

Peer Integration for Implementation Readiness: Building and Sustaining Peer Support Roles Across Systems

Presented by

Tracy Levins,
Director of Programs and Services-
Center for Applied Research
Solutions

Lane Krumpos,
TA Specialist-
Center for Applied Research
Solutions

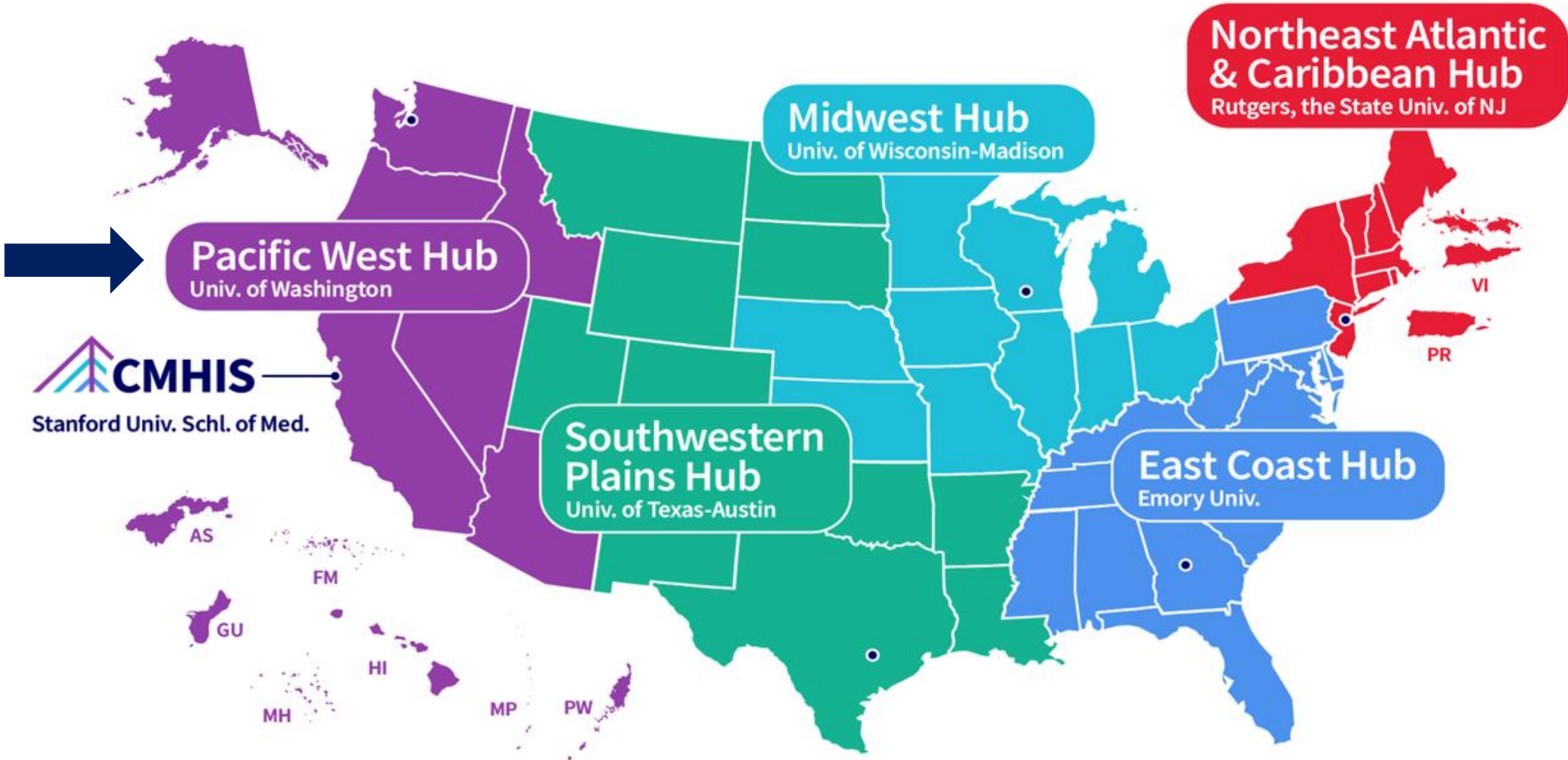
March 24th, 2026

Disclaimer

All material appearing in this publication, except that taken directly from copyrighted sources, is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA or the authors. Citation of the source is appreciated. Do not reproduce or distribute this publication for a fee without specific, written authorization from the Pacific West Hub.

For more information on obtaining copies of this publication, contact pacificwest@cmhisupport.org.





Peer Integration Series: A Shared Learning Journey



