

PeerLINKS FOCUS IV*

(PEERLINKS IMPERIAL VALLEY)

PROJECT BLUEPRINT

*PeerLINKS FOCUS IV is known in the community as: “PeerLINKS Imperial Valley.” This name will be used throughout the remainder of this document.

PeerLINKS Imperial Valley is conducted by NAMI San Diego in partnership with the San Diego Regional Center in Imperial County. Our project is funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in partnership with the Department of Developmental Services. NAMI San Diego is a non-profit organization that provides education, support services, and advocacy to improve the quality of life of individuals affected by mental illness.

<p>STEP ONE</p>	<p>DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP</p>	<p>San Diego Regional Center (SDRC) is a service of San Diego-Imperial Counties Developmental Services, Inc. SDRC is a focal point in the community for persons with developmental disabilities (intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or other disabling conditions similar to intellectual disabilities) living in San Diego and Imperial counties. SDRC is a private, non-profit 501 c (3) organization that contracts with California to provide the services outlined in the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act. The San Diego Regional Center is one of 21 regional centers throughout California.</p> <p>The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is a national organization that provides “advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives” NAMI San Diego & Imperial Counties (NAMI SD IC) is the local affiliate in this region and offers a variety of services such as: Support groups and trainings; a peer support warmline; and several other programs including two programs that provide peer support services to individuals living with a mental health conditions. The latter have had statistically significant outcomes including reductions in emergency visits and hospital stays, increased access to services, and improvements in depression, suicidality, anxiety, and several other key factors.</p> <p>In 2020, SDRC and NAMI SD IC partnered to develop PeerLINKS Imperial Valley, which incorporated teachings, structure, strategies, or successes of NAMI SD IC’s existing peer support programs, and was re-envisioned to support individuals served by the San Diego Regional Center and who are also living with a behavioral health condition; the program was also designed to ensure it met the needs of individuals (and families) living in Imperial County, which has limited health and mental health services, and the community experiences high unemployment rates, poverty and other factors. Nami IV hired staff who are bilingual and knowledgeable about local community, resources and services; strong focus on building relationships with providers and conducting community outreach and whenever possible doing so in person; utilizing written flyers/materials and ensuring available in English and Spanish; familiarizing team with key resources in San Diego as some families preferred to receive services there or saw that as their only option after being turned away in IV.</p>
<p>STEP TWO</p>	<p>START-UP PROCESSES</p>	<p>The collaboration between the San Diego Regional Center and NAMI San Diego & Imperial Counties was formalized through a sub-contract. Meetings were held to ensure that all parties understood the goals, vision, responsibilities, timelines, and project deliverables of the contract.</p>

In the first phase of the project cycle, a plan was established that met the grant guidelines, and was supportive to clients and key stakeholders. Before implementing the PeerLINKS Imperial Valley program, the plan was assessed, and it was ensured that everyone on the team understood the project deliverables. The program name was modified based on feedback from stakeholders.

The PeerLINKS Imperial Valley Team was identified and onboarded. NAMI San Diego & Imperial Counties focused on equipping a strong team comprised of a Program Manager, two Peer/Family Support Specialists, and an Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Counselor. Key qualifications included relevant profession and educational experience, personal lived experience (IDD and or mental health) as a peer or family member and (given that a large proportion of the population in Imperial County are Spanish-Speaking) bilingual in English/Spanish was highly preferred. The team received relevant training including a thorough overview of our program, clients served, privacy and confidentiality, use of recovery language, and crisis intervention. The team also received additional trainings throughout contract, including motivational interviewing and a 40-hour course for Peer/Family Support Specialists.

Finalized program forms, assessments, and procedures, and provided training to team members. This included developing an online database to capture assessment data (see step three for details about assessment). The team received training on all forms, assessments (see step three for details), and processes, including practice opportunities prior to serving clients.

Meetings and trainings with San Diego Regional Center were held to ensure the successful launch of the program. PeerLINKS Imperial Valley's Program Manager provided an overview/training about the program's services and referral process to Service Coordinators and other staff members from SDRC in Imperial Valley.

Flyers and webpages were developed to promote the PeerLINKS Imperial Valley program. Flyers were developed in English and Spanish; brochures were developed at a later date, also in English and Spanish.

Outreach and Announcement of Program Launch. The PeerLINKS Imperial Valley program was promoted by getting word out to hospitals, crisis homes, behavioral health services, schools, communities, and other agencies.

