

3

EDUCATORS TRAINING DAY 2

This training can take place as a Staff 'half-in/half-out' Day before the Easter break.

Background

The evaluation of the earlier Training Day may show that the Educators' first hand interaction with someone's self-experience of mental illness in an educational context has been a valuable learning journey. This learning now needs the complement of a formal introduction to the notion of Recovery in current mental health thinking. A resource person, e.g. a Community Mental Health Development Officer, is required to present a module on Recovery and engage in a Question and Answer session with the teachers.

The notion of Reasonable Accommodation appears as the proper interface between student's learning needs and the College's response. Specifically, the Equality Authority's concept that much of reasonable accommodation is included within common courtesy and the requirements of the profession is a useful starting point for reflection. Material about Recovery and Reasonable Accommodation edited from varied sources can be supplied to the Educators in advance of the Training Afternoon.

Aims of the afternoon

- 1) To further develop mental health awareness of the First Training Day amongst the Educators of the College.
- 2) To introduce the notion of the Recovery Model in mental health and examine its implications for students with self-experience undertaking Further Education.
- 3) To allow Educators an opportunity to discuss the relevance of the Recovery Model to their dealing with students.
- 4) To discuss among Staff what Reasonable Accommodation means in the existing culture and practice of the College.
- 5) To examine what Reasonable Accommodation in relation to mental health issues might mean in the developing practice and policy of the College (bearing in mind the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004).

3

Timetable of the afternoon

Time	Content	Facilitator(s)
3.00 pm	Introduction	Principal
3.05 pm	Update on Mental Health in Education Project	Project Coordinator
3.20 pm	"The Mental Health Recovery Model and Further Education"	Community Mental Health Development Officer
3.40 pm	Questions and Answers	
4.00 pm	5 mins. Break	
4.05 pm	Workshops "Aspects of Reasonable Accommodation of Students"	Various
4.50 pm	Evaluation.	

Training Pack

The Training Pack supplied to the Educators consists of

- The timetable of the afternoon
- "Recovery, Frequently Asked Questions"
- "Recovery: Definition and Components"
- "FAQ from Educators on Reasonable Accommodation"
- "What Accommodations work in School"
- "What kind of accommodations are people with a mental health problem likely to need?"
- "Rights and Responsibilities with regard to Reasonable Accommodations"

Workshops

Educators were divided into six groups. They were asked to discuss the following:

- How comfortable are you with the concepts of Recovery and Reasonable Accommodation?
- Your experience of Reasonable Accommodation in recent and current practice in the College: highs and lows.

After the Day

Process the Evaluation Results

3

Recovery ... frequently asked questions

What is recovery?

Recovery is the idea that everyone suffering from mental illness can recover a meaningful life. This does not necessarily involve a cure, but may mean learning to live as full a life as possible with mental distress.

Can everyone recover?

Yes. Research suggests that this is possible. Some people may not be ready for Recovery. They may live in a negative environment or have little hope. It is then the task of those around them to remain hopeful, and provide an environment for Recovery.

What's new about it?

The idea of Recovery has been around since the 1930's. It is only now being widely accepted and adopted. Particular strategies used by individuals as part of their Recovery are not new; for example, using music to counter distressing voices.

Where did it come from?

America. It is, however, widely used in Australia and New Zealand, and also in the UK, in Newcastle and the West Midlands.

How can I recover?

Recovery is individual, what works for one person may not for another. There are however common themes. Accepting ones' distress is one of the most important steps; having a plan for recovery is another.

How does a recovery based service differ from others?

Most service provision is based on the maintenance model: relying on medication and risk avoidance. A Recovery based service aims to use a variety of tools, possibly including medication, to empower the individual on their road to recovery.

3

Recovery: Definition & Components

Since the mid-1980s, a great deal has been written about mental health recovery from the perspective of the consumer (client), family member and mental health professional. The amount of research of various aspects of recovery continues to grow. Early research by Courtney Harding (1987) and others challenged the belief that severe mental illness is chronic and that stability is the best one could hope for. They discovered there are multiple outcomes associated with severe mental illness and that many people did progress beyond a state of mere stability. As such, the concept of recovery began to obtain legitimacy (Sullivan 1997).

Although there are many perceptions and definitions of recovery, William Anthony, Director of the Boston Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation seems to have developed the cornerstone definition of mental health recovery. Anthony (1993) identifies recovery as "a deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and/or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life even with limitations caused by the illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness."

Ultimately, because recovery is a personal and unique process, everyone with a psychiatric illness develops his or her own definition of recovery. However, certain concepts or factors are common to recovery. Some of these are listed below .

- **Hope**

Hope is a desire accompanied by confident expectation. Having a sense of hope is the foundation for ongoing recovery from mental illness. Even the smallest belief that we can get better, as others have, can fuel the recovery process.