Informational Session

March 24

Establish shared understanding
Build language & context

Coaching Session

March 26

Reflect together
Apply learning to real-world practice

Learning Collaborative

June 11, 18, 25

Practice in community
Deepen Integration



Grounding Together





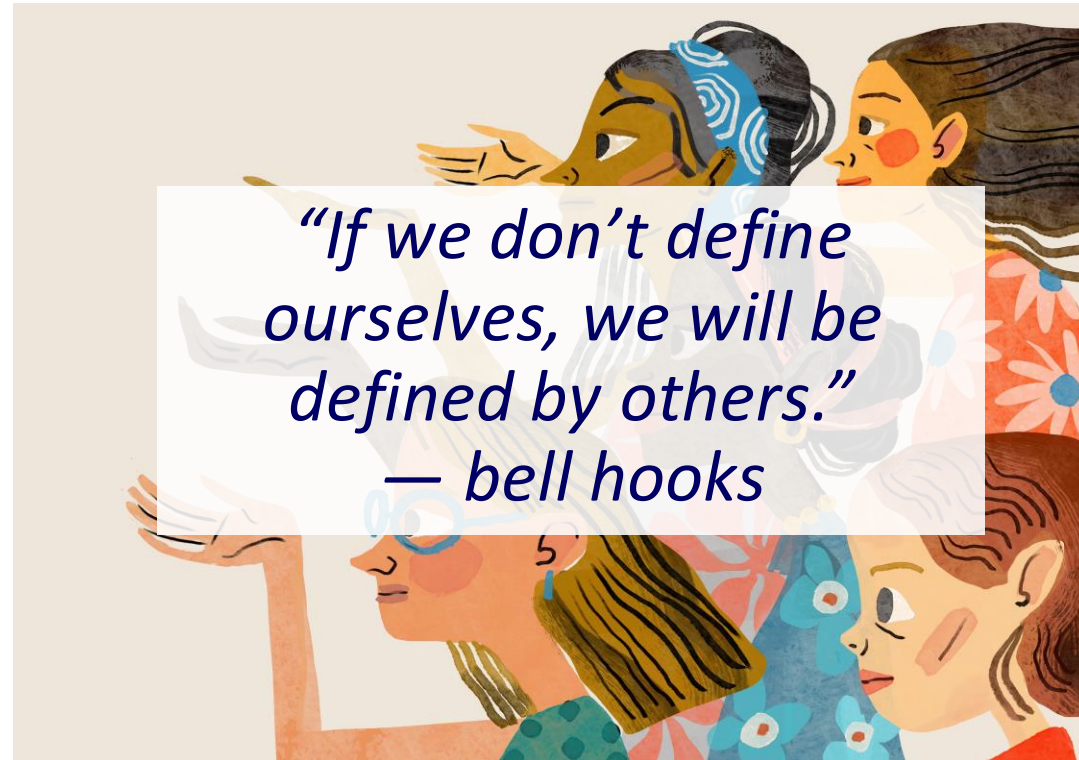
Land and Labor Acknowledgement

I Need You, Because of Us



Introductions

- Meet Your Facilitators
 - Tracy Levins
 - Lane Krumpas
- Please Introduce Yourself
 - Name
 - Role
 - Location
 - Fun Fact



Learning Objectives




- Identify key factors that influence successful integration of peer support roles within behavioral health systems.
- Describe common implementation challenges related to peer role clarity, supervision, and workflow alignment.
- Recognize practical tools that support readiness and sustainment of peer roles.

