THE CATALYST

AnchorTranslating Knowledge for Change During COVID #2: Martin Boucher

Our project at the Northern Initiative for Social Action (NISA) involves the training and supervision of older adult Mental Health Peer Support workers and volunteers.

By: | Posted: August 11, 2020

Martin Boucher (Summer 2019 cohort)

Northern Initiative for Social Action (NISA) (http://nisa.on.ca/)

Our project at the Northern Initiative for Social Action (NISA) involves the training and supervision of older adult Mental Health Peer Support workers and volunteers. Because older adults are particularly susceptible to the worst outcomes of COVID-19, and the locations where support groups and one-to-one peer support were being offered have closed to visitors in order to respect social distancing guidelines, the training of new peers and the delivery of services in these settings has halted. However, we have moved our paid peer-support workers to doing phone support so that they can continue to offer services to older adults facing exacerbated levels of isolation.

The rapid mobilization of alternative modes of delivery (phone and online) at the organization generally, and in this project specifically, has opened up possibilities for the future. In a time where we focus on what we are not able to do and who we are failing to serve, it is equally important to look at who we are reaching that we were not reaching before, as well as how these alternative delivery methods might suit them better. In the spirit of the SPARK program and its focus on evaluation, this truly unfortunate situation does introduce promising opportunities for evaluating and improving service delivery overall. It may teach us things about how to serve our community better, including the most isolated and vulnerable among us.

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