

Episode 4: Lived Experience Leadership – Annie Powell on Professional Development and Growth

Today's episode focuses on professional development

Annie Powell: CASAT Podcast Network.

Justin Bell: Today's episode focuses on professional development. Many folks don't just want to stay in a frontline role. They want to grow into becoming a supervisor, a trainer, administrator, or a leader who actually helps shape the future of the field. But many peers wonder, how can I move into those sort of roles? And I'm not always getting support from my job to get there. So today I talked with someone who's actually done the work, going from the front line to becoming a national leader. That is Annie Powell, founder and CEO of One World Recovery Network and principal investigator of SAMHSA's center for Addiction Recovery Support, or CARS. Annie is a licensed chemical dependency counselor and, and a certified peer supervisor with more than two decades of experience in this field. We discuss Annie's own journey from peer support to executive leadership, the importance of professional development, as well as mentorship and national efforts through OWRN and CARS to strengthen the workforce. Let's jump into it. Hey, everybody. Welcome to the Peer Support Professional's Guide. I'm your host, Justin Bell, research scientist in person. Recovery peer support is one of the fastest growing roles in behavioral health right now. With that growth comes opportunity, but also a lot of questions about how we do it. Well, so each episode of the Guide, I sit down with peer specialists, leaders, advocates from across the field, talk about what's actually happening on the ground, what's working, what's challenging, what it takes to grow in this role. Whether you're just getting started as a peer, whether

you've been doing this work for years, this is your guide to help you build skills and think critically. All right, Andy, thanks for joining us today. appreciate your time. I'm a fan of yours, and I think you're, Well, today's topic is on professional development, and I think you, you exemplify that quite significantly. And I think the conversations that I've had with you, you've always held a pretty high bar for what the pure workforce should be in terms of a profession. And so, that's a big reason why I invited you today. but I guess I wanted to just start a little bit from the beginning and kind of hear your journey, both in peer support and the recovery field, and also just your journey of professional development, because obviously you're a national leader now. I would consider you that. And so, can you tell us kind of about what that journey has been like?

Annie Powell: Yeah. Thank you, Justin. I'm so glad to be here with you today. And, this is a topic I, am extremely Passionate about. so my journey into this work, it started with me taking on another career. I worked in finance and banking and I was like, you know, I really want to do something. Making money was great but it didn't bring as much joy and fulfillment. And so I went back to school and I became an addiction counselor. I was like, oh man, this is so, you know, wonderful and I want to help people. And it felt great. I also was a person in recovery and I just thought that those two things just married perfectly. once I got into being a counselor I saw the limitations to really quote unquote helping people. and then I got introduced to peer support and that part was I would, I feel like I remember first getting introduced to peer support in a under resourced community. I was volunteering and I was like, this is my tribe.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: I felt so connected to the people, to the work. I remember I was just going to volunteer a few hours a week and it turned into like, are you full time here?

Absolutely. Because I saw the value of what we know today is peer support.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: one person supporting another, and it allowed for that human connection and humanizing people in their life struggles. So that's really how I got into peer support. And I think that some of my transferable skills from being in corporate America and for over 20 years that leadership just came along with me. But there was some valuable lessons.

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Annie Powell: Leadership in corporate America is not leadership when you're doing community based work. Sure.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: Right. So corporate America is very top down and hierarchy and peer support is very participatory. Community is very welcoming, and inclusive. Yeah. So I think that that's part of the journey I've had to peer support. And then recognizing leadership is not leadership in all places.

Justin Bell: Yeah. You're not the first person. I've found this pattern that a lot of the people that are really interested in professional development and strengthening professional development in the peer support field often do have that background of they've worked in a different job and so they've kind of seen. So I agree that like we probably shouldn't be copying corporate America's strategies completely and just doing

everything that they're doing because that's not going to work out. But are there some things that you feel like you, that were positive about that past you know, life that, that you have brought in, or community work?

Annie Powell: That's, that's, that's a great question. I think that what I brought into this field is my professional identity, which is what I see is one of the greatest struggles for this field of, recovery professionals, which is how I refer to us, to take on that professional identity beyond just telling our lived experience or telling our story. there's so many, skills and competencies we bring to this work, to this field as a profession that are minimized or missed because it. We lead deeply with telling our story. And that's just one element of who we are.