Early in the recovery process, it is possible for a treatment provider, friend, and/or family member to carry hope for a consumer. At some point, however, consumers must develop and internalize their own sense of hope.

- **Medication/Treatment**

While many people are frustrated by the process of finding the right medications and the side effects of medications, most persons with a psychiatric disorder indicate that medications are critical to their success (Sullivan, 1997). For many, the goal is not to be medication-free, but to take the least amount necessary.

Likewise, mental health consumers often report that mental health professionals and treatment programs are valuable to their recovery. Especially when consumers feel they are engaged in a partnership with their treatment provider and are involved in their treatment planning .

- **Empowerment**

Empowerment is the belief that one has power and control in their life, including their illness. Empowerment also involves taking responsibility for self and advocating for self and others. As consumers grow in their recovery journeys, they gain a greater sense of empowerment in their lives .

3

- **Support**

Support from peers, family, friends and mental health professionals is essential to recovery from mental illness. It is especially beneficial to have multiple sources of support. This not only reduces a consumer's sense of isolation, but also increases their activity in the community, allowing them to obtain an integral role in society. In addition to support from individuals, participation in support groups is an important tool for recovery. Consumers frequently report that being able to interact with others who understand their feelings and experiences is the most important ingredient for their recovery .

- **Education/Knowledge**

In order to maximize recovery, it is important to learn as much as possible about our illnesses, medications, best treatment practices and available resources. It's also important to learn about ourselves, including our symptoms so that we can gain better control over our illnesses.

Consumers can educate themselves by speaking with health care professionals, attending workshops and support groups, reading books, articles and newsletters, browsing the internet and participating in discussion groups.

- **Self-help**

While most consumers recognize the value of professional treatment, self-help is often viewed as the conduit to growth in recovery. Self-help can take many forms including learning to identify symptoms and take actions to counteract them, reading and learning about an illness and its treatment, learning and applying coping skills, attending support groups and developing a support system to rely on when necessary.

- **Employment/Meaningful Activity**

Frequently, when we meet new people, they ask "what do you do?" Whether it is fair or not, what we do shapes others' opinions of who we are. As a result, it is common for a person's identity to be significantly impacted by what they do. Likewise, what a person does influences his/her confidence, esteem, social role, values, etc. Simply put, employment/meaningful activity affords most consumers the opportunity to regain a positive identity, including a sense of purpose and value.

Anthony, W. A. (1993). Recovery from mental illness: The guiding vision of the mental health service system in the 1990' s. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, 16(4), 11-23.

Harding, C. M., Brooks, G. W., Asolaga, I. S. I. S., and Breier, A. (1987). The Vermont longitudinal study of persons with severe mental illness. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 144,718-726.

Sullivan, W.P. (1997). A long and winding road: The process of recovery from severe mental illness. In L. Spaniol, C. Gagne and M. Koehler (Ed.), *Psychological and social aspects of psychiatric disability* (pp. 14-24). Boston: Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

3

Frequently Asked Questions From Educators

Q. What is a reasonable accommodation?

A. "accommodation" is a term coined from disability and employment legislation, and it refers to any modifications that need to be made for a person or within an environment to minimize the discriminatory effect of a person's physical, emotional, or learning disability. "reasonable" means the provision of the adjustment should not cause undue burden on the setting or the institution. In a further education setting reasonable accommodations might include classroom adjustments, exam modifications, or administrative accommodations.

Particular academic adjustments are not specifically mandated. The idea is that the adjustment matches the individual need of the student and does not change the essential requirements of the role of student. The student should be able to perform in the role of a student with or without the adjustment; the adjustment should have the effect of reducing the handicapping effect of the disability in the academic environment. The goal of reasonable accommodations and academic adjustments has been referred to as "levelling the playing field" for people with disabilities. For a person with physical disability, this might mean having a translator or allowing a guide dog in a classroom. For a student with a mental health disability, it might mean taping lectures, having beverages in class, or having an exam supervised.

Reasonable accommodation (Dept of Education and Science: *Schools & The Equal Status Act, 2000*)

Reasonable accommodation may be defined as providing special treatment or facilities or making adjustments for a person to enable them to access a service.

A school must provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of a person with a disability if it would be impossible or unduly difficult for that person to participate in school without the special treatment, facilities or adjustments.

There is no obligation to provide special treatment, facilities or adjustments if they give rise to anything more than a 'nominal cost'. The meaning of 'nominal cost' will depend on the circumstances of the individual service provider concerned – a large and well-resourced organisation is more likely to be able to afford a higher level of cost in making reasonable accommodation than a small one is. As most schools are funded by the State, this would suggest the 'nominal cost' exemption may not be very significant in practice.

