EVALUATION BRIEFS

Finding Improvement by Reaching Empowerment (FIRE)
Study overview of the FIRE program evaluation.

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SUMMARY

Since 2010, FIRE, sponsored by One Community One Family (OCOF), has been dedicated to empowering at-risk youth to self-advocate for social change in their community with regard to mental health awareness and service provision.

Overview of Program Services

- FIRE currently employs two young adult-aged staff trained as Peer Support Specialists. These Peer Support Specialists have personal experience with service provision provided by community service agencies that partner with OCOF. FIRE peer support specialists currently provide one-to-one peer support to youth referred by Community Mental Health Centers in the eight counties served by OCOF. FIRE one-to-one peer supports include supportive counseling and coaching by Peer Support Specialists to develop appropriate coping strategies, as well as self-advocacy skills for service provision planning.
- FIRE has recently implemented weekly peer support groups in Lawrenceburg and Batesville. These support groups are open to ALL youth, with a target age range of 13 to 25 years. These gatherings provide a safe environment for fun and relaxation, as well as supportive interaction with FIRE peer support specialists and other youth experiencing similar challenges.
- FIRE staff also engage in social marketing activities and presentations to community groups about the importance of promoting the voice of youth in their own service development and provision.

Evaluation

The FIRE evaluation is part of the broader One Community One Family local evaluation, following all professional and ethical regulations regarding confidentiality. This study collects qualitative and quantitative data from three primary sources.

- FIRE program data including attendance at support groups and 1-to-1 contacts
- Youth satisfaction surveys for weekly peer support groups
- Interviews with program staff, community stakeholders, and parents/caregivers of FIRE participants regarding perceived impact and program improvement and expansion

One Community One Family: FIRE

Community and System Conditions

1.1 **Target Population:** Youth ages 13 to 25 who have mental health needs.

1.2 **System Conditions:**
- Community stigma regarding youth with mental health needs resulting in lack of youth voice and decision-making
- Youth in the region feel disconnected to services and disenfranchised by the system.

1.3 **Need:**
- Youth opinions need to be more fully integrated in service planning decisions.
- Youth need more support to engage in self-determination and self-advocacy.

Major Program Components

2.1 One-to-One Peer Support Services

2.2 Peer Support Groups

2.4 Community Education

Planned Activities

3.1a FIRE Peer Support Specialists will provide 1-to-1 youth support services for youth referred by Community Mental Health Services.

3.1b Supportive Counseling and coaching to develop appropriate coping strategies, as well as self-advocacy skills are the focus of peer support activities

3.2a Weekly peer support groups will occur in Lawrenceburg and Batesville, expanding to remaining counties as program staff and youth participants from other counties increases.

3.2b Participants will have an opportunity to receive peer support from other youth and Peer Support Specialists.

3.2c Monthly structured outings and/or events for peer support group participants will be implemented in Fall 2011 to provide for increased team-building opportunities.

3.4a FIRE staff will give presentations and meet one-on one with community groups and officials to educate them about the importance of including youth in service provision decision-making.

3.4b Community-wide social marketing will be utilized to spread the word of valuing youth voice.

Expected Outcomes

At end of funding period:

4.1 Youth will report a higher level of support.

4.2 Youth will report a deeper understanding of their own mental health needs.

4.3 Youth will report increased use of appropriate coping strategies

4.4 Youth will report a higher sense of self determination

4.5 Youth voice and input will be valued and more fully integrated into service provision.

4.6 There will be a reduction in the stigma attached to youth with mental health needs within the community.

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