



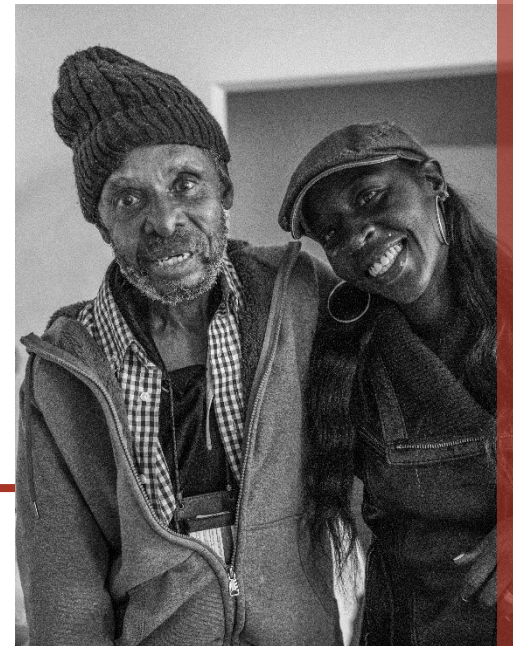
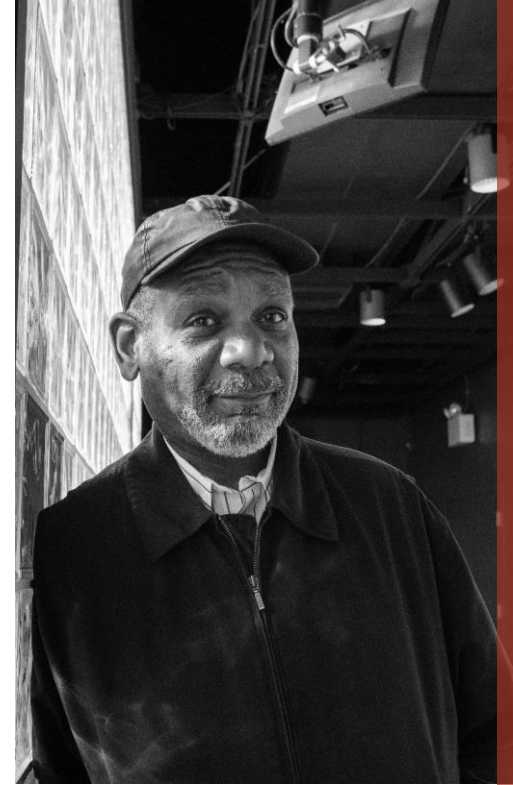
A program of Pathways to Housing PA

# Assertive Engagement

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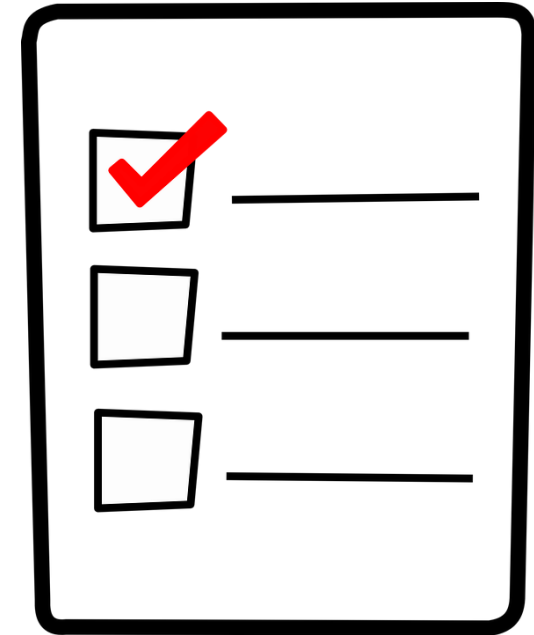
# Housekeeping

- We invite you to be present with us!
- If you are seeking CEUs...
  - Stay for the duration of the training
  - Participate in discussion
  - Turn your camera on for the duration of the training
- Questions and comments welcome throughout
  - Chat can be utilized for comments/discussion
  - Feel free to use the raise hand function to speak
  - Questions may also be sent privately via chat
- Course evaluation is required to receive a certificate
- Closed captioning is available, or send a private chat to request any other disability accommodations



# Today's Agenda

- ✓ Introductions and reflection
- ✓ Best practices for engagement & initiating services
- ✓ Intersection with other EBPs
- ✓ Reflection
- ✓ Q & A



# Learning Objectives

- Define the purpose and goals of engagement.
- Name three common barriers to care and three creative solutions to overcome those barriers.
- Articulate the importance of centering client needs.



# Reflection

Is there a person you can think of that has been difficult to engage?

How long have you been trying to crack this egg?