Justin Bell: Yeah. Yeah, I agree. I've had that conversation with other guests, including my past guests, that it's fantastic that, you know, we are expected to share lived experience. I mean, or that we can, share lived experience, I should say. But actually I think that we talked about with other guests kind of that expectation can be a little bit of a burden at times. Right. Like where it's just like every room that we walk into, we have to share the story and we have to go through the trauma again. And, and you know, in the last guest I had, we talked about the strategy of sharing lived experience. I mean, do you find that you have. Is your lived experience strategic for you?

Annie Powell: it is today. Yeah. Hasn't always been that. Right, right. I think one of the things that I've, I've been very fortunate is I've been at every single level of this work. Yeah. From volunteer to now being a national leader. And I've, I've just been able to glean so much from people at different, at those different levels. yes. as a person that is in recovery, share, my lived experience used to be what I led with. That was my entry into the room. Right. That was my, that was my expertise at the table. as I continue to

grow and develop as, as a professional and as a leader, what I realized was I was so much more. Right. there was a leader, in our state. And I remember her saying to me that her recovery was just one part of who she was. Yeah. And I had been, you know, like, hey, this is, you know, my recovery story. Is it.

Justin Bell: It's everything.

Annie Powell: And it is. And it defined me, that identity. And so when she said that to me, she saw me as a leader. I just saw myself as a person in recovery. Sure. And that began my journey of exploring what does leadership look like in this space.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: Yeah. and I think one of the first things that came up for me is I wasn't a leader in terms of I didn't run an organization, I didn't run a program. I wasn't the volunteer coordinator. I wasn't any of those roles. and some of the things that I did is I started listening to podcasts and reading books around leadership as an art, not a science. And the other one was leading from where you are. You're a leader in your own right from whatever position, quote, unquote, you're in.

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah, I think that's really great because I think what I've seen a lot in the peer workforce, I'm sure it happens everywhere, though, is people get really good

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Justin Bell: at their frontline job. You know, they're peer specialists. They're a great peer specialist. And then they get promoted or voluntold to be a leader, but they don't get the

training to actually do that. And it's just sort of expected, like, well, if you're a good frontline person, you're going to be a great leader. You're going to be a great supervisor, or team lead or whatever their position is. And then they get into those roles. And I've seen people feel very lost, because they're not getting any support. It's just kind of like someone just picks them out. You're good at this, then you're going to lead Now. so for you, I know you talked a little bit about the books and the podcast and stuff like that. What did that development process look like to be more of a leader? other than. I know you said some of those things, for sure.

Annie Powell: You, touched on two really important things about this, the field and the work that we do. I think the number one thing I would say to anyone that is aspiring to be more of a professional and, or leader is find a mentor. Yeah. Find someone that exudes the characteristics, that you're looking for in who you would like to become as a leader. And that requires you sitting down and evaluating yourself. Like, as a leader, how would I want to show up in this field? The other one is you touched on something that is still very prevalent today in our field, is because I'm a good peer specialist, that makes sure that means that I'm a great. I would be a good or great peer supervisor. And that's not necessarily true. Right. And so in our field, we currently do not have what I call our bridges, our connectors for us to grow in our career. because we don't have those components, people tend to find other avenues. Right. For career advancement. But to say on what you're, what you're bringing up right now is how Did I grow being very new in this whole space? This wasn't my. My career before. How did I know I was ready to move from being just a peer specialist to whatever that next level was? For me, it was being a team lead. I got mentored. I had a great peer supervisor. They allowed space for me to know what my strengths were, and they, were equipped to show me where my opportunities were and provide the development and the support to grow or build capacity. as a professional, like, there was just things that I did not know. and in

doing that, having a mentor, mentors, which I actually had more than one, I had someone that mentored me around public speaking. because that was not my greatest strength, though they would invite me to come along when they would speak at different meetings and events. sometimes I got to travel with them. I think I had also a mentor that, I was able to learn about advocacy, because advocacy in this work of peer support is vast. am I advocating with a person I'm supporting? Am I advocating for the feel like, where am I in this space? Am I advocating at the local level, at the federal level? There's so much I did not know. So I began to look at the things that interest me the most, and I look for people to connect with. even if it was from afar, not everyone's going to welcome you into that close mentorship. And you can pick up the phone and call or text. Yeah. So I began to just follow people that I saw that I thought just were good mentors for me. as I progressed from being a team lead and then thought, could I supervise other people in this work? Yeah. I took the, I took the training in our state.

