

Nebraska's Brain Injury Peer-To-Peer Support Pilot

February 17, 2023



Background

- Nebraska's legacy of dedicated local support groups dates back to the late 1980's and early 1990's.
- Nebraska VR and the Brain Injury Advisory Council (BIAC) sustainability planning in 2016 resulted in a recommendation to "build the voice" of Nebraskans with brain injury.
- Peer Support pilot was included in Nebraska VR's federal Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) grant application for 2018 – 2021.
- Goals to increase the availability of evidence-based Peer-to-Peer Supports for individuals with TBI and their families are in the 2021 – 2026 TBI grant and Nebraska's Living with Brain Injury State Plan.

Peer-to-Peer Pilot Overview

- Funded by Nebraska VR, with TBI Grant funds from the Administration for Community Living (ACL)
- Primary contractor was the Nebraska Injured Brain Network (NIBN)
- Pilot rolled out in three phases from November 2020 to April 2022
- Technical assistance provided by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) and a volunteer consultant
- **Key outcome:** Injured Brain Peer Support (aka Peer Support) resulted in positive outcomes for the individuals who were involved.

Phase 1: Planning

- Team of 6 individuals with brain injury (Peers) worked with the consultant to formulate a plan
- Planning phase included review of past survey results, first person interviews, team dialogue, literature review, data analysis and assessment of readiness of potential participants
- Results: Underlying philosophy of the Recovery Journey, Peer Support definition, process, Injured Brain Peer Supporter (IBPS) role, principles for interaction, outlines for tools, activities
- Phase 1: November 2020 – March 2021

Definition: Peer Support

- Peer Support is a process that seeks to engage a Peer with an IBPS for the purpose of assisting the Peer to identify if they have any vulnerabilities that keep them from understanding, defining, and pursuing the Recovery Journey of which they are capable.
 - Support the Peer to address those vulnerabilities to the extent they are capable
 - IBPS works alongside the Peer to pursue the Recovery Journey Path that the Peer defines for themselves

Phase 2: Ramp Up

- Phase 1 plans were tested and adapted
- Accomplishments:
 - Hired Project Manager
 - Drafted Discovery Tools, IBPS job description
 - Created policies, protocols, marketing materials, IBPS training curriculum
 - Recorded training sessions
- Barriers encountered:
 - Several Peers who were involved became unavailable
 - Difficulty identifying and recruiting Peers to participate
 - COVID-19 pandemic forced virtual vs in-person training sessions
- Phase 2: April 2021 – November 2021

Phase 3: Implementation

- Barriers encountered in Phase 2 inspired a shift from the traditional program approach to a “meet Peers where they are” approach.
- A **new goal** was identified: introduce the Peer Support curriculum and tools to as many Peers and family members/caregivers as possible.
- Naturally occurring pairs or groups formed to watch and discuss recorded training videos:
 - Married couple
 - Local BI support group members
 - Mother and sister
 - Siblings living in different states

Phase 3: Implementation

- Participants watched videos and progressed at their own pace
- Some completed entire curriculum, some did not
- Group discussions held twice per month in the evening via Zoom
- 21 Peers and 6 family members/caregivers = 27 participants
- 620 hours of time spent by Peers and family members/caregivers
- Participants were from 8 Nebraska counties and 1 other state
- Conducted formal and informal evaluations
- November 2021- April 2022

About the Participants

- 17 Peers were aged 22-59 years
- 4 Peers were aged 60 and over
- 1 Peer was a Veteran
- 6 Peers were working competitively, 3 were in school or training
- Most lived on their own/independently, some with immediate family
- 4 family members were aged 22-59 years
- 2 family members were aged 60 and over
- Most lived in central or western Nebraska counties

Participants said...

“This training has made my relationships with my friends and family better in terms of communicating about my TBI.”

“It’s changed how I look at myself in a life altering way. I lost my sense of value after my injury. This reminded me I have worth and how I allow others to treat me is on me. If I see no worth in myself, how can I expect them to see worth in me?”

Participants said...

”It reminded me of how many things my kids did for me, and so I sent them each a thank you. It has affected my relationship with my kids positively.”

”I appreciated how the videos were set up so I could pause them and answer the questions and interact with the people in the video in my own way. I was able to laugh along with the discussion in the videos and identify with others. It made me feel included and supported.”

Participants said...

“I received so much more from this experience than I will ever be able to give back. You can't describe finding some value in yourself when you've completely lost that.”

General Conclusions

- People valued the opportunity to be engaged in building a community
- The customized curriculum can be adapted to be more inclusive
- Individuals expressed statements of joy often during the trainings
- Individuals learned something new about themselves, formed new relationships and strengthened existing ones
- Peers and family members would like to continue with the program
- Peer-to-Peer Support is worth expanding and supporting

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