



QUALITY PRACTICES OF ENGAGEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCES

Clark County Social Service Resource and Development
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PLE Engagement Policy – Why do we use this strategy?

Engaging people with lived experience (PLE) continuously and meaningfully is essential for organizations committed to inclusivity, equity, effective, and person-centered decision-making. By consistently involving individuals who have direct experience with the issues or services being addressed, organizations can benefit from their unique insights, expertise, and perspectives. By valuing and involving their perspectives, organizations can create positive change, cultivate inclusivity, and enhance the impact of their work.

Core Components

At a minimum, engagement with PLE incorporates these core components:

Establishing an Inclusive Culture: Create an organizational culture that values and respects the contributions of PLE. Cultivate an environment where diverse voices are actively sought, welcomed, and considered in all aspects of decision-making, planning, and implementation. Encourage open dialogue, active listening, and mutual respect among all stakeholders.

Partnership and Co-creation: View PLE as active partners rather than passive recipients of services or programs. Engage them as equal contributors, involving them in the design, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives. Collaborate with them to co-create solutions, policies, and practices that are relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs of people with lived experiences. This partnership ensures that program design can respond to the changing environment and reflects ongoing quality improvement practices.

Multiple Engagement Strategies: Utilize various engagement strategies that accommodate different preferences and accessibility needs. These may include advisory committees, focus groups, surveys, community forums, online platforms, and one-on-one conversations. By offering diverse opportunities for participation, you can ensure inclusivity and capture a wide range of perspectives.

Continuous Communication and Feedback: Maintain regular and transparent communication channels with PLE. Keep them informed about organizational updates, initiatives, and opportunities for engagement. Seek their feedback on ongoing efforts, projects, policies, and programs to ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness to their evolving needs. Engage PLE in discussions about performance metrics, project goals and outcomes, and data analysis.

Capacity Building and Empowerment: Provide opportunities for capacity building and skill development for PLE. Offer training, workshops, mentoring, and leadership programs that enable them to enhance their knowledge, expertise, and confidence. Empower them to contribute effectively to discussions, advocacy, and decision-making processes.

Recognition and Appreciation: Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of PLE while respecting their autonomy. Recognize their expertise, time, and effort by publicly acknowledging their involvement, sharing success stories, or providing opportunities for them to showcase their accomplishments after receiving permission from the individual to do so. Express appreciation for their valuable contributions and their positive impact on your organization privately to them and publicly if they are comfortable with these actions.

Continuous Evaluation and Adaptation: Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of your engagement strategies. Seek feedback from PLE on their experience of participating in your organization's activities. Use this feedback to adapt and refine your engagement approaches, ensuring they remain responsive, inclusive, and meaningful, understanding that some feedback may be difficult to hear. Remember that this partnership is designed to ensure services are person-centered and that course corrections are an important part of program implementation.

Remember, ongoing engagement with PLE is a collaboration, learning, and growth journey.

Best Practices

To ensure PLE have a meaningful role in our work here are some examples of best practices used in Southern Nevada as part of an engagement strategy.

Listening Sessions

Listening sessions allow PLE to provide perspective and insight. By regularly hosting listening sessions, agencies allow for an unbiased perspective for clients to openly share their thoughts, experiences, and feedback. These sessions provide a safe space for PLE to contribute programs, services, and decision-making processes.

Focus Groups

Focus Groups are similar to listening sessions in that they can tell you what a group of people think about a certain topic and why they think that way. While listening sessions are less structured and allow discussion to flow freely, focus groups are often moderated or have a structured agenda that lead the conversation in a specific direction.

Client Input

PLE input in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs and services will help ensure the initiatives are responsive, effective, and aligned with the client's needs. PLE are encouraged to actively participate in meetings, focus groups, surveys, and other opportunities to provide valuable input.

Grievance Policy

It is understood that issues or concerns may arise beyond the boundaries of each agency. In such cases, it is essential to ensure PLE has access to a fair and transparent grievance process. The grievance policy outlines steps that should be taken to address grievances related to external entities or agencies. It is expected that each agency will support navigating that process and provide the necessary guidance and resources.

Satisfactory Ratings

Feedback through satisfaction surveys or other rating mechanisms is regularly collected to ensure collective expectations are met. The ratings and comments provided by PLE help identify areas for improvement and celebrate areas of success. The feedback is integral to the commitment to providing high-quality experiences.

Compensation for Lived Experiences

PLE contributions are invaluable, and it is necessary to acknowledge the time, expertise, and effort invested in providing expertise to each agency. In each situation, compensation may be provided for participation in activities such as advisory committees, focus groups, or speaking engagements. This

compensation serves as a token of appreciation for the commitment to the work and for recognizing the value of PLE. Compensation is reflective of trauma-informed, person-centered practices.

