

Community Inclusion and Participation of People with Mental Health Conditions in Rural Areas

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Acknowledgements



NIDILRR

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living,
and Rehabilitation Research



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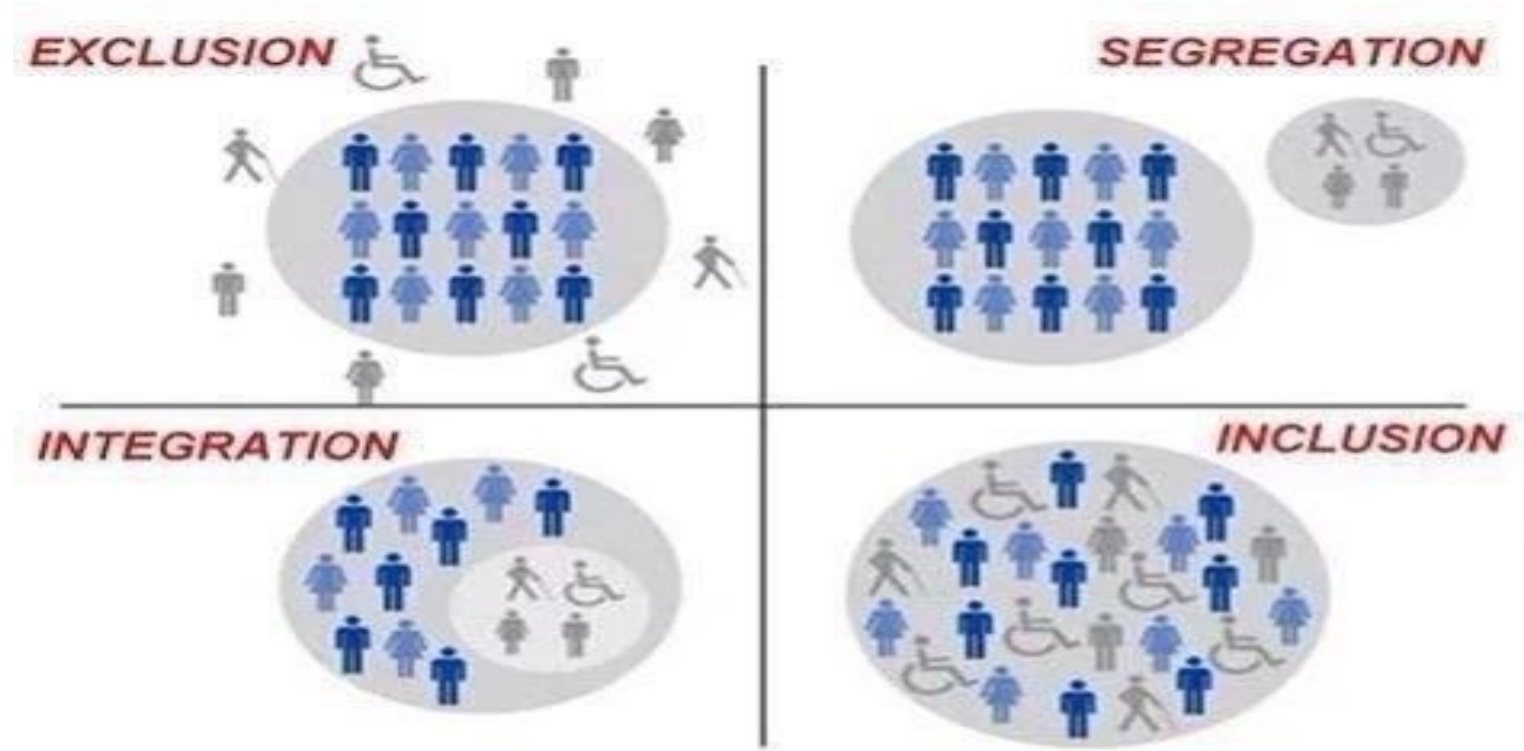
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Overview

- Background on community inclusion and participation
- Overview of our project
- Activities
- Barriers in rural areas
- Solutions to overcome barriers



What is Community Inclusion?