The provision of reasonable accommodation is most often a low-cost exercise. It can seek to address a range of barriers – physical, communication and attitudinal. The starting point for providing reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities is an assessment of their needs.

Schools can, of course, take steps to ensure that students do not harm themselves or others. It is not discrimination to treat a person with a disability differently to the extent that this is necessary to prevent them from causing harm to themselves or to another person.

The provisions of the Equal Status Act relating to reasonable accommodation do not override the duties a school has towards people with disabilities that are set out in the Education Act.

Q. How do I know if a student really has a disability?

A. In most cases, students who are requesting accommodations are receiving services from the disability services or the counselling service. Unless the student discloses his or her

3

specific disability to you, as an instructor are not entitled to the specifics of this information. If a student is requesting an adjustment from you, s/he should present you with verification from the Learning Support Office stating that s/he indeed qualifies for academic adjustments.

Q. How do I know when I am providing " accommodations" or when I am over accommodating or going too far?

A. A basic rule of thumb is that the student should be able to meet the core requirements of the course without adjustment. You should not change the curriculum for the course or modify assignments to the degree that they alter the core requirements. For example, changes in test formats or giving extended time or advanced notice to a student would not be altering the requirement of learning course material, and therefore are within reason.

Q. How do I set limits or tell a student they are performing poorly in the class without upsetting the person or breaking the law?

A. You should treat a student with a disability as you would any of your students. Follow your normal procedures for a student who is doing poorly in class. Make sure that your specific performance expectations are clearly delineated and communicated, and then track the student's performance, documenting each step.

Q. Do I have to create an academic adjustment for the student or do they have to request it?

A. It is the student's responsibility to request the adjustment. The exact adjustment is usually arrived at after discussion and negotiation with you. The adjustment should be such that it prevents the disability from interfering with the student's performance and it should be something that is reasonable for you to provide. For example, a student might approach you saying that they are having a hard time comprehending the text and they feel it is due to their inability to process written material. You might suggest that they get the text on tape, which might alleviate the problem.

Q. Do I need to modify my typical marking process for someone with a mental health disability?

A. Giving a student an academic adjustment should not affect the grading process. The adjustment might involve altering the form of evaluation; for example, you might give an exam verbally instead of on paper, or you might change the format from multiple choice to essay. Otherwise students are required to meet all academic standards regardless of disability.

Q. If someone cannot do the classwork, no matter what adjustments I provide, can I fail the student?

A. Students with disabilities are required to meet the same academic requirements that all students are required to meet. If they cannot meet the standards then you should grade them as you would any other student.

Q. How do I know if an academic adjustment request is unreasonable?

A. The academic adjustment should not create an undue burden on you or the institution. If you believe an accommodation request is unreasonable, the best first step is to discuss it with the student and negotiate an acceptable solution.

Q. Who can I go to for help with all the questions I have?

A. If you have questions around academic adjustments or disabilities you should go to the person in the College that provides support for students with disabilities.

3

What Accommodations Work in School?

Types of potential academic accommodations

Classroom Accommodations

- **Preferential seating**
Seating in front, by door, helps reduce audio/visual distractions
- **Assigned classmate as volunteer assistant**
Similar to an accompanier, an assistant may help take notes or provide informal support.
- **Beverages permitted in class**
Helps alleviate dry mouth or tiredness caused by medications.

Lecture accommodations

- **Pre-arranged breaks**
Helps student anticipate and manage anxiety, stress, or extreme restlessness caused by medication.
- **Tape Recorder**
Alleviates pressure of notetaking, freeing student to attend and participate more fully in class.
- **Photocopy of another's notes**
If notetakers are not available, then securing from another student helps free him or her to attend and participate more fully in class.

Assignment accommodations

- **Substitute assignments**
Written exercises or other out-of-class exercise may be necessary for a student with a mental health disability to best demonstrate their grasp of the required knowledge.
- **Advance notice of assignments**
Helps a student anticipate and plan time, energy, and workload, and arrange for any support or academic adjustments.
- **Delay in assignment due dates**
A student may need to go into the hospital for a week for a medication check or a brief emergency; extra time on a due date might be all that is needed for a student to pass the course. The delay should be specified; i.e., a new due date should be negotiated and formalized, not be left open-ended.
- **Handwritten rather than typed papers**
Relieves an additional source of pressure if student does not yet have typing skills. The time tests and accuracy required in a typing course make them a very high stress experience for students who are just returning to school.
- **Assignment assistance during hospitalization**
Staying connected to a student during a course while he or she is in the hospital may

3

mean the student can finish the course as planned, and not have to repeat the course again. (The exacerbation of mental health symptoms does not necessarily preclude the student's ability to complete schoolwork, and in some cases it seems to help them leave the hospital sooner because they have academic responsibilities to meet.)

