ACT Team Leader Retreat 2019
Changing the Narrative: Breaking Through Barriers

The ACT Institute was pleased to present the ACT Team Leader Retreat on October 10th and October 11th in Albany, New York. The retreat brought together 78 ACT Team Leaders and Vocation Specialists from all five NYS regions (NYC, Hudson River, Central NY, Western NY, and Long Island), along with OMH Administrators, to change the narrative and break through barriers.

On Thursday, October 10th, Helle Thorning, Pascale Jean-Noel, and Luis Lopez, introduced the main focuses of the two-day retreat by sharing how implicit and explicit bias impact them both personally and professionally.

The ACT Institute invited Dr. James Rodriguez and Dr. Jennifer Mullan to set the stage for an eye-opening discussion.

Dr. James Rodriguez presented an insightful keynote titled, *Overcoming Implicit Bias in Treatment* (Click Here to view Powerpoint). Dr. Rodriguez defined implicit bias as “the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decision in an unconscious matter.” He expanded on the ways in which “these implicit bias influence prejudices and impact the work of mental health providers by leading to microaggressions or insults that can, in turn, lead to a poor working relationship or early termination of services.” Dr. Rodriguez closed his presentation by providing tools to help change behaviors and unconscious biases.

Dr. Jennifer Mullan then presented *Decolonizing Our Mental Health* (Click here to view Powerpoint), an impactful keynote “focused on the importance of viewing mental health through a politicized lens, weaving together the therapeutic relationship, traumatic stress, and systemic oppression. Dr. Mullan offered her ideas on how “mental health professionals are also contributing to dismantling inequities and health disparities, leading to better outcomes from clients and clinicians, alike.”

Moderated by Luis Lopez, Drs Rodriguez and Mullan, along with Pascale contributed to a lively Q&A, where participants asked questions about how to implement tools discussed in the keynotes and real-life scenarios.
experienced when providing ACT services and working alongside those who identify with marginalized groups.

Later in the evening, Stacey Hale from the OMH Central Office lead an informative Billing Session ([Click Here to view Powerpoint](#)). Stacey reviewed the ACT Budget Model, differences in billing between upstate and downstate NYS ACT Teams, as well as regulations and guidelines for billing. She also offered workforce development ideas and the importance of the data provided in Tableau and ACT Profiles. The session concluded with time for questions.

After a long day of challenging ideas and conversations, ACT's very own, DJ LOL (Luis Lopez) kicked off a fun-filled night for all those attending the Retreat to dance, socialize, and enjoy a great playlist.

Day 2 of the Team Leader Retreat began with an energizing breakfast followed by a summary of the previous day's events and an introduction to the focus on the Vocational Specialists role.

In line with the title of this year's retreat, “Changing the Narrative: Breaking Through Barriers,” a discussion about employment and the power of employment in helping people move toward recovery. Dr. Paul Margolies, Gary Scannevin, and Noah Lipton lead the discussion with Team Leaders and Vocational Specialists about the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment, a model that has demonstrated excellent employment outcomes in PROS and OnTrack programs and NYS outpatient clinics.
During the presentation titled, *Adapting IPS for ACT (Click Here to view Powerpoint)*, Dr. Margolies reviewed the principles and practices of the model along with some of the fidelity items and with each one asked the group to comment on its feasibility within ACT. The group seemed to largely be supportive of many aspects of the model including zero exclusion, rapid job search and developing jobs based on individual preferences. Many people expressed the concern that Vocational Specialists do not have the time to focus on job development and other pieces of the model given that work is shared across the team and crises are a regular occurrence. The group provided extensive, detailed feedback that demonstrates how work is valued within ACT while also clarifying some of the challenges ACT faces in implementing the IPS model.

Following the discussion about the IPS model, Team Leaders and Vocational Specialists divided and went to different workshops. Vocational Specialists participated in a workshop entitled, *From Thinking It to Saying It to Doing It: Engagement Strategies for Helping People Move Toward Employment (Click Here to view Powerpoint)*. This workshop brought the principles of IPS to life as the group considered each one in turn and how they could be applied in how we think, speak and act with the people we serve. For example, we looked at the goal of IPS, which is competitive employment and mainstream education/training, and contrasted that with the (not too) historical view that employment was considered a risk to people’s health and financial status and that people should go through months of evaluation in noncompetitive environments before receiving support with competitive employment. We also looked at how each principle could be used to help facilitate engagement. Finally, we reviewed the Employment Resource Book and discussed its usefulness as an engagement tool.

The ACT Institute thanks all of the presenters for their contributions and opening a dialogue, allowing for us to change the narrative! We also want to thank all Team Leaders, Vocational Specialists, and OMH staff for participating and providing feedback. We look forward to a continued conversation on how to address mental health needs and barriers, as well as rethink how we approach employment for marginalized groups.

If you have not already, please make sure you complete the Evaluation emailed to you from the CPI LMS in order to receive your CEUs!