Today's Flow

- Grounding Into Our Collective Space
 - Centering Lived and Living Experience
 - Identifying Who is In The Room
- Identifying The Impact of Peer Workforce
 - Understanding Peer Support Workforce Strengths and Challenges
 - Reflecting on Transformation Change
- Mapping Peer Support within System Structures
 - Stakeholders and Rightsholders
 - Positionality of Our Roles and Influence
- Centering and Sustaining Peer Leaders
 - Tokenism vs Authentic Engagement
 - Creating Safety and Trust
 - Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing



**Let's Hear
From You!**

- What is one thing you are curious about with these topics?
 - Role Clarity
 - Supervision Structures
 - Workflow Alignment
- 



Identifying Impact:

**Understanding Peer Support
Workforce Strengths and Challenges
Reflecting on Transformation Change**



What Makes Peer Support Unique



- Peers are people who bring lived and living experience into systems of care.
- Provide non-clinical community-based support rooted in connection, trust, and shared understanding.
- Support others through:
 - Social support and group spaces.
 - Advocacy and system navigation.
 - Skill-building, mentoring, and goal setting.

Peer Support as a Workforce

- Rapidly expanding role within behavioral health.
- Present within systems that often lack trust-building, engagement, navigation across fragmented systems.
- With the growth of peer support, almost every state has developed some form of peer support training or credentialing.