Justin Bell: Yep.

Annie Powell: with my leadership skills that I brought into the field, I knew that the training was very lacking. It lacked training me how to be a leader. it lacked, giving me the competencies around managing other people. So that opened me up to start taking workshops. Like, I started looking for trainings to supplement that. so I often run into peer specialists because I also do the peer supervisor training in our state. And they struggle with two things. Where do I find more training to be developed because I'm not getting it where I am. And, this wasn't enough. Like, I need someone now you've taught me how to do this,

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Annie Powell: this, almost like an internship level that says, now I need the training, wheels, to just make sure I'm doing this right.

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think that's a common problem everywhere. I mean, I've heard that sentiment so much in my conversations with peers and supervisors and stuff like that. Is that. Yeah, it's like, you know, I do this training and I come in and I. I get a very maybe idealistic understanding of the job, and then the systems that I go into, you know, end up not really meeting that what I actually was trained to do. which is unfortunate. what do you end up recommending in terms of how do you get that extra training? How do you get that more realistic view on things?

Annie Powell: when I came into this field, that wasn't a lot.

Justin Bell: Yeah, I know.

Annie Powell: You know, I think that when we went through Covid, it opened up, it would move the geographical boundaries, and most things came. Became virtual. So today we have more access to trainings. Yeah. learning, communities, communities of practice. so even today, in my role that I have, I still seek out, like, what trainings, what conferences are going on, what's happening locally, because, you know, everyone doesn't have the budget to be able to go to all these trainings and pay all of the costs. What webinars are happening. There's so many free webinars. there's so much available. And I would say to anyone today, find a mentor. Yeah. Decide what kind of leader you want to be, and then begin to seek out what trainings, webinars of no cost that are available to you.

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah. And we'll talk about OWRN and cars and stuff like that, and so we'll provide some concrete examples that they could go to. But, you know, just kind of

going back to the mentors thing for a second, were you. Did you get lucky with your mentors, or was that something you really had to seek out and find? Because I've heard both things. Like. And I've had ones that have fallen into my life, and I've had ones that I probably had to, like, really engage with. and. And asked them to kind of mentor me. So I just wondered for you kind of what that looked like.

Annie Powell: I would, I would say I. I agree. I. My first mentor in this field was a psychiatrist.

Justin Bell: Really. Okay.

Annie Powell: And just fell into my lap. I went to one of his groups. Somebody was like, hey, you know, you should really go to this one. And I went. I attended. And, it's just like, he just beelined me. And he was like. And from that moment until his passing, he was just. He was like, come along. Yeah, I'm going here. I'm doing this. Are you aware of that? Here's an article. here's a website. And it. I was a sponge. And I think that for. For many years, probably my first three to five years, I was just a sponge. Wherever someone sent me, I went. I did have some situations where I was like, I want that person to be my mentor.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: And, I made some missteps. Right. Sometimes you're like, oh, my God, I know that person. I've been in the space with them.

Justin Bell: Too intense. Yeah.

Annie Powell: Right. And they're just like, pump your brakes. So, I would say for the people that I selected as my mentors, I, learned how I approach it, very delicately and respectful of their time, their knowledge. and if they would share resources with me. so those that I sought out, which this may be, you know, I don't know if that's. I would love to know what your experience has been, but. Yeah, were always people. That was where I wanted to be.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: I don't know if you've ever heard that. Proximity. Right. Like, if this is where you want to be, get in proximity of that.