Sample Documents including Policy & Procedure Templates– What are the minimum requirements?

Inclusion and Representation:

A. Policy

- a. Promote the meaningful inclusion and representation of PLE in decision-making processes, advisory committees, and relevant forums.
 - i. Performance Metrics
 1. Representation – track PLE percentage participating in initiatives.
 2. Retention & Engagement – measure PLE engagement within the organizations. Higher retention and active participation are indicative of inclusive environment where individuals feel valued and supported.
 3. Participation – evaluate PLE in decision-making processes, committees, or focus groups. This will help gauge their influence and impact in shaping organizational strategies and initiatives.
 4. Leadership – assess PLE in leadership roles and positions of influence-members of boards, project leaders, etc.
 5. Impact on Policies – consider how PLE influences the development and improvement of organizational policies, practices, and services.
- b. Ensure diversity within the group of PLE. Members should be reflective of, those including but not limited to, individuals from marginalized groups: people of color, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, veterans, transition-age youth, and senior citizens.
- c. Create opportunities for PLE to participate at all levels, including program planning, evaluation, and policy development.

B. Procedure

- a. Develop a procedure for identifying and involving PLE, including outreach efforts, community engagement strategies, and the recruitment of diverse representatives.

Training and Support:

A. Policy

- a. Provide comprehensive training and support to PLE to enhance their skills, knowledge, and confidence in contributing to the organization's work.
- b. Offer resources, workshops, and mentorship programs to respectfully empower PLE and enable them to share their perspectives, individual expertise, and insights effectively.
- c. Cultivate a supportive environment that encourages continuous learning, growth, and mutual respect among PLE and staff members.

B. Procedure

- a. Develop procedures for delivering training sessions, workshops, or mentorship programs that cover relevant topics such as advocacy, critical organizational functions, peer support, cultural competence, and trauma-informed care.

Peer Support Programs:

- A. Policy
 - a. Establish a policy that promotes the creation and implementation of peer support programs where PLE of homelessness can offer guidance, mentorship, and support to their peers.
- B. Procedure
 - a. Develop procedures for recruiting, training, and supervising peer support workers, ensuring they receive appropriate support, ongoing professional development, and opportunities for advancement.

Grievance and Feedback Mechanisms:

- A. Policy
 - a. Establish a policy with PLE input that outlines the process for PLE of homelessness to provide documented feedback. This should include a variety of modes of submission to allow for individual preferences including verbal, written, electronic, etc.
 - b. Establish a policy that outlines how to voice concerns, and file grievances related to homelessness programs, services, or treatment in Southern Nevada.
- B. Procedure
 - a. Develop clear procedures for receiving, documenting, investigating, and responding to grievances and feedback, ensuring confidentiality, fairness, and timely resolution.

Empowerment and Leadership Opportunities:

- A. Policy
 - a. Implement a policy that encourages and facilitates opportunities for PLE of homelessness in Southern Nevada to assume leadership roles in shaping and influencing homelessness policies, programs, and initiatives.
- B. Procedure
 - a. Establish procedures for identifying potential leaders, providing mentorship, training, and platforms for engagement with decision-makers, local authorities, and community stakeholders.

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity

- A. Policy
 - a. Adopt a policy that emphasizes cultural competence and sensitivity in all interactions and services provided to individuals with diverse lived experiences of homelessness in Southern Nevada.
- B. Procedure
 - a. Develop procedures for staff training, organizational cultural assessments, and implementing culturally appropriate practices that respect and value the diversity of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Clear Communication and Feedback Channels:

- A. Policy
 - a. Establish clear and accessible communication channels to ensure effective and transparent information sharing with PLE.
 - b. Provide regular updates, newsletters, or bulletins to inform individuals about organizational activities, initiatives, and opportunities for involvement.

- c. Encourage and actively seek feedback from PLE, ensuring their voices are heard, valued, and acted upon.
- B. Procedure
 - a. Create accessible communication platforms that clearly provides information in clear and concise language that ensures easy comprehension and outlines the purpose, objectives, and expected outcomes of communication and feedback processes.

Collaborative Decision-Making:

- A. Policy
 - a. Incorporate the input and perspectives of PLE into decision-making processes, recognizing their expertise in navigating the issues being addressed.
 - b. Create collaborative spaces where PLE can actively participate in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies, programs, and services.
 - c. Ensure that decisions reflect the collective input of PLE and are communicated back to them promptly and transparently.
- B. Procedure
 - a. Develop procedures for collaborating with organizations, specializing in advocacy and empowerment to provide workshops on public speaking, negotiation skills- how to create a partnership to ensure the most important components are implemented, and policy analysis.