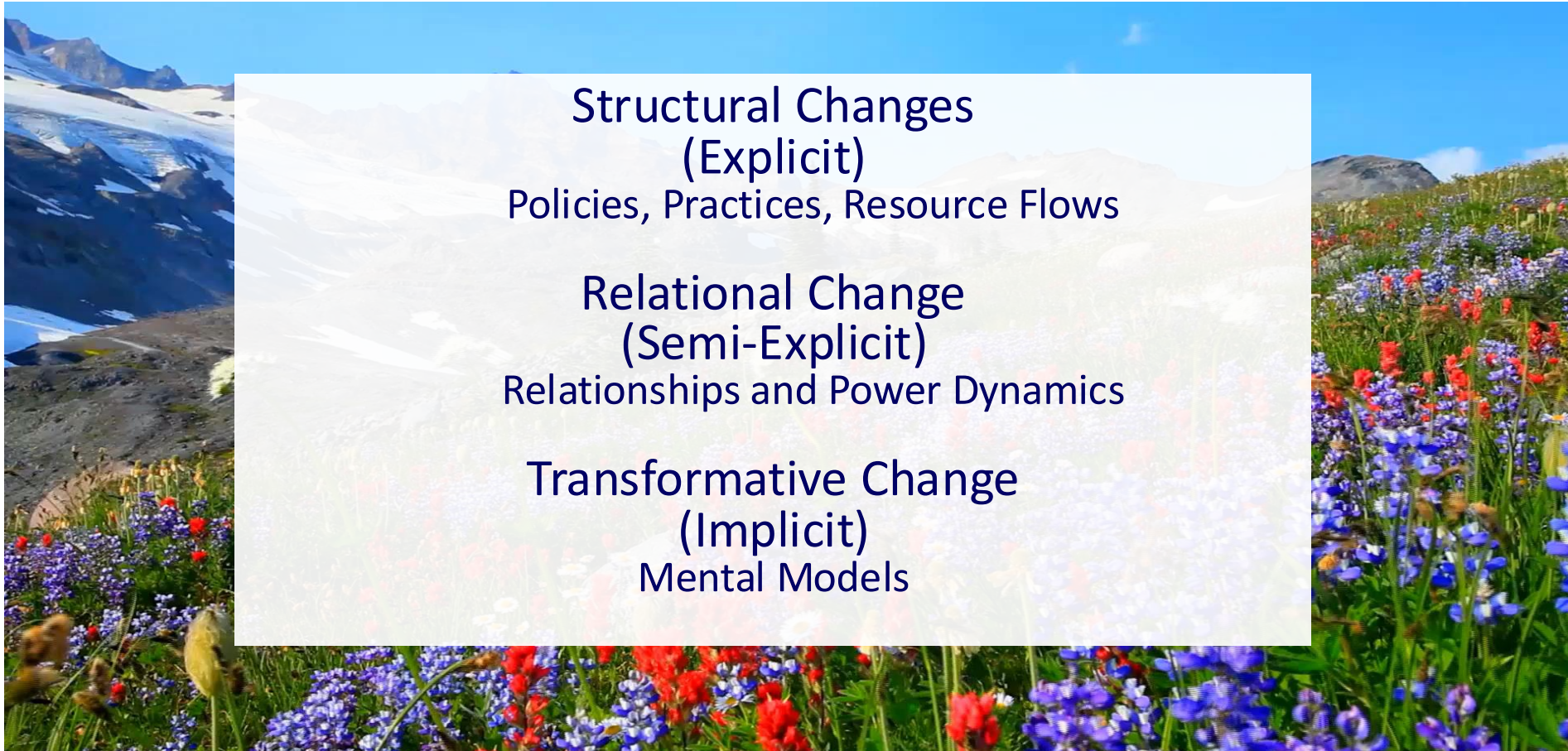


Various Challenges



- **Role Clarity**
 - Misunderstanding what peers do.
 - Burnout for peers.
 - Roles drifting into case management.
- **Supervision Structures**
 - Lack of history supervising peers.
 - Might have a clinical approach.
 - Organization values may not align.
- **Workflow Alignment**
 - Peers added after program design.
 - Documentation requirements that conflict with peer values.
- **System Barriers**
 - Certification differences.
 - Billing restrictions.
 - Compensation.
 - Stigma towards peer workforce.
 - Unclear pathways for growth.

The Power of Knowing Ourselves and Knowing Each Other



Structural Changes
(Explicit)

Policies, Practices, Resource Flows

Relational Change
(Semi-Explicit)

Relationships and Power Dynamics

Transformative Change
(Implicit)

Mental Models



Mapping Peer Support in System Structures:

**Stakeholders and Rightsholders
Positionality of Our Roles and Influence**



Stakeholders & Rightsholders



- Stakeholders
 - Stakeholders are individuals or organizations with the **power to influence decisions, control resources, or impact program implementation.**
 - They may be funders, decision-makers, policy leaders, or institutional partners. Their involvement is essential for scaling, sustaining, and aligning prevention efforts with systems and policies
- Rightsholders
 - Rightsholders are individuals and communities who are **directly impacted by the issues being addressed**, especially those with lived experience, those inappropriately served, marginalized, or those disproportionately affected by substance use and the social drivers of health.
 - They hold the **right to shape the solutions that affect their lives**, and their engagement must go beyond consultation to authentic co-leadership.

*Emphasis on **relationship-first.***

Authentic engagement improves outcomes and ensures peer efforts reflect community needs and strengths.