Justin Bell: I was told in my early recovery, stick with the winners was the advice I was given. So I. I like that approach. Yeah. Yeah. And I. I think for me, it's. It has been a mix. I mean, I have had mentors fall into my life, and actually those have tended to be the best ones, probably because they've been like, supervisors and folks that were recommended to me, which I think is a good way to start the process, obviously. And you just end up naturally having a lot of time with them. I think I've had, as you said, less success with, like, picking my mentors. And part of that has been, like, you know, sometimes kind of speaking to, what you were saying, like, sometimes you idealize people from afar, and then you meet them, and either a. I mean, sometimes it's just people just don't have the time because everybody wants them to be their mentor because they're sort of like the famous people in the field and stuff. And I've met some of those, heroes. And it's not that they're bad people. It's just that they're, way too busy to become your

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Justin Bell: mentor. And so that has, like, disappointed me. And I've kind of realized, ah, I was probably setting unrealistic expectations for this relationship. so, yeah, I think I've evolved too, where it's just like, I. I stay in proximity to the people that I like, and if that naturally develops into something that's great, awesome. Like, I will absolutely take it, but I try not to set the unrealistic expectation that this person is going to become, like, the new, you know, father figure, mother figure, whatever in my life, you know, like, that's probably going too far. And I've had that fantasy before and then have it shattered by the person not responding to my email and just being like, oh, okay, like, we are not on the same page, but that's okay. I mean, I tried it, and I think what you said is great. Like, just stay in proximity to them and maybe try to find organic ways of communicating with them if you can. You know, like, bombarding someone at a conference, in my experience does not always lead to a lifelong relationship, and that's fine.

Annie Powell: But 1000% you made me think about, mentors that I've had that I was so afraid of. Like, oh, like, you're so busy and you're such this great figure, and, yeah, I don't want to, like, call you all of the time. And I lost those opportunities because, not only was I in proximity, I had access.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: And if I text, I called, they were waiting.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: And because I was afraid. Yep. to really. You really utilize or leverage that relationship, you know? Yeah. It. It, I lost the opportunity. And so I would also say if you get the opportunity for whoever this mentor is, you know, and they say you. You know,

they share their phone number, the email address, use it.

Justin Bell: Yes. Yeah, exactly. I'm, reading Bill White's autobiography, Recovery Rising right now, which is an awesome book, which is details, like, from the beginning of his recovery all the way towards whenever that book was published in, I think, the 2000s or something. So, like, you know, over 40, 50 years of career. But he talks about the early days, and he said exactly that. He's like, I was so young when I was getting a lot of my mentors. Young in the career, and then also just literally young he was in, like, his 20s, and he's like. I just look back on it, and I'm like, one of my few regrets is that I just didn't take advantage of the time that I had with some of these folks. And I think it's true. Like, I just tell people because I just talked to, you know, a master's student who wants to go into a PhD, and he was just like, well, how do I find a mentor and stuff? And I'm just like, just email these folks, because some people will, like you said, are just waiting. and I was like, if they say that they don't have the time, or they give you sort of a weird response like, you probably don't want to work with them anyway. So just try it out and see what their response is. You might be surprised. I've m emailed some people in the field and then have gotten a really nice response back. And I was like, really like you. I've been reading your papers for years and you respond in a timely fashion. Like, that's pretty cool. So.

Annie Powell: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, let me ask you this.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: what were the qualities you were looking for in a mentor?

Justin Bell: Well, that I think has changed for me over the years too. I think, like, I, I kind

of use that phrase, like father figure. I, I think when I first came in, I wanted that like, wise, sage sort of person. And that meant like literal age too. but I think, you know, over time now I just try to, like, I do find people who are, or I try to find people who, like you said, are just have things that I want. But like, what I want has changed quite a bit. And so I think, you know, I was maybe looking for some of the more like, flashy things like, oh, you're at a, you're at a fantastic institution that I would like to work at, or you're like a national figure and all that. now I just try to find people who, you know, basically have get together. I think is just a quality that I'm looking for because I don't always have my stuff together. And, so I just try to find those people. And I think I kind of a strategy that I guess I use now in terms of like, trying to find people to work with or to mentor or whatever is, you know, I just try to like, start the relationship really slow. And, I don't, I don't want to say that I'm giving them a test, but I am sort of like trying to figure out, you know, like, are you going to keep a correspondence going or does it seem like, yeah, you just don't have time

