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REPRESENTATION STRATEGIES FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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Abstract

The paper presents the practice advocacy in the context of the representation of people with mental health issues, focusing on the strategies used: informational, collaborative and confrontational.

Keywords: *representation strategy, advocacy, mental health.*

Institutional framework

With the advent of "Mental Health Law and protection of people with mental disorders" (July 2002) laid the foundation for a genuine social protection of persons with mental disorders in Romania. "The person with mental disability" is defined by this law as: "... a person mentally ill person with imbalance mentally or insufficiently developed mental or dependent on alcohol or drugs, and the person who disorders that can be classified under the rules for diagnostic medical practice in force as mental disorders" - vz. Article 5) point a).

This category of people includes a wide variety of cases where intervention is required psychosociological, sometimes with a sense of urgency. Rights of these persons are required defended and promoted through efforts to support and sometimes representation in society, steps that are known in English literature as "advocacy".

This practice takes place "when someone speaks or acts on behalf of others to present their cause as it would be as own". An "advocacy" of particular interest to persons with mental disorders because are frequently asked where they can not speak / act effectively to protect its own interests in relation to a group (or person).

The responsible of advocacy campaign is called "organizer". This person designates tasks and acts as moderator of the activity. The organizer must always think how much can involve people with mental disorders in advocacy campaigns without jeopardizing their personal and / or professional interest.

The first premise from which goes to advocacy is that people have rights and that these rights can be defended. Before engaging in a campaign of advocacy, an "organizer" will help people to define their rights and to develop strategies for defending these rights.

The second premise is that this practice is a process of forming capabilities ("empowerment"), absolutely necessary for social integration

Types of "advocacy"

While all campaigns are oriented rights advocacy and capacity building, not all addresses issues in the same way. Some advocacy campaigns use mass demonstrations and confrontations, while others use the method of negotiating and lobbying campaigns. There are three main types of advocacy:

Personal advocacy involving personal, family or friends / acquaintances close. For example, a utility bill "bloated" can be the starting point for a personal advocacy approach.

Situational advocacy. This type of approach focuses mainly on cases where a person or group of people can not defend themselves / properly represented in society.

Group advocacy typically arises in cases repeated. This appeals to many people and refers to any system change involving people. Changing laws is usually one of the consequences of an advocacy campaign.

Choosing the best strategy depending on the level of resistance

After the aim of the campaign is chosen, the next step is to determine a strategy. Strategy always requires a look ahead, but in the end, the results of similar efforts.

Roland Warren developed a theory of election strategy based on an amount of understanding and misunderstanding between the organizer and group / persons - target. EI suggested that the misunderstandings that we can help in determining a / strategies that we can use. Based on his theory generally refers to three types of strategies in advocacy campaigns:

1. *Information* - I assume that the target group and the general public do not have enough information to make decisions about the problem faced. Here are used various media and promotion actions, round tables and debates, etc.

2. *collaborative* - involving sending a joint message of many stakeholders in the campaign of "advocacy" and joint actions actually occurring. Methods used: coalition between NGOs, using an expert to support the cause, organization of events (meetings, joint press conference).

3. *confrontation* - predicated on the assumption that conflicts are so great that discussion, negotiation or dialogue would not be successful. Involve the use of demonstrations, boycotts of all kinds and ridicule opponent's actions as specific methods.

In various difficult situations in which the persons with mental disorders (due suffering, some more difficult problems - for example, legal or credibility diminished psychiatric diagnosis) approach of "advocacy" can take place depending on the specific type of strategy in part.

Information strategy

Information strategy is used every advocacy campaign. One of the most important goals of this campaign is involving the public and even those against whom the campaign is heading. One way that may be involved is his teaching, revealing the importance of the issue for which they advocate.

The advantage of using this strategy is that of a relatively light use. There is little possibility of conflict or no conflicts in sharing information. Conflicts arise later, when it requires making decisions and acting accordingly. The cost information may be small if the media is convinced distribute campaign messages advocacy campaign advantageous conditions for the organizer.

One disadvantage is that the information strategy rarely pays off if used alone. Public education is not sufficient to cause social change, and action is needed. Moreover, it is difficult to say whether the messages really reach the target audience. Without media support, cost information can be very high.

Collaboration strategy

It used a strategy of collaboration means working together. Organizations and people have common values and therefore working together will help them reach their goals faster and more efficiently than if they work individually.

Coalitions are born from implementing a collaboration strategy as components start transient, but can turn into permanent coalition. Coalitions can give rise to many frustrations and may lead to compromise during the advocacy campaign. For example, some organizations may want to use the method involved confrontation, while others may want to devote more time for the negotiations to achieve the goal of the campaign.

Problems may arise in the coalition because of differences in resources and reputation of each of the coalition members. If an organization of large, well known is required to join the campaign, it can take all the credit advocacy campaign.

Despite the disadvantages of a collaboration strategy there are positive things. Can make contact with more people and it is possible that this campaign to advance faster if using a strategy of collaboration. Such a strategy can bring many creative and interesting ideas and

tactics. Learn how addressing other sectors of society or other organization these problems. A significant advantage of collaborative strategy is to increase human, technical and financial aspects of the campaign.

Confrontation strategy

The strategy of confrontation is often used as a last way to address a request for "advocacy". When all other methods have failed strategies, resort to strategy of confrontation. There are of course different levels of confrontation, so when choosing confrontation is needed Selection tactics of confrontation gradually increasing.

There are several advantages of adopting the strategy of confrontation as "advocacy". A confrontation can be organized in a fun way. Fun methods can lead to community support if done properly. Another advantage is that they can lead to major successes. Many significant historical changes were the result of fast campaigns that used in the confrontation. These include: the civil rights movement in the United States, reducing taxes in England, movement to grant voting rights to women in the United States.

The downside is that the strategy of confrontation can remove potential supporters. Broad public support is essential for an approach of "advocacy" to be successful, so if the confrontation strategy is introduced too early can lose public support. Through the strategy of confrontation, group / person - Target can take the desired change. It is therefore important that this message of the campaign to reach the public (via tert-national information strategy) before resorting to confrontation strategy.

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