



Crestwood Recovery Resilience Solutions

Making Our Vision Big Enough

by Dr. Lori Ashcraft

Is it possible to create a vision that can result in a life-changing experience for the people you support and a world-changing vision for achieving optimal recovery outcomes and organizational transformation? Too often people who receive mental health services and those who serve them, fall short in making their recovery vision big enough.

In 2019, a leadership team at Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc. set about “imagineering” a “big bang” kind of vision to transform the way it provides recovery services. Crestwood is a premier provider of behavioral health services in California, supporting thousands of individuals throughout the state, as well as providing training and consultation support both nationally and internationally.

The innovative outcome of this vision became a pioneering pilot project called the “Peer Employment Learning Center” (PELC). The PELC trains and prepares people who receive mental health services in a residential treatment setting to become Peer Support Specialists. Once the initial training is completed, the Peer Support Specialists participate in a paid three-month paid internship on the same campus where they received treatment.

As interns, these individuals put the skills they have learned into practice and cultivate their experience into a career. The project also includes preparing a work environment in which all staff are also trained and grounded in recovery principles and practices.

Our time is now calling us to a much higher accountability for optimum recovery services and outcomes. Our goal for the PELC was not to deliver a one-time training event, but to create an ongoing learning experience to shift the status quo. We believe our vision for the Peer Employment Learning Centers to prepare and hire peer support specialists will shift the status quo to a status of let’s go and grow in recovery.