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Justin Bell: for this. and that's fine. You know, I don't, like, I think early, early in my career and early, early in my recovery, like I said, with the unrealistic expectations, there's like a tendency to like, if a mentorship doesn't work out, you're going to like, leave with a negative impression of that person. And that's like, not productive, you know, And a lot of times it's not personal. And so just reminding myself not to take it personally. And so I just do sort of like the small test of, you know, send an email out or have a conversation. And if the person, you know, reschedules five times in a row, that's fine. Like, they might have a bunch of stuff going on in their life. but I just admire the people who, like, you know, like you, who, like, you know, have so many years in the career, but, like, still seem to be pretty happy and, talk about, like, having, like, things in their personal life

going on that they enjoy and family and all that stuff. I'm like, that's. That's what I'm looking for, future wise. So, I'm not as attracted to the flashy stuff anymore because sometimes you meet those folks and they might have these fantastic celebrity careers, but they don't talk that much about their personal lives. And that's fine. That's what they've chosen most of the time, is that they want that 100% career 100% of the time. But for me, I'm like, that's gonna burn me out if I do that. So who are the people who are, like, doing stuff on the weekends and all that? That's my approach.

Annie Powell: Yeah. That's, that's awesome. you're right. Over time, m. the qualities I was looking for in a mentor has changed. Yeah. I, feel like you're right at the beginning. Yes. It's the shining stuff. Yeah. It's like, you know, where's the buzz? And, you know, who's the up and coming and who are the names that we keep hearing often. Yeah. and I remember back then it was, let me get in front of them, let me be associated or connected to them in some kind of way. And that, by osmosis, I guess, would mean that I was, as great as they were. Yeah. and then on that journey, like today, when I think about, I now mentor others. Yeah. What, were the things that I wish I would have known, and I try to, bring that to my mentorship of others. And that is, be kind. Yeah. So if I'm talking about qualities I mentor, that's kind of, that's considerate, and have relevant knowledge. Like some of the mentors I've come across in my time, they were kind and, you know, all of those things, but they didn't have relevant knowledge. And. Yeah. Although that was helpful to me to teach me how to be a kind leader and to humanize the work and the people that I'm, supporting, the relevant knowledge is still important.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: because we. To grow and evolve, Right?

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah. I'm just gonna keep quoting Bill White like, a thousand times.

Annie Powell: Yes.

Justin Bell: Too relevant. But he talks about, you know, we need less recovery rock stars and more recovery custodians. And it's just like, yeah, we need. We need more people who are just like, just doing the work quietly sometimes in their communities on a local level. and that's also where I've met some of the best people, including in the research world, are just these people who, like, don't necessarily work at, like, you know, the celebrity rock star institutions or, you know, but they're doing, like, really fantastic work. And they're oftentimes, like, the best people to work with because they're waiting for, like, meaningful things to come along, meaningful relationships to come along. their Rolodex isn't a thousand cards long. And so they. When they meet you and they, you know, you get to know them, like, they're ready to do big things because they have the time for it. And if you invest in them, they invest in you. and so, yeah, I. I realize that, now you make me think

Annie Powell: of, stewarding your time and, ah, your resources.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: So in this field, are you being as an individual. I think that that was one of the things that I did, and I think I did it well. I stewarded my time and my resources wherever I was. Yeah. so that when I aspired for the next place in my journey, I was prepared. Yeah. you know, sometimes we're on such a fast track to be the next thing, we miss the

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Annie Powell: opportunity. And I think it's another thing that you said, I really want to highlight in this conversation is recovery professionals are not just working in the peer workforce.

Justin Bell: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Annie Powell: We are everywhere. Yeah.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: And when we can begin to see ourselves as such, I think that there's a transformation that will happen in this field. Yeah. Yeah. That will be explosive.