1. Being valued for one's uniqueness
2. Opportunity to participate like everyone else
3. Welcoming and embracing environments

“The ability to live in the community, and be valued for one's uniqueness and ability, like every one else” (Salzer, 2006)



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Community Participation

Employment
School
Housing
Dating/marriage
Parenting
Leisure/recreation
Spiritual/religion
Civic engagement
Family relationships
Friendships and social relationships



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Why is it important?



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It is a legal and human rights issue

Inclusion of those with disabilities is a human right - nations must “promote full and effective participation and inclusion in society, including...competitive employment, and participation in the economic, political, social, cultural, recreational activities of their communities.”

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ (UN Convention, 2006), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly

- Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)
- Supreme Court Olmstead decision (1999): unnecessary institutionalization is a form of discrimination prohibited by the ADA
- President’s New Freedom Initiative (2001)
- President’s New Freedom Commission Report (2003)



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Community Participation is a Medical Necessity



Well Together

A blueprint for community inclusion:
fundamental concepts, theoretical
frameworks and evidence

Prepared for Wellways Australia Limited by Mark S. Salzer and
Richard C. Baron from the Temple University Collaborative on
Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities
(Philadelphia, PA, USA)

WELLWAYS AUSTRALIA



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Getting Out and About is Good for Physical and Mental Health

	% time at home	% time alone
U.S. Population	54%	41%
People with serious mental illnesses	75-80%	55-75%

- More community participation is associated with more physical activity (Snethen et al., 2021)
- Getting out of the house and being with others is associated with greater happiness and less loneliness (Nagata et al., 2021)
- Greater participation is associated with lower levels of depression (Nagata et al., 2021; 2022)
- It is also associated with recovery and perceived quality of life.



It is Also Good for Cognitive Health

- Physical activity: “A growing body of literature suggests that physical activity beneficially influences brain function during adulthood, particularly frontal lobe-mediated cognitive processes, such as planning, scheduling, inhibition, and working memory.” (Ratey, J. J., & Loehr, J. E. (2011)).
- Social interaction: Social isolation associated with cognitive decline (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009)
- Unemployment: Eldar Shafir – Research on the science of not having enough -- “Poverty impedes cognitive function” (Science, Aug 2013)
 - The strain of poverty drains cognitive resources, especially as tasks become more challenging and complex



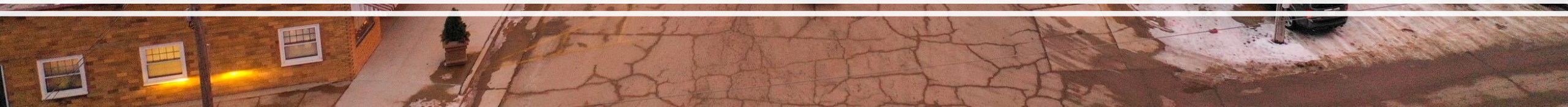
Benefits for Mental Health

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Participation in Rural Areas



Beliefs About Community Inclusion in Rural Area

- It is not relevant to rural areas because there are fewer opportunities to do things
- The interests of people in rural areas related to participation are different from people in urban areas
- There is nothing we can do to increase opportunities for participation



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What We Did

- We conducted a series of conversations in two different counties in rural PA
- Groups were made up of service providers, individuals with mental illness, and their family members
- We asked three questions:
 1. What activities do people in rural areas (you) like to do?
 2. What are barriers that prevent you from doing these activities?
 3. What would facilitate doing those activities?



People in Rural Areas Like Doing the Same Things as Everyone Else



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Activities Ranked

- socializing with friends and family ($n = 13$)
- outdoor activities, such as fishing and camping ($n = 11$)
- visiting an aquarium or zoo ($n = 7$)
- travelling ($n = 7$)
- exercise ($n = 6$)
- going to concerts ($n = 5$)
- sporting events ($n = 5$)
- faith communities ($n = 4$)
- museums ($n = 3$)
- working and volunteering, and attending classes ($n = 2$)



What are the Barriers?