- **Use alternative forms for students to demonstrate course mastery**

A student may be better able to demonstrate his or her knowledge in ways that don't require lots of writing (e.g., a narrative tape instead of a written journal) or time pressure (an essay exam rather than only multiple choice, or an extra paper if the student has not performed well on the exam due to his or her disability).

- **Textbooks on tape**

May help a student whose vision or concentration interferes with their reading ability.

(Adapted from <http://www.bu.edu/cpr/reasaccom/educa-accom.html>.)

Check out these websites:

Comhaire Citizens Information: Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities in the provision of goods and services

<http://www.cidb.ie/live.nsf/0/802567ca003e043d80256c8c003953c2?OpenDocument>

The Equality Authority : Reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities in the provision of goods and services

http://www.equality.ie/getFile.asp?FC_ID=149&docID=104

AHEAD : The Equal Status Act 2000 - A Brief Guide for Students with Disabilities

http://www.ahead.ie/info/factsheets/equal_status.htm

Dept of Education and Science: Schools & The Equal Status Act, 2000

http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/ge_schools_and_equality

3

What kinds of reasonable accommodations are people with a mental health difficulty likely to need?

Common reasonable accommodations for people with mental health difficulties include:

Assistance in applying, and while on the course

- Someone from an outside agency may assist the Student in the College. Alternately, someone within the College, might perform this role.
- The assitant can help in a number of ways such as assisting the person to fill out applications, helping them to reduce their anxiety by providing feedback, observing their work and making suggestions about accommodation.

Flexible scheduling

- Flexibility in the start or end of classes to accommodate effects of medication or for medical appointments.
- Modular completion of Courses
- More frequent breaks

Changes in supervision

- Modifying the way instructions and feedback are given. For example, written instructions may help a Student focus on what is required.
- Having weekly meetings between the Tutor and Student may help to deal with problems before they become serious.

Changes in teaching and assessment

- Allowing extra time to complete projects.
- Allowing the person to be assessed ways that are individualized.

Using technology

- Allowing the person to use a lamp instead of fluorescent lights to eliminate a flicker which may be irritating or cause a reaction.
- Providing the Student with a tape recorder to tape classes or tutorials, if they have difficulty with concentration.

Modifying work space or changing location

- Allowing an Student to relocate to a quieter area where they will be free from distractions.
- Allowing a Student to work at home.

More than anyone else, the Student will know what accommodation they need to allow them to work productively. By talking directly with the Student, you will be able to come up with solutions that meet the needs of the individual as well as the College.

(Adapted from <http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/employers/faq/question17.asp>)

3

Rights and responsibilities in regard to Reasonable Accommodations

The College should:

- Create an atmosphere in which Students are comfortable asking for reasonable accommodation. This means providing Students with information about the College's reasonable accommodation policy, and creating procedures that allow for the request to be made confidentially.
- Assume that the Student's request is made in good faith.
- Work with the Student, and experts if necessary, to explore all possible reasonable accommodations.
- Maintain records of the request and steps taken to deal with the request.
- Respect the confidentiality of the information provided by the Student.
- Respond to reasonable accommodation requests in a timely manner.
- Require the Student to provide only that information which is necessary to develop an appropriate reasonable accommodation.
- Respond to requests for reasonable accommodation even if they are not made in a formal manner or using the term "reasonable accommodation."
- Ensure that teachers are aware of their obligation to avoid a Student being discriminated against in the College because of disability. Reasonable accommodation should be done in a way that does not subject the Student to ridicule. The Student should also be assured that the College will not tolerate any form of harassment.
- Ensure that progressive assessment processes are in place to identify and assist Students with disabilities prior to their disability leading to a performance issue.

The Student should:

- Tell the College that they require reasonable accommodation because of a disability and, to the greatest extent possible, set out the type of reasonable accommodation needed.
- If requested, provide supporting documentation from a health care provider or other person in order to assist the College in developing an appropriate accommodation.
- Work with the College, or with any experts the College has retained, to determine an appropriate accommodation.
- Meet all relevant course requirements and standards once the accommodation has been provided.
- Continue to work with the College to ensure the reasonable accommodation remains effective.

(Adapted from <http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/employers/faq/question10.asp>)

3

Mental Health in Education Project Evaluation Sheet

Educators Training Day 2

Please take a moment to answer the following:

1. Did the afternoon give you a clear idea of what Recovery and Reasonable Accommodation mean in the relation to learning needs arising out of mental health issues?

Yes

No

Comment:

2. What did you find most valuable in terms of learning or insight during the afternoon?

3. Further comments:

Thanks for taking the time to complete this evaluation.

