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Item Type	Conference paper
Authors	Shagott, Todd P.;Shepherd, Matthew D.
Citation	Shagott, T. & Shepherd, M. (2006). Trends among consumer run organizations. In Proceedings : 2nd Annual Symposium on Graduate Research and Scholarly Projects. Wichita, KS : Wichita State University, p.78-79.
Publisher	Wichita State University. Graduate School.
Download date	2026-05-20 01:49:03
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10057/809

Trends among Consumer Run Organizations

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Introduction

Since 2000, Consumer Run Organizations (CROs) in Kansas have provided quarterly reports as part of their support received from the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS). Quarterly reports have summarized activities and accomplishments to dates based on their initial grant agreement with SRS. In 2005, Consumer Run Organization (CROs) in Kansas adopted an activity framework known as LETR (pronounced letter) to help in setting and reporting activity goals. This framework highlights four activity areas: Leadership, Education, Training, and Research.

The transition to the LETR model is an attempt to assist CROs to create more focused goals and objectives, and has started to become the framework used in reporting data and applying for grants.

Through its partnership with SRS, the Self-Help Network: Center for Community Support and Research at Wichita State University collects and analyzes CRO quarterly reports. Through this process, the Self-Help Network is able to provide feedback to individual CROs as requested, as well as provide a summary of all Kansas CROs to better understand their capacities, strengths, and areas needing additional attention.

Methods

Participants and Setting

A total of 25 distinct CROs participated. Because CROs are organizations that can open or close for a variety of reasons, only 12 CROs were initially included, and the last CRO was added in 2004. As new CROs were opened, they were included. There were 5 CROs included in 2001, 3 CROs were included 2002, 2 CROs were included in 2003, and 3 CROs were included in 2004. The criterion required for selection was a) the CRO must have been located in the state of Kansas and b) The CRO must have been receiving funding from Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (KDSRS). There was participant morbidity because of the closure of a number of CROs. There was 1 CRO closed in 2001, 2 CROs closed in 2002, 2 CROs closed in 2004 and 2 CROs closed in 2005.

Design

From the second quarter of fiscal year 2000 (October 1, 1999) through fiscal year 2002 (June 30, 2002), technical assistance was provided to CROs for a number of tasks, including goal setting. Data was collected each quarter from quarterly reports sent to KDSRS. In fiscal year 2003, technical assistance providers introduced a model for setting goals based on Leadership, Education, Training and Research (LETR). This model was used to assist in goal creation and obtainment.

Instrumentation

The instrument consisted of a report that was sent to KDSRS as part of a quarterly update required by grantees. The report included budget information, organizational information, and goal information. The organizational information included questions regarding the number of members, the number of hours open, and other information regarding membership and CRO operation. The goals section contained the progress of goals that had been set at the beginning of the fiscal year. The goals often consisted of a concrete task that was to be performed by the end of

each quarter. However, there were also annual goals and goals that had a certain due date. CROs often included other material such as newspaper clippings on media coverage, flyers, etc. as part of their quarterly reports.

Procedure

Each quarter the CROs quarterly reports were collected from KDSRS. The goals and objectives section of the report were extracted and coded into one of 32 goal areas. The categories were generated from the goals and objectives frequently listed in quarterly reports such as “provide peer support” and “hold celebration activities.” Any goal or objective that did not fall into one of the 32 goal areas was placed into an “other specify” category. The goals areas that concerned social support were extracted from the larger dataset. The data was then analyzed across CROs for each year. Means and percentages were used as they were sufficient enough to demonstrate change across time.

Findings

CRO LETR Goal Setting. The percent of goals aimed at training rose from 9% in 2000 to 31% in 2005. The less than 1% decrease from 2004, suggests that CROs are beginning to focus on other areas, and thus the percentage of goals revolving around training is leveling off. The 3% increase in educational goals suggests the direction of the shift in goal focus. The slight decrease in research goals could merely indicate that CROs believe this area provides less direct benefit to members. Alternatively, CROs could have difficulty with the abstract concept of research and are thus setting a smaller percent of research related goals, devoting more time to the goals which are more tangible. The data suggests that leadership has been on a steady decline since 2000. When interpreting the findings for leadership it is important to realize that the data presented represents explicit reported leadership goals. In other words, every goal, regardless of its focus, in order to be met, inherently has leadership related goals

CRO LETR Goals Achieved. The average percent of education goal met were at an all time high in 2005. The percent of goals met related to education increased from 71% in 2004 to 88% in 2005. Data in 2005 also showed a 10% gain over 2004 in the average percent of research goals met, for an all time high of 85% of research goals being reached. The goals met for training were down by 7% in 2005(89%), from 2004(96%). Goals in leadership in 2005 were less than a percent lower than 2004. As with the data for goal setting, the data for goals achieved represents explicit leadership goals. It must be understood that for each goal met, regardless of its focus, a number of implicit leadership goals were also met.

Conclusion

Although the data used is not 100% representative of CRO activities, it gives an idea of how well CROs in Kansas are meeting goals overall. The data suggest training as the major focus of CROs, even though it appears to be leveling off. The introduction of LETR in 2002 demonstrates that after a period of adjustment, a larger number of goals overall are being met.