What makes this engagement so challenging?

What breakthroughs have you had?

What creative strategies have you tried?

What *hasn't* worked?

# Getting Started



# What is engagement?

- Where participants get their first impressions of your program
- A process, not an event, where we introduce the service relationship, explain our role, & find common ground
- Highly individualized

# Goals of engagement:

- Establishing and building a relationship (primary)
- Care for the participant's immediate needs (Maslow's Hierarchy)
- Administering services
- Connecting to resources and providing education
- Working on developing housing stability

# The Four Stages of Engagement

Becoming and being difficult to engage

Bad experiences

Rejection of illness concept

Being angry/fearful/avoidant

Engaging and developing a new role

New relationship

Personal qualities

Experiences and motivations

Team functioning

Organizational support



# The Four Stages of Engagement

## Managing threats to engagement

Breaching trust

Disappointments

Crisis

Exercising boundaries and authority

Payeeship

## Engagement and process

Initiating and making regular contact

Involvement

Increased openness

Positive regard

Growth and change

# First Impressions Count!



- Communicate your role clearly
- Convey true caring concern and compassion from the very first interaction
- Follow the client's lead
- Promote belief in the recovery of the individual in all interactions
- Remain consistent in a message of hope & possibility
- Display patience, reassurance, and acceptance

# “Wanda”

- Referred to Pathways in March 2021, located in a high-traffic area outside.
- Volatile relationships with staff during engagement.
- In Jan 2022, psych hospitalization before returning to the street upon discharge.
- Eventually willing to look at photos of apartments, and shared that interest with outreach.
- We followed her lead and timeline.
- Housed in March 2022, a year after she was first referred.



Meet where  
the individual  
feels most  
comfortable

Clients will  
prioritize their  
own goals, not  
the provider's  
goals

Housing First is  
a *community*  
mental health  
program

# Centering Client Needs

Clients know  
what their  
needs are and  
have clear  
preferences

Remain flexible

# Building Trust

- Forming trusting and respectful relationships with participants takes practice
- Start with the assumption that participants can find their own path
- Remove obstacles wherever possible
- Let participants set the pace
- Be consistent
- Be honest
- Pay attention



# Barriers to Engagement

- What happens when participants refuse to engage in services?
- Why might participants have reservations?

## *Consider...*

Attachment history, fear, trauma history, sources of self-esteem, substance use, psychiatric histories and triggers, being un-medicated, staff turnover, social connections/domestic partners

- Engagement can last months or *even years*
- **Follow through is KEY!**

# “Jeremy”

- Has been engaged by Pathways for over seven years
- Has a tent near the Schuylkill River, very resourceful
- Will not accept an apartment because of “the gasses” that he believes the government pumps through vents
- For years, would speak only minimally with the team
- One day, suddenly asked us to help him make an eye doctor appointment
- Now, lets us take him shopping, to the laundromat, and to regular medical appointments



# Participant Experiences



- Engagement is a process of gradual acceptance
- Trusting relationship and receiving benefits have the greatest impact
- Enduring involvement – staff showing up multiple times a week even if previously rejected
- Sometimes social work can feel like policing (of participants' time, behavior, values, etc.)



**Break**



# Engagement Strategies



# Engagement Tips

- ✓ Listen, observe, & communicate
- ✓ Maintain realistic expectations
- ✓ Use a non-judgmental approach
- ✓ Emphasize strength-based approach
- ✓ When in crisis, focus on the here & now
- ✓ Be consistent & reliable
- ✓ Negotiate & compromise when possible
- ✓ Be flexible
- ✓ Stay positive (especially when the participant is feeling negative)
- ✓ Celebrate all successes
- ✓ Use open body language

# The Power of Small Talk!

- It's easy to get into the routine of goal-focused tasks but the relationship suffers as a result
- Ask questions about their hobbies, daily plans, favorite TV shows, music, food, holiday, etc.
- Share commonalities as appropriate
- **Get to know the person**



# “Alex”

- Alex is considered an “easy” participant.
- He is currently struggling with health issues and drinking.
- He engages with light banter, joking, and self-deprecating comments.
- The team is staying alert for opportunities to go deeper.
- We continue to follow his lead.



# Be Creative!

Does the person love hot chocolate?

Take them out for a treat.

Do they like to walk or play basketball?

Incorporate physical activities into their visits.

Are they wanting to date?

Make an appointment to go with them to the barbershop/hairdresser or go clothes shopping.

Do they want a job?

Go to a job fair together or work on a resume.

Do they like to read and watch videos?

Take them to their local library.

Do they like art?

Bring art materials to your next visit.