		<p>Announcement emails were sent, phone calls were made, meetings held, and we provided an overview of our program during a meeting attended by various providers and community members.</p>
<p>STEP THREE</p>	<p>SERVING CLIENTS</p>	<p>The PeerLINKS Imperial Valley Program provides culturally and linguistically competent recovery-focused Peer Assisted Supports for persons ages 12 and older who reside in Imperial County, are served by the San Diego Regional Center and are not effectively connected to the necessary Behavioral Health Services. Services included enhanced peer support; case management; support with accessing and navigating services and benefits; etc.</p> <p>Service Coordinators from San Diego Regional Center in Imperial County (SDRC) submit referrals to PeerLINKS Imperial Valley’s team. These are reviewed by the Program Manager and assigned to a Peer/Family Support Specialist or our AOD Counselor, who in turn connects with potential clients to invite into our program, as well as with the SDRC’s Service Coordinators to provide updates.</p> <p>PeerLINKS Imperial Valley onboards new clients through an intake process and initial assessment for the purpose of client evaluation and utilizing the findings to inform and improve the planning and implementation to more effectively carry out the PeerLINKS mission and achieve programmatic outcomes.</p> <p>After the initial assessment, the Peer/Family Support Specialist, AOD Counselor, and/or Program Manager determine what risk category the client would fall into as categorized below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk level 1: Maintenance – Contact every other week. • Risk Level 2: Regular – Contact once a week. • Risk Level 3: Safety concerns – Contact twice a week. <p>The assigned team member provides enhanced peer support services based on our client’s goals and preferences and meets with their client at the frequency specified by their risk level. Visits may occur more frequently as needed, and may occur in person, via phone or email depending on our client’s situation and their preferences.</p> <p>Additional assessments are performed on a monthly basis during the first quarter and then on a quarterly basis. The PeerLINKS Imperial Valley program assessment plays a dynamic role in evaluation as part of a focused continuous quality improvement (CQI) effort. This internal assessment has provided targeted information on</p>

		<p>effectiveness on a variety of topics. This internal reflection has been a critical component of a comprehensive evaluation plan. Risk levels are changed as needed, depending on the client’s situation. Our team communicates with SDRC’s Service Coordinators as needed to provide updates and coordinate care.</p> <p>Adjustments were made to our program design as needs arose. For example, initially our program served only individuals ages 14 and older, however, SDRC staff identified a strong need for services for youth ages 12 and 13. With MHSA DDS’s permission, the age range of clients served was expanded to meet this critical need.</p>
<p>STEP FOUR</p>	<p>OUTREACH & TRAININGS FOR PROVIDERS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS</p>	<p>The PeerLINKS Imperial Valley team conducted extensive outreach and training (e.g. overview of our program; LGBT community and mental health; peer support services; and a training regarding post-COVID and how community members could best manage stress associated with that) to professionals, service providers, clinicians, family members, clients, and the community in various locations including, but not limited to: hospitals, crisis center, crisis house, police departments, juvenile and adult courts, probation department, the public defender's office, the district attorney’s office, Imperial Valley’s Behavioral Health Services (including full-service partnership programs, clinics, outreach departments, etc.), the area’s federally qualified health centers (Innecare), community organizations, Imperial Valley LGBT Resource Center, Imperial County’s Office of Education, Imperial Valley College, several high schools, IV Regional Occupational Program, Womanhaven (provider of services related to domestic violence), private practice providers of mental health services, the Sure Helpline, resource fairs, and community events.</p> <p>In addition to providing presentations about our program, PeerLINKS Imperial Valley held community presentations on topics, such as: Peer Support Services and POST-COVID Re-Entry. Furthermore, our team held a Facebook live event in collaboration with Innecare and Imperial Valley LGBT Resource Center regarding Mental Health & the LGTB+ Community. These trainings were directly responsive to the professional development needs and the concerns of the community, SDRC, Behavioral Health, and other stakeholders. These trainings included evaluations; the results were tabulated and used for the purpose of adjusting the format and content as needed to maximize the experience for the participants.</p> <p>The PeerLINKS Imperial Valley program, as well as our trainings were promoted through flyers, brochures, social media campaigns, word of mouth, by participating in meetings/presentations and resource fairs, and through a billboard posting in one of the area’s malls.</p>

<p>STEP FIVE</p>	<p>REPORTS & DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS</p>	<p>Reports were submitted to MHSA DDS on a bi-annual basis. A final report will be submitted at the end of the contract. To ensure that other Regional Centers and organizations have a road map to developing a similar program, a blueprint was developed (i.e., this document). Furthermore, MHSA DDS and SDRC were given copies of all materials from the training sessions and all marketing materials developed by our program. Additional dissemination efforts may include presenting to providers and community, promoting via social media and presenting findings at available, relevant conferences.</p>
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