Justin Bell: I agree. And I think what you highlighted, too, or, something I want to highlight from what you said when you talked about your mentors, was like, you don't always have to get. Even if you are a peer professional, you don't have to get your mentorship from other peer professionals exclusively. And that includes clinical folks. Like, I've heard people tell me that their best supervisor was a clinician, but that that clinician was, like, had a ton of good qualities and also valued the peer workforce. So it worked out. But, but, yeah, like, it doesn't, you know, where you get your Mentorship or where you get your wisdom from does not have to cover and come from even another person with necessarily lived experience. Right. Like it could be somebody who does not have any lived experience, but just has qualities, I think. Yeah, there is sometimes that from both sides. Unfortunately, the sort of territorial mindset of like this is the recovery space. I only meet with recovery people, you know, and, and I've even done

that where I've kind of discounted other researchers or whatever because they've been from a different field and stuff. And it's like, man, I've had conversations with geologists and stuff like that where I would have never thought I would get some wisdom from them. And then they share their perspective, which is just totally different from what I'm thinking about. And I'm like, oh yeah, I'm glad we had this conversation because I would have never thought about it from that perspective. So yeah, I think where you get mentorship from or where you collaborate with, yeah, I think there should be more of that getting outside of the spaces that we're in for sure.

Annie Powell: Absolutely. I feel like the spaces and places that we're in can be very limiting.

Justin Bell: Yeah, that's true.

Annie Powell: Even for career trajectory.

Justin Bell: So. Yeah, yeah, definitely. Well, I wanted to talk a little bit about the fruits of your professional development and collaborations with folks and all of that, the things that you're doing now as a leader, one of them is the One World Recovery Network. And so for listeners who don't know about that but might be able to get some resources maybe from that organization. Can you just tell us about that organization and how that came to be?

Annie Powell: Yeah, on my journey. Right. Of working in this field, I saw how the workforce struggled a great deal. today I can refer to that as the infrastructure. The infrastructure was not in place, for long term sustainability of the service delivery model, which was peer support. What I saw was all of these gaps and struggles. You know, if

you didn't know the right people, you didn't have access to the right information, gatekeeping of information. and then I saw the organizations, at that time was primarily recovery community organizations and they struggled. Limited resources, limited pool of up and coming emerging leaders. and so I just took all that, my knowledge and things that I brought to the field and things that I learned and I said, do I want to be a part of the problem or part of the solution? And therefore birth One World Recovery Network? And our primary focus is to improve access. When you think about the recovery Field. It's about people getting access to the supports and services necessary to live a healthy and a life filled with quality. and so, one more recovery network is all about supporting the infrastructure and career pathway for the peer workforce and for all organizations. It doesn't matter if it is an rco, a pro, a hospital, it doesn't matter. Wherever peer support services are being integrated, we want to be there to support the fidelity of integrating those services into whatever system. I think that that has been missed and it's still something that's forming. And so the work of one more recovery network, is just evolving as the field evolves and as, the systems in which peer support has been

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Annie Powell: integrated evolves.

Justin Bell: Yeah. So tell me what that looks like. I mean, when you are trying to reinforce the fidelity of the peer role, what does that look like working with an organization that maybe doesn't necessarily yet understand peer support or has integrated it hastily and now is trying to catch it? I mean, do you have situations like that and kind of how does your organization work to really reinforce what the peer role should be?

Annie Powell: That is a magnificent question. and I could probably give you a million different answers because it looks different, for different service settings, and the maturity of different organizations. Where I'll give you an example of, we're working with a hospital and then wanting to integrate this service delivery model. you can't have a service delivery without the workforce. oftentimes what supersedes the fidelity of peer support is the very system in which it's being integrated in the hospital is saying, these are the accreditations, we have and this is how we function and this is what's required, what they have. What in those settings most often is missed is now you need, what are the set of implementation tools or accreditations necessary for this service delivery model? And that doesn't exist today like it does for doctors. Right. And so we start there. Yeah, educating them about the peer support service delivery model, and then providing the supports, or what I like to call the scaffolding around implementing the program, and alongside that also preparing the system or the entity for integrating this new workforce. M. Because oftentimes what I hear people say, regardless of what setting it is, it's synonymous. Peer support, service delivery and peer workforce are synonymous when they're not.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: Right. So preparing the workforce, you've been certified as a peer specialist, but not in this setting. So being able to work with the people that the hospital recruits to work in that setting. So alongside them, implementing the service delivery model, also preparing the workforce with the competencies and skills to work in those settings because those systems are not going to change. Yeah. So how do we ensure that our workforce is equipped.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: To provide the best peer support in those settings?

