. Meetings are scheduled the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month, 7-8pm. The meeting is co-facilitated by 2 FPSPs and follows a trauma informed, mutual aid format, allowing the meeting to flow organically with what concerns parents and caregivers bring with them. Participants are given the option to be on or off camera and there is no pressure to participate. We start the meeting with an ice breaker and a review of safety agreements, so everyone feels comfortable in the space. We then open the discussion to anyone who has something they want support with. Email follow ups are done for parents/caregivers requesting additional support and/or resources. Some parents have requested FamilyWorx Family Peer Support Services after attending a meeting. Registration has steadily increased since November, with 98 families currently on the active registration list.

Referral sources for Support Group- NAMI, School Districts, Mobile Crisis, FamilyWorx Family Peer Supports, Child and Family Focus, Respite provider, Social Media, Hopeworx programs, Horsham Clinic, Creative Health, High Fidelity Wraparound, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Laurel House, Merakey

Support Group Expansion Ideas- The Family Satisfaction team conducted a survey of current registrants to find out what is working well and how we can improve. Below are some ideas shared by attendees. The FamilyWorx team is scheduled to discuss these options and will expand as staffing and expertise allows

- Add additional focused groups on alternating weeks for parents seeking support with Autism, Adoption and Foster Care, Intellectual Disability
- Breakout groups for parents during the meeting- IE: based on experience, topic
- Adding an in-person option once per month
- Specific topic for the meeting, along with leaving time at the end to discuss anything
- Extend meeting time
- Guest Speakers

REFERRAL UPDATES:

Referral Sources

Targeted outreach to community providers and school districts to strengthen awareness about the FamilyWorx Program led to multiple new provider connections in the community throughout the year. 38 different providers referred families to the program, seven of which had never referred families to Family Peer Support in the past. Most notably was the increased partnership with local law enforcement, OCY, and juvenile justice partners, who have been a new and particularly strong source of referrals for some of our most complex families.

In addition to professional referrals, 29 referrals came from family members and friends of families who are currently being served by the program.

Warm Line Outreach

FamilyWorx provides warm line support. Warm line support consists of contacts with referral sources and resource sharing with community partners. Many resources, including opportunities for families to participate in community events and trainings, were sent to community partners daily. During the 2021-2022 contract year, FamilyWorx contacted community partners 11,689 times, primarily via email. This represents an average of nearly 975 contacts with referral sources and providers per month.

OTHER PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

Certification Efforts

Although Family Peer is not currently a certifiable service in PA, the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant Plan has prioritized moving Family Peer Support forward to a certifiable service in the state of Pennsylvania. OMHSAS recently created a steering committee to review current family peer programs

across the state and develop a certification and training curriculum process for family peers. Clare Higgins was asked to join this steering committee in December 2021 and continues to meet with the steering committee twice per month. The steering committee is scheduled to convene over the next three years.

Work Groups, Training, Community Meetings and Committees

Team members attended 223 different work groups, community meetings, and committees throughout the year. The team attended 548 trainings which focused on trauma informed care, diversity and inclusion, LGBTQ support, cultural competency, self-care, and enhancing the ability to serve families with a person-centered approach. Family Peers can play a critically important and unique role in representing and supporting family and youth voice in the community. Doing this well requires ongoing learning. We support continuing education, training, and certification opportunities which will enhance the FPSPs ability to serve families and provide meaningful contributions in the community. For highlights of meetings and trainings attended during the contract year, please refer to the infographic below.

All FPSPs have completed the five-day Family Peer Support Specialist Training, as well as the trauma training courses offered through Lakeside Global Institute. All team members are up to date on required clearances and Mandated reporter Training.

County Collaboration

FamilyWorx is grateful for the continued collaboration with Montgomery County Office of Children's Behavioral Health. In addition to monthly update meetings which have continued throughout the quarter, FamilyWorx continues to consult with the county offices regularly for input and support on children and youth with multiple complex needs. FamilyWorx was able to work collaboratively with MCOBH at numerous Interagency Team Meetings, school meetings, and in conjunction with IBHS and Family Based teams. The County Offices also continues to consult with FamilyWorx and FST on the Mobile Crisis Pilot Project, providing valuable insights and suggestions for successful implementation.

Digital Outreach

Keeping up with the use of technology, FamilyWorx uses email to engage with county families and community allies. We provide regular email communication to those on our email lists. At the end of Q3, there were 258 family contacts and 317 professional contacts on FamilyWorx list served. To be added to our email list, please email lradcliffe@hopeworxinc.org

In addition to maintaining a family and professional contact list, FamilyWorx increased its digital presence throughout the year by connecting to community Facebook groups, special education alliances, family groups, and community message boards to share our program and support group flyers. A number of those organizations have shared our resources on their websites.

HopeWorx website has been updated with FamilyWorx team bios, detailed program descriptions, and program flyers. In addition, FamilyWorx is considering the feasibility of launching a Facebook Page or other social media account before the end of 2022.