*Peers can be **BOTH** a stakeholder and rightsholder.*

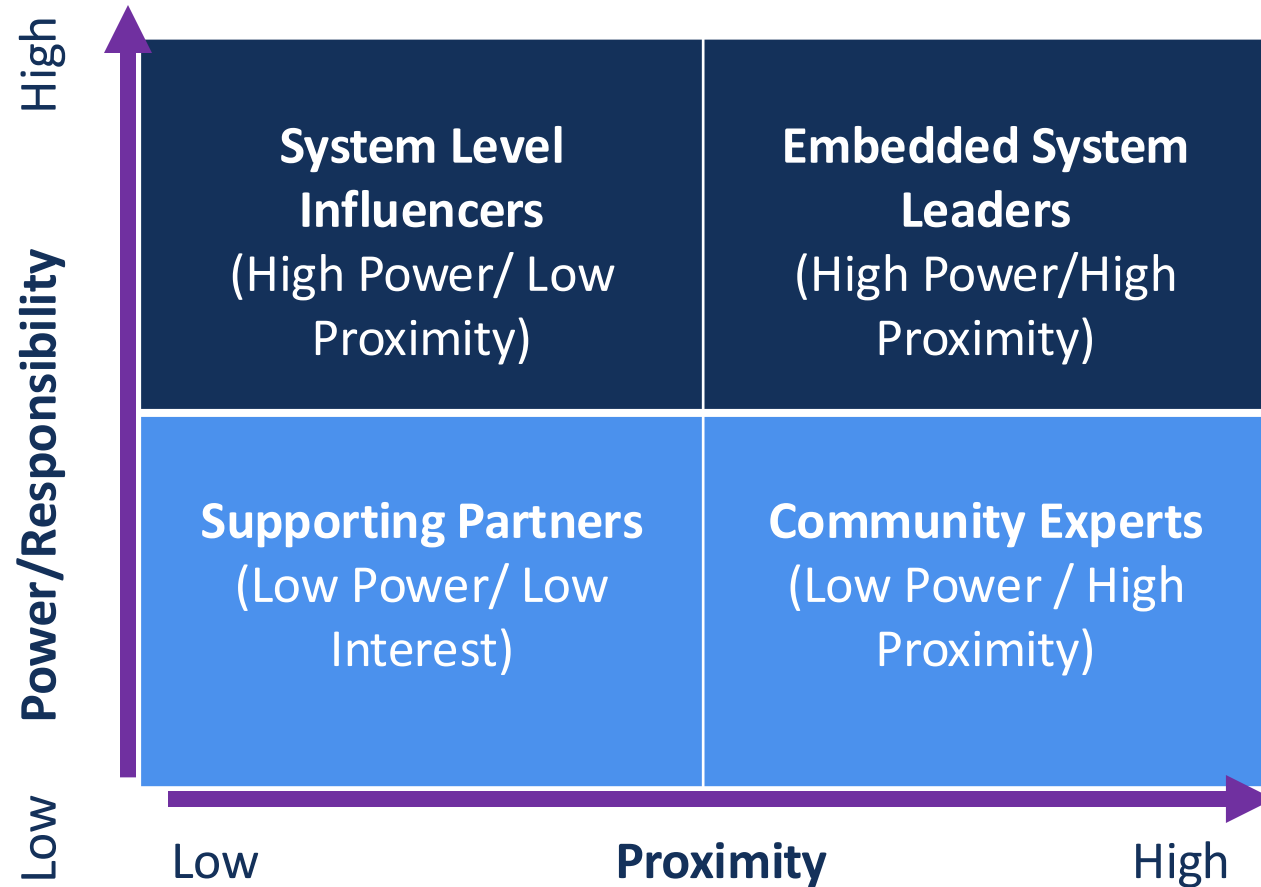
Positionality of Peers and Peer Partners



- Proximity
 - How directly someone or something experiences harm or benefit.
- Power
 - The ability to influence decisions or resources.
- Responsibility
 - What they're expected to do with their power/access.
- Risk
 - What is the impact of engaging or disengaging.