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah. It's hugely important work. The one I, I guess barrier that I would imagine is getting those organizations that are hiring peers and are maybe being incentivized a little bit through grants and now Medicaid funding is opening up and all that. That getting them to really care about building that infrastructure out. So, or letting. Opening the door for an organization like yours to actually come in and provide some input? I could see that as a bit of a barrier in certain organizations. Do you have any strategies to share about, like how do you get that employer to care and to let you guys in and to actually provide some input about like what their infrastructure or what their role description or whatever should look like?

Annie Powell: I'll tell you, the very things that create the opportunities for the organizations are normally the very challenges they're experiencing. That is, I want to hold on to the funding or we've gotten a, bad audit is what draws them to who out here can help us do this? Well, that's fair. And correct these issues. Yep. unfortunately we've seen over the last few years organizations exploit the funding and the workforce and the service delivery model, in ways that have been damaging. and I think that that for us is the greatest concern. In working with organizations of that nature, if that makes sense. What's your motivation? What's your intention? And I'm fortunate enough to say today that we have not come across those types of organizations because we don't just come in on the surface. We actually drill down to make sure that they have a firm foundation. so when they come to us, and I can tell you we're working with someone out of Indiana now that they wanted to integrate peer support services and they have hit a wall. The workforce is just not cooperating. And I thought that they cared enough about the funding that they wanted to get this right, so they sought us out for, you know, that level of

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Annie Powell: support. Not that, you know, they necessarily cared about the workforce in the manner in which you and I probably do. Sure. But they cared enough about the people receiving the services that they wanted to get the service delivery right.

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah, I think that's a good perspective. I mean, I try to keep the same mindset as if somebody's Reaching out. You know, there's an opportunity there and, maybe you're not going to make them into the world's, you know, most recovery oriented. I love peer services, but, there's still an opportunity. And yeah, there are sort of pressure points and convincing arguments about ROI and stuff like that that these organizations, these maybe more traditional organizations like that we can make. And I think doing more of that is good. There's always a balance I think that you have to take where you're not just selling peer services as this is going to make you a bunch of money. Because that's not exactly true per se, but, is it going to save you some money? Is it going to lead to the rest of your workforce, like your doctors and nurses not being as stressed out about these clients who are coming in that have these sort of unsolvable problems that a peer could start to, you know, build the trust? Yes. And in fact, the first guest we had on was a peer working in emergency department. She talked about that. Like these nurses, like wanted to help, but they just would freeze when someone would start to talk about, you know, substance related issues. They didn't even know what to say or how to help them. Just kind of would nod their head and be like, okay, but now they could say, hey, we got this peer. They've been through this and like, whether the nurse cares about recovery or not, their job was just made easier by a peer being there. And that started to sell to the rest of the hospital kind of the potential for this. Again, regardless of whether anybody there cared about, like the deeper recovery stuff that we talk about, it just made somebody's job easier. And that

was a pretty easy sell for the rest of the hospital. So I think those, those arguments, I

Annie Powell: love the way you're, you're talking about it in, in that sense. Right. Like, what's the value in having these peer specialists.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: In any of the settings. we definitely have those moments when the light bulb goes on when we're working with an organization. Yeah. and so what we call it is building the bridges m. Within the institution, whatever that is. Yeah. So that sounds like building a bridge. And for us, when we're working with an organization, building that bridge is education.

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah.

Annie Powell: Right. Not just buy in education. educating those who are not peer specialists and not putting that on as a responsibility on the peer workforce to educate the employer.

Justin Bell: Yeah.

Annie Powell: About, you know, their roles and things of that nature. So I think that, you know, that was well said.