2021/2022 Contract Year Attendance Highlights



County Meetings

- County/FamilyWorx Monthly Meetings
- CPS Supervisor's Meetings
- Advocacy Coalition Meetings
- Montgomery County System of Care (SOC) County Leadership Team
- Suicide Prevention Taskforce
- Children's Roundtable
- Truancy Taskforce
- Children's Mental Health Zoo Day



Workgroups

- Mental Health Planning Council
- PEAL Leadership Council
- GLS Family Engagement Workgroup
- CSAG Crisis Workgroup
- FPSS Steering Committee
- Call For Change Steering Committee
- Transition Coordinating Council
- Norristown, Abington, Lansdale, and Lower Merion HUBS



HopeWorx Meetings

- Weekly staff meetings
- Department head meetings
- Inter-team collaboration meetings
- Weekly individual & group supervision
- Weekly Family Teams group supervision
- Bi-Monthly Family Teams admin meetings
- HopeWorx Trauma Team meetings
- Support Group bi-weekly de-brief



Trainings Attended

Trauma-Informed Care

- Trauma-Informed: What it Means for You and Your Services
- Enhancing Trauma Awareness
- Advancing Trauma Principles
- Trauma 108: Trauma and Racism
- Trauma 101
- Processing Pain, Facilitating Healing
- Navigating Trauma for Kids & Teens: Back-to-School & COVID
- Lakeside Global Train the Trainer
- Trauma-Informed Services: Help that HELPS
- Navigating Trauma

Family/Youth Voice and Involvement

- Meetings that Matter (Presenter)
- The Kids Are Not Okay: Practicing Empathy for Everyone, Even Yourself
- Child Welfare - Safety and Risk 101
- How to Help Families Through COVID-19 Transitions
- Act 65-Mental Health Consent Law in PA
- Transition to Adulthood
- Helping Our Children Who Struggle Find Social Success
- Sandwich Generation Training
- Supporting Assertive Family Engagement
- Getting Candid: Youth Mental Well Being Panel
- Family Roadmap Training

Mental Health System

- Helping Children by Navigating Multiple Complex Systems (Presenter)
- Cheltenham Mental wellness Panel (Presenter)
- Understanding Paranoia
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Understanding Self-Harm
- Psychiatric Advanced Directive Training
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Crisis Services
- Diverting to Treatment: Community Policing and Supporting Youth with Mental Health Needs
- Understanding Severe Autism with Complex Mental Health Support Needs
- Young People and Rural MH
- Mental Health: A Deeper Dive
- Fix the System, Not the Kids
- Impulsivity and Mental Health Training

Cultural Competency

- Trauma and It's Impact on Cultural Consideration
- How Culture & Race Impact Identifying and Treating Mental Health Conditions
- Addressing Unconscious Bias to Create an Inclusive System of Care
- Working With Linguistically Diverse Populations
- Cultural Awareness 101
- Connecting Across Differences

Crisis Intervention

- SOC Back to School Series: Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention
- Mobile Crisis Support Services Training
- Teenage Suicide Training
- Family Crisis Plan Training

Peer Support

- PaPSC Moving Family Peer Forward (Presenter)
- FPSS 5-Day Training
- FPSS Supervisor's Training
- Intentional Peer Support (IPS)
- Ethics in Peer Support
- Engaging with Families as Peers
- Measuring the Impact of Peer Support

Employee/Organizational Wellness

- **Practicing Self-Compassion**
- Building Skills for Self-Care and Reflective Practice
- Reset from Burnout
- Mindful Cultivation: Using Mindfulness for Personal and Organizational Transformation
- Eye of the Storm
- Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others During the Pandemic: Self-Care and Stress Inoculation
- Mindfulness and Its Connection to Judgment

Other

- Bridges Out of Poverty
- Advocacy for Non Profit
- Building Organizational Change/Diverse Equity, Inclusion & Justice
- Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania
- HIPPA Compliance
- Ride the Wave with Gab Bonesso
- Fetal Alcohol /Adoption Training
- Intimate Partner Violence Training
- Loss and Bereavement Training

LGBTQIA+

- The Importance of Schools in Mitigating the Effects of the Pandemic among LGBTQ+ Youth
- Gay-Affirmative Practice: Creating a Safe Space in Behavioral Health Services
- Bending the Binary: Contemporary Concepts for Gender & Mental Health
- Examining Policy and Practice Trends in the LGBTQ+ Community
- Gender & Substance Use
- Ensuring Counsel for LGBTQ Youth
- Resilience in Sex and Gender

Education

- PEAL Center Family Leadership Series
- Schools, Mental Health, and What Teens Have to Say
- Mental Health & Social and Emotional Supports in the Classroom
- PA Waiver Funding
- IEP Training Series
- Inaccessible Accessibility: Addressing Mental Health Disabilities In Higher Education
- Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging for Students
- Emotional Well-Being for Students After the Pandemic
- Implementing Act 1

Leadership

- Coach Approach to Adaptive Leadership
- Motivational Interviewing
- Managerial Ethics and Boundaries: Setting the Example