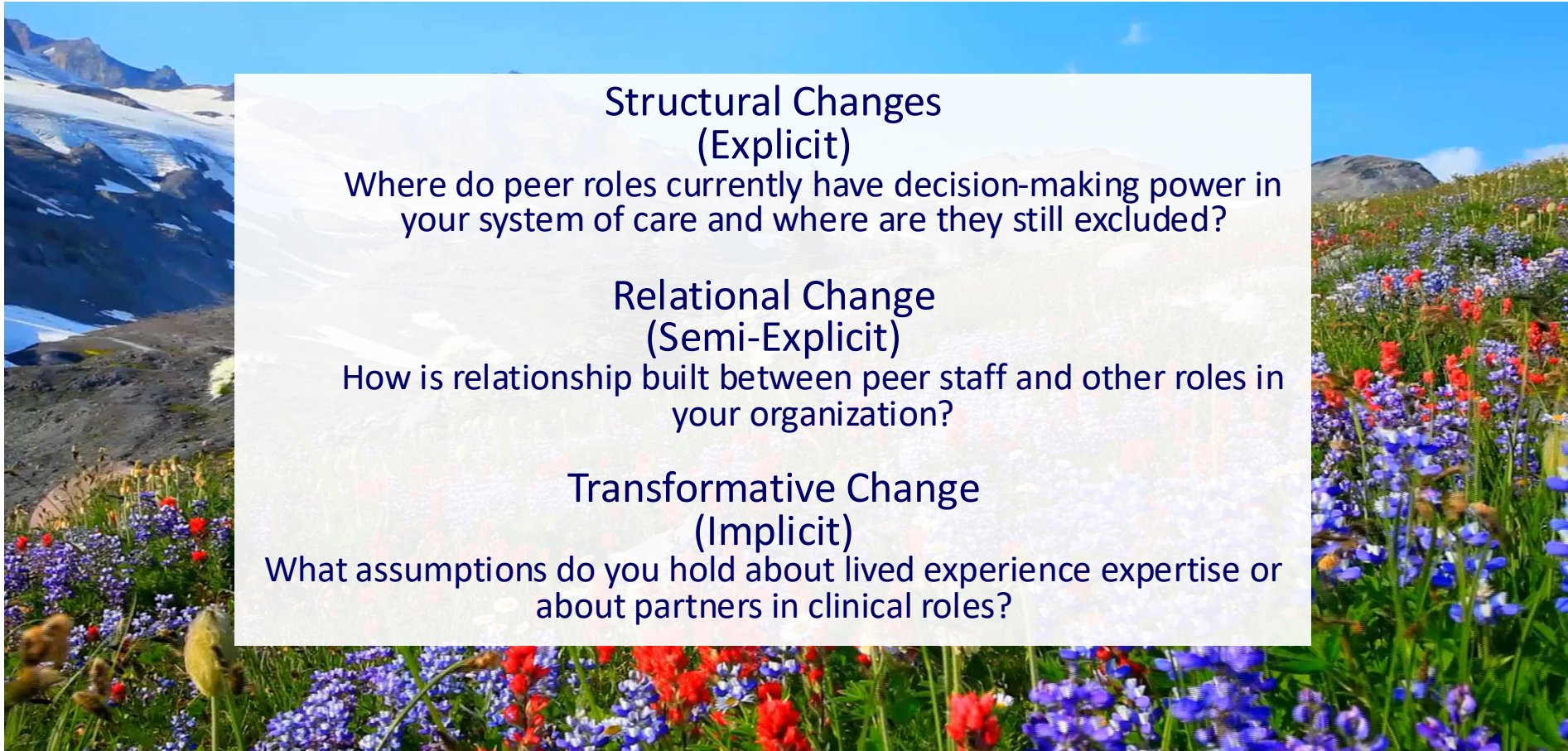


Experience Mapping



- Peer support bridges power and proximity.
- Peer roles carry high relational and system-level risk.
- Peer support shifts where power lives.
- Peer supports also challenge traditional power structures.

The Power of Knowing Ourselves and Knowing Each Other



Structural Changes (Explicit)

Where do peer roles currently have decision-making power in your system of care and where are they still excluded?

Relational Change (Semi-Explicit)

How is relationship built between peer staff and other roles in your organization?