# Practice Non-judgment

- Start with a smile and **listen**.
- Create a **safe** place to talk and receive services.
  - Ideally, the participant should feel comfortable telling you about how much they drank, what laws they broke, and how they spent all of their money.
- Match your intervention to the client's stage of change.
- Offer ideas when the person is ready to hear them, *not before*.



# Finding Common Ground

Agree on  
the work

Aware of our  
own agenda

Meet the participant  
where they are



# “Daria”

- Engaged by Pathways for 2 years
- Insisted on living in Center City
- Often stayed with her mom in West Philly
- We found a unit near her mom and near the MFL (easy access to Center City), convinced her to view it, but she wouldn't make a decision
- “I don't know...” vs “Let's just give a try”



# Initiating Services



- Be **clear**
- Explain all services so there are no surprises
- Offer as many choices as possible
- Explain staffing structure, communication, grievance process, etc.
- Prioritize rapport-building over rigidly following program rules

# **Intersection with other Evidence-Based Practices**



# What tools are in your tool box?

- Client-driven practices with the same humanistic values and principles that are integral to the Housing First model
  - ✓ *Motivational Interviewing*
  - ✓ *Harm Reduction*
  - ✓ *Trauma-Informed Care*
  - ✓ *Restorative Practices*



# Motivational Interviewing (MI)



- Who's motivation is it anyway?
- Motivation is informed by willingness, readiness, and ability
  - Just because someone wants to change, doesn't mean that they're ready to, can, or will follow through
- Change is a process not an event
- When a behavior comes into conflict with a deeply held **value**, it is usually the behavior that changes

# O.A.R.S.

- **Open ended questions**
  - Tell me what it's like...
  - What are your thoughts on...
- **Affirmation**
  - Thank you for agreeing to meet with me.
  - You are very resourceful.
- **Reflective listening**
  - Repeat back what you've heard the client say
  - Try to put yourself in their shoes
- **Summarizing**
  - Encourage them to keep going
  - Link back to what was said earlier

# Kindness with *Skill*

- Submit to the process of connection
- MI prioritizes *relationship*, not *outcome*
- There's no expected "ending" with participant behavior
- Supportive silence
- *I'm here to accompany you*

"Healing is not a relationship between an expert and a problem; it is a relationship between human beings."

- Rachel Remen

# Harm Reduction

- Recognizes that people make their own choices based on their *options* and opinions of what feels right for them
- Acknowledges risky behaviors in a non-judgmental way
- Identifies practical ways of lessening consequences of such behavior
- Can be applied to substance use, mental health, and other behavioral health concerns





# Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)

- Practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing for individuals who have experienced trauma
- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices
- Actively resists re-traumatization



# “Carla”

- She resisted engagement for a long time and made physical threats at one point.
- She has a long history of homelessness and experiencing interpersonal violence.
- She becomes easily overwhelmed by paperwork, and the team worked on slowly building trust.
- She has been housed with Pathways long term and is thriving.



# Restorative Practices

- An alternative way of approaching conflict and decision-making; many have experienced punitive program approaches and criminal justice system
- Instead of punishing, emphasizes restoring a person back to good relations with others after misbehavior
- Proactively involves attempting to build social skills to avoid and resolve future conflict



# Case Studies



# “Jacob”

- We struggled to find him and often lost touch.
- He was skeptical that he would receive housing despite what we told him, and he felt undeserving of his own housing.
- Need for team to initiate.
- There was a delay in the housing process that impacted engagement.
- He moved in to an apartment in March 2022.



# “Steve”

- Going into 3<sup>rd</sup> winter of engagement
- Isolated, no apparent supports, longtime street homeless
- First year of engagements, he would tell staff to go to hell, throw food/water in trash
- 1 year in: Started to accept food, stopped cursing sometimes
- 2 years in: “Hello, how are you?” – Major shift in rapport



# “Ricardo”

- Street homeless since the 80s, consistently refused all shelter and housing
- Pathways engaged him consistently for close to 5 years, took a year before he accepted coffee
- Invited him to holiday party (fully expecting him to decline) and he attended
- Team capitalized on that moment to also invite him to see a nearby apartment



# Reflection

Is there a person you can think of that has been difficult to engage?

How long have you been trying to crack this egg?

What makes this engagement so challenging?

What barriers are present for this individual?

What breakthroughs have you had?

What creative strategies have you tried?

What *hasn't* worked?

What new assertive engagement strategies could you try?





# Review

- Staff conducting outreach and engagement must be patient and flexible.
- Participants know what their needs are and have preferences about their lives and recovery— always center *their* goals, on *their* timeline.
- Be honest, straight-forward, and realistic about what you can and cannot provide.
- Remember that trust takes time.
- Use your creativity, ask questions, learn about the participant *from* the participant.

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