Justin Bell: Yeah, yeah. I think that is one of the biggest barriers I think that is the biggest thing I hear is like I don't have any opinions of peers per se. Deep down, I just don't know what's going on. so that's a great segue to the last thing I wanted to talk

about in the last few minutes or so that we had is education and technical assistance. And the other role or the other hat of I'm m sure many is principal investigator of SAMHSA's center for Addiction Recovery Support or CARS. And so again for folks who aren't familiar and this is definitely a resource that I think everyone listening could access to some degree or their organization could access and get something out of. what is CARS and how do you go about like accessing the resources that CARs could provide in terms of some of the things that we've been talking about, education and technical assistance and all that.

Annie Powell: the center for Addiction Recovery Support is a federally funded training and technical assistance center. And our role is so unique in that we were funded to advance the recovery infrastructure and build capacity for recovery support services. And we run the full gamut. The work that we do which we refer to as our core topic areas cut across the full continuum of recovery and that is prevention, treatment and long term recovery along sustainable recovery. so we focus on the peer workforce from peer supervision, building competencies or skills for the peer workforce. We work with peer supervisors, we look at funding, we look at not just funding the service delivery model but let's start talking

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Annie Powell: about the challenges that the peer workforce is facing. So livable wage. So we really dive into all of those. In addition to looking at the cross cutting areas like clinical treatment, we know that that's one of the largest ah, institutions in which peer support services have been integrated and it has the greatest friction. And so how do we develop publish guides and tools to support the integration of that in those different settings along with criminal and legal system recovery, high schools, collegiate

recovery. so we've had the opportunity of doing some amazing work over the last two years at no cost free to anyone that wants to yes to access it. And it's a beautiful pairing. To who own is one world recovery network. we're like hey, most people cannot afford a consultant. So through these services they have access to not only the digital hub where all of these publications are available and ah searchable by topic in particular areas. They can also through submitting a TA request free no cost submit a Request and be provided a consultant and help them just kind of navigate how do I do this thing.

Justin Bell: Yeah, that's, I mean, that's why I wanted to highlight it because it's free. Like you just, you don't have to pay for this. And you could get some world class technical assistance and consulting for your community organization that doesn't have enough money to do that, and get something out of it. And so I highly recommend anybody listening, please, go on the website, which we'll put in the description of this and make a TA request or tell your leadership, hey, we need to be more recovery oriented or maybe we need a training or something or some consulting on finding, professional development opportunities, finding mentorship opportunities for our peers. Like that could be a great start to a conversation with CARS about, you know, finding some way to help you. for listeners who don't know, I sit on the national steering committee, so that's my conflict of interest statement there, and I'm springing this upon you. But if we do get a second season of this show, I would love to have maybe an episode with some of the steering committee or something like that coming on and sharing some of their stories and more work that CARS is doing. Because we could do, I know, a whole episode about that sort of stuff. So that's just, you know, throwing that into the ether and we'll see what happens.

Annie Powell: Absolutely. And I don't want us to wrap up without, acknowledging that we

also, focus on research, recovery research. And so to all of the researchers out there that's researching any topic in the recovery field, we would love to hear from you. We want to amplify and highlight your research, and connect you to the community that very well, would benefit from that.

Justin Bell: So, yeah, and I think the steering committee would also love to hear about that work. And if there's an opportunity that, you know, something like that could even give a little bit of feedback or something like that, I think that would be an amazing product of cars. Well, the thing that I wanted to close on here is to just in the spirit of the peer professional support guide, is to kind of give you an opportunity that if you had one thing to say for somebody, I guess anywhere along their career, but somebody who's looking for more professional development or wants to get into leadership, what's the one kind of piece of advice that you would give to them?

Annie Powell: The one thing that I would say is be clear about what you're looking for, so when you see it, you will know it.

Justin Bell: Yeah, I love that. I, love that. And I think that's one of the things that I've been told by some of my mentors, too, is to just, if you're clear about what you want, oftentimes you will drift into that and it will come to you. Yes, exactly. Well, thank you so much, Annie. I appreciate all the work that you're doing at all levels. I, continue to admire you. And thanks for your time being on the podcast.

Annie Powell: Thank you very much.

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