Transformative Change (Implicit)

What assumptions do you hold about lived experience expertise or about partners in clinical roles?



Centering and Sustaining Peers:

Tokenism vs Authentic Engagement
Creating Safety and Trust
Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing



Tokenism



“An artificial appearance achieved by including a limited number of people in the minority group in effective positions because of their characteristics, such as gender, race, religion, age, and others, that are accepted as a disadvantage or seen as different from the dominant group.”

– Rosabeth Kanter

- Examples:
 - Optics over intentional impact.
 - Unpaid and underpaid labor.
 - Lack of mentorship.
 - Leadership titles without opportunity.
 - Asking individuals to share their trauma or stories.

Authentic Engagement



“Authentic youth engagement means seeing young people as resources to be developed, not problems to be solved.”

— Karen Pittman, Forum for Youth Investment

- Examples:
 - Co-creating decisions and strategies with peers rather than for them.
 - Act on peer input.
 - Affirm their impact.
 - Invest in their growth.
 - Compensate equitably.
 - Build intergenerational mentorship.
 - Foster safety and belonging.
 - Peers as full collaborators and community experts, not “future leaders”, leaders now.


Creating Safe and Trustworthy Spaces



Encouraging Open Conversations: Welcoming different viewpoints.




Embed Systems of Support: Clear communication avenues, training, and leadership support.



Psychological Security: Making sure people feel comfortable sharing.



Cultural Awareness: Recognizing the diverse backgrounds of participants.



Ensuring Safety: Ensuring all peers feel seen, valued, and affirmed.

Intergenerational Partnerships: Why Leading Together Matters

- Youth peers bring lived experience, creativity, and energy.
- System partners and peers bring resources, institutional knowledge, and mentorship.
- Collaboration strengthens decision-making, program relevance, and sustainability.
- Shared leadership builds trust, belonging, and accountability.



Values of Peers, Values of Sustainability



Barriers

Implicit:

Lived experience not seen as expertise.

Relational:

Peers not trusted as equal team members.

Structural:

Job descriptions limit peer roles.

Values

Implicit:

Lived experience is valid and essential knowledge.

Relational:

Shared trust and mutual respect.

Structural:

Clear role definitions that protect the peer scope.

System Shifts

Implicit:

Shift language to center lived experience as expertise.

Relational:

Create spaces for authentic engagement and shared decision-making.

Structural:

Develop peer-informed job descriptions and supervision models.

Nothing About Us, Without Us




“We need to normalize recognizing and **honoring each other’s humanity** and acknowledging that **we are allowed to stumble** and seek support without judgment. It’s essential to create spaces **where asking for help is seen as a sign of strength** and not a weakness.

This is how we can truly support the well-being of people with lived experience and give them room to navigate their journeys with **authenticity and curiosity.**”

-Youth Voices Rising writer Aaron Toleafoa.

Nothing About Us, Without Us



“If we don’t define ourselves, we will be defined by others.”
— bell hooks

Peer Integration Series: A Shared Learning Journey



Join Us Thursday!

Informational Session

March 24

Establish shared understanding
Build language & context

Coaching Session

March 26

Reflect together
Apply learning to real-world practice

Learning Collaborative

June 11, 18, 25

Practice in community
Deepen Integration

Apply for the Learning Collaborative!



Three Thursdays, June 11, 18, & 25, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. Pacific Time

Together, we will:

- Apply implementation principles to refine peer role definitions and workflows
- Share and adapt peer integration strategies informed by peer learning and facilitated reflection
- Identify actionable improvements to support long-term peer role sustainment.

**Thank you!
Please scan to
complete
our evaluation
survey**



Let's Connect!



SCAN ME



<https://www.cmhisupport.org/hubs/pacific-west/>



<https://www.cmhisupport.org/register/>



pacificwest@cmhisupport.org



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/pacificwesthubofcmhis/>