Community Wellness Resource Centers
Concept Paper

Office of Consumer Affairs
Behavioral Health Services Division

Background
The Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA) and the Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) are intent on expanding the role of peer support and other peer activity consistent with New Mexico’s transformation to a recovery-based behavioral health system. As part of that effort, OCA and BHSD are initiating the development of Community Wellness Resource Centers (CWRC) in New Mexico. CWRCs are consumer run community based programs for behavioral health consumers. OCA and BHSD will support the start-up and implementation of two CWRCs through an RFP process in the Spring of 2011.

The Concept
A CWRC is a safe and supportive place run by and for behavioral health consumers. The central values of a CWRC are 1) consumer run and directed, 2) equality amongst all participants, 3) consumer autonomy and self determination, and 4) democratic - all voices and opinions are valued. One of the main goals of the CWRC is to create a safe and open space for consumers to explore and define their recovery as a personal process. Peer support and self-help are priorities of the centers.

Participants of a CWRC could be any self-identified adult individual with behavior health issues and as appropriate, their family and community and natural supports. There would be no diagnostic or other limitations. Participation in the CWRC would be voluntary and people would be free to come and go as they choose. Consumers would be encouraged and welcome to participate in all areas of operation of the center.

CWRCs would likely be staffed by both paid and volunteer staff. Centers would be required to have, at a minimum, 51% of the board identified as consumers. Given the core value of equality, everyone would have equal access to resources, decision-making, and the overall daily operations of the center.

Activities and Services
CWRCs are most likely to provide some combination of peer led support and social programming. The key to service provision is that activities and services are designed and implemented by consumers, and that there is a plan in place to periodically review and update the menu of services.

Activities could include, but would not be limited to, the following:
- Peer recovery services and support (eg. peer mentoring and coaching)
- Leadership and advocacy development
- Peer led support and self help groups
- Social and recreation activities and events
- Job and skill development

---

1 Consumers Hold the Keys: A Manual for Consumer-Run Drop-in Centers. Dr. Carol T. Mowbray, University of Michigan, School of Social Work.
o Basic needs supports and resources
o Community education and outreach
o Computer/resource lab
o Health and wellness resources, events, activities and groups (physical health promotion)
o Creativity events - writing, arts, crafts, etc.
o Transportation services
o Training and skill development opportunities and other education programs, including recovery related training (e.g., WRAP)
o Resource center/clearinghouse with computer lab and other mechanisms to access information
o Employment supports
o Other activities as determined locally

CWRC Organizations
Organizations that are mission-consistent nonprofits (501-C-3), or those with an application into the IRS for nonprofit status, would be eligible to apply for funding through OCA. These would be groups/organizations that are consumer managed and directed, with a Board of Directors that is, at a minimum, 51% consumers. They would have some connection to the larger behavioral health and recovery community. The organization would facilitate consumer participation and involvement in its operations.

CWRC Participants
Participation at the CWRC would be voluntary. Centers would be asked to explain how they would or would not formalize participation. Some of the ways that participation might be defined or formalized, and some of the ways that participants might contribute to the overall success and sustainability of the center, could include:

o Dues
o Participant contract
o Volunteering
o Participating on center and/or community committees
o Center decision-making
o Center and community leadership
o Outreach

CWRCs would reach out to the community to solicit participation. They would develop a system for creating and maintaining safety and wellness at the center. For example a center might develop a safety contract and/or codes of conduct. Centers would also be asked to have or create consumer friendly grievance policies.

Outcomes and Accountability
Programs would track and report on participation as well as activities and programs they have offered. They would also periodically survey and document participants’ evaluation of, and satisfaction with, center operations and activities, including important self-reported recovery measures.