- Transportation was a top barrier, but accessibility was not
- Lack of resources was also high even though employment was not ranked high as important activities
- Personal factors such as symptoms, physical health, lack of confidence and internalized stigma
- Prejudice and discrimination
- All others were ranked substantially lower: lack of information, weather, lack of formal MH services, lack of natural supports, and lack of experience



**People Also Came Up with
A LOT of solutions**



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Transportation Solutions

- Expanded public transportation
 - Increased hours and days, number of stops, more routes, more frequent buses
 - Tokens or money for rides or monthly passes for taxi services
 - Discounts or lower cost for people with disabilities
- Rideshare or carshare
 - Programs or apps where people can ask for rides and just pay for gas
 - Bartering programs to exchange services for rides
 - Driving cooperatives



Transportation Solutions

- Active transportation
 - Bike and scooter share and rental programs
- Make it easier to drive
 - Support to obtain a license
 - Make it easier to buy and sell cars



Resource Solutions

- Support for education and employment
 - Loans and grants for school
 - Money for materials, clothing etc. needed to go to school or work
 - Supports to find employment or information about casual work to increase income
 - Eliminate testing and make access to OVR easier
 - Counseling about benefits and employment/income
- Support for basic needs
 - Have more places to sleep that do not require log-in
 - More supported housing and low-income housing



Resource Solutions

- Decrease cost
 - Agencies purchases group tickets or negotiate discounts
 - Access to information about low-cost or free events
 - Look for restaurant discounts
 - Use the library – free classes, books and movies, internet and computers
- Healthcare
 - Broader health insurance coverage, including eyewear and hearing aides
 - Expanding self-directed care to individuals with MH issues
 - Getting reimbursement for participation or healthcare
- Budgeting and financial counseling



Solutions for Personal Factors

- Support groups
 - Mental health groups that encourage storytelling
 - General support groups for people who experience discrimination
- Peer support to have someone go with you if you are nervous
- Accommodations
 - Bigger spaces for drop-in centers so it is less crowded
 - Access to noise cancelling headphones
 - Create safe and welcoming spaces
 - Limit the number of people at specific times or events



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Solutions for Personal Factors – Justice Involved

- Education for service providers, landlords, and employers
- Ensuring people having access to medications and treatments for people transitioning out of facilities
- Financial incentives for people to provide housing and employment to people who have been justice involved
- Increase re-entry that focuses on broader criminal justice issues
- Work with probation and parole officers to advocate for jobs
- Special housing for people who have been justice involved



Create More Welcoming Environments

- Education for employers about mental health conditions
- Community events to educate the public
- Sending out information about mental illness in the mail
- Support people with MH conditions to identify welcoming and inclusive spaces
- Encourage others to reach out
- Reducing labels surrounding mental illness
- Advocacy in film and TV to get more accurate representation
- Increase self-advocacy skills



Solutions to Increase Natural Supports

- Have social events to create activity clubs based on interest
- Encourage people to use meet-up and social connection apps
- Help from a peer specialist to connect with other natural supports
- Support for family members to be more encouraging
- Education about dignity of risk
- Education on how to meet people in new areas and develop friendships



Solutions to Increase Access to Information

- Agencies could compile a list of free or low-cost events every week or month and send it out via email or post it on social media
- Support in accessing the internet
- Expand topics discussed by providers to include community participation
- Access to a peer support specialist to get information
- Put information about community events on a website
- Make messages simpler
- Greater discussions about dating, relationships, and sexual and gender identify



**Are you interested in learning
more or getting support to
implement some of these
strategies?**



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Sign up to get support to promote participation in your community

We are looking for 5 rural communities that we can work with to provide additional support on promoting community inclusion and participation for individuals with mental health conditions in rural areas.

We will accept requests from a state (e.g., state office of mental health or association of providers in the state), county/region (e.g., County or regional office of mental health), or a mental health agency.



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Sign up to get support to promote participation in your community

We are looking to work with those who express that these topics are important and that they have the time and resources to implement suggested strategies.

If this interests you please reach out to us at:

rural@temple.edu



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Opportunities for Centers for Independent Living Centers

- Peer to Peer Mentoring Program
- Rural Core Conversation Series

Contact Rebecca at rroberts@april-rural.org



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