Recognition and Appreciation:

- A. Policy
 - a. Recognize and appreciate the contributions of PLE through various means, such as public acknowledgments, testimonials, or certificates of appreciation with respect to the service provided, and within the boundaries that PLE have expressed comfort with.
 - b. Celebrate the achievements and milestones of PLE, highlighting their positive impact on the organization and the broader community.
 - c. Regularly assess and review the effectiveness of recognition strategies, ensuring they align with cultural sensitivity and respect the privacy and preferences of individuals involved.
- B. Procedure
 - a. Develop recognition programs that honor and celebrate the contributions, perseverance, and resilience of PLE that engages community members, service providers, and decision-makers in the nomination and selection process.

These standards aim to cultivate a culture of inclusivity, respect, and collaboration, where PLE are valued as equal partners in shaping policies, programs, and services. It is essential to continuously evaluate and adapt these standards based on feedback and emerging best practices to ensure ongoing improvement and responsiveness to the needs of PLE.

Sample Grievance Policy –

Clark County Social Service (CCSS) grievance policy is designed to provide PLE with a fair and accessible process to address concerns, complaints, or grievances that may arise beyond the scope of an agency or organization. It ensures that their voices are heard, their rights are respected, and appropriate actions are taken to resolve any issues they may encounter. This policy applies to all individuals who have direct or

indirect experience with services, programs, or activities provided by external entities. CCSS utilizes Tisa N. Evans as the official Ombudsman, Dispute Resolution for the Clark County Departments of Family Services and Social Service. Her information can be accessed [here](#). It is CCSS expectation that each outside agency will create their own policy and procedure to use internally that they can provide to their clients upon request.

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide the implementation of this grievance policy beyond the agency:

- a. **Accessibility:** The policy will be accessible to all individuals, irrespective of their background, abilities, or communication preferences.
- b. **Empowerment:** The policy will empower individuals to express their concerns without fear of retribution.
- c. **Fairness:** All grievances will be treated fairly, impartially, and unbiasedly.
- d. **Timeliness:** Grievances will be addressed promptly to ensure a timely resolution.
- e. **Confidentiality:** The privacy and confidentiality of individuals filing grievances will be respected, except where disclosure is necessary for investigation or resolution purposes.

Grievance Procedure

The grievance procedure consists of the following steps:

Step 1: Identifying the Responsible Entity

Individuals should identify the external entity or organization responsible for the services, programs, or activities related to their grievance. This may include government agencies, non-profit organizations, private entities, faith-based organizations, or other relevant parties.

Step 2: Filing a Grievance

Individuals may submit a written or verbal grievance to the designated contact person or department within the responsible entity. The grievance should include the following information, if available:

1. Name, contact details, and preferred communication method of the individual filing the grievance.
2. A clear description of the issue, including relevant dates, locations, and individuals involved.
3. Any supporting documents, such as records, emails, or photographs.
4. A solution-based resolution to their grievance or suggestion for what they would like to see changed.

Step 3: Receipt and Acknowledgment

Upon receipt of the grievance, the responsible entity will acknowledge its receipt in writing or via the individual's preferred communication method. The acknowledgment will include an estimated timeframe for resolving the grievance and provide information on the designated person or department responsible for its investigation.

Step 4: Investigation and Resolution

The responsible entity will conduct a thorough investigation into the grievance. This may involve gathering additional information, interviewing relevant parties, and assessing any evidence provided. The investigation will be conducted in a manner that respects the principles of fairness and impartiality.

Step 5: Outcome and Action

Once the investigation is complete, the responsible entity will communicate the outcome to the individual who filed the grievance. If the grievance is substantiated, appropriate actions will be taken to address the issue. These actions may include corrective measures, policy changes, staff training, or any other necessary steps to prevent similar grievances in the future.

Step 6: Appeal

If the individual filing the grievance is not satisfied with the outcome, they may have the option to appeal. The process for appeal, including the designated body or officer responsible for reviewing the appeal, will be clearly communicated to the individual. The appeal process will be independent and impartial, ensuring a fair and final determination.

Support and Assistance

Throughout the grievance procedure, individuals may seek support and assistance from an advocate, counselor, or trusted individual of their choice. The responsible entity will provide information about relevant support services available to them.

Documentation and Reporting

All grievances, investigations, and outcomes will be documented and recorded to track patterns, identify systemic issues, and facilitate continuous improvement. Regular reports on grievance activities and outcomes will be generated and shared with appropriate stakeholders while ensuring confidentiality.