CSPNJ
COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT PROGRAMS OF NEW JERSEY
CEC

KOVA

Keeping
Our
Values
Alive
Program

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Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey (CSPNJ) and Community Enterprise Corporation (CEC) share a set of **Core Values** that guide our vision, shape our culture, and reflect what matters most. These values support wellness for everyone—our employees, the people we serve, and our communities.

The **Keeping Our Values Alive (KOVA) Program** ensures that these values are not only remembered but actively practiced every day. KOVA strengthens our peer support and wellness-focused culture by helping teams reflect on and apply our values in real, meaningful ways.

KOVA benefits everyone throughout CSPNJ/CEC by:

- **Reinforcing our values** so they remain central to daily work and decision-making.
- **Supporting wellness-focused practice** through reflection and practical skill-building.
- **Promoting respectful, relationship-centered interactions** that build trust and communication.
- **Strengthening teamwork** through shared learning and mutual support.

The goal of KOVA is to keep our values **active and visible** through regular team discussions, reflection, and daily actions. The materials in this packet provide an easy-to-follow structure so that any team member can facilitate a KOVA discussion and help keep our shared values alive in all we do.

A Value is defined as:

- Something to be important or beneficial
- A person's principles or standards of behavior
- One's judgment of what is important

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Keeping Our Values Alive (KOVA) Tips:

For Staff

- **Use values in greetings and daily interactions:** Keep communication respectful, supportive, and recovery focused.
- **Name the values when you see them:** For example, *"That was a great example of compassion"* or *"I appreciate your teamwork today."*
- **Apply values in decision-making:** Pause and ask yourself, *"Am I responding in line with our values?"*
- **Reflect during the day:** Take 1–2 minutes at the end of a shift to think, *"How did I live our values today?"*
- **Encourage alignment:** Gently remind colleagues if something feels out of alignment with shared values.
- **Share stories:** Use team huddles, check-ins, or casual conversations to tell short examples of how values shaped your work.

For Supervisors

- **Start meetings with a value check-in:** Ask, "Which value has been most important in our work this week?"
- **Highlight values in feedback:** When giving recognition or coaching, connect it to a value (e.g., "The way you supported your colleague shows our value of teamwork in action.").
- **Integrate into supervision:** Dedicate 2–3 minutes per supervision session to reflect on how the staff person has lived a value, or where there's an opportunity to strengthen.
- **Use values in problem-solving:** When addressing challenges, ask, "Which of our values can guide our response?"
- **Model the values:** Demonstrate them consistently in tone, decision-making, and interactions so staff see them in practice.
- **Celebrate values in action:** Share short stories of staff or teams living out the values during staff meetings or newsletters.
- **Reinforce through recognition:** Create a "Values Spotlight" where staff nominate peers who exemplify a value that month.

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Day-to-Day Weaving Strategies (Supervisors + Staff Together)

- **Visual reminders:** Post values in breakrooms, meeting spaces, or share via email.
- **Micro-reflections:** At the end of a meeting, spend one minute on, "Where did we see our values today?"
- **Value of the month:** Rotate and focus on one value monthly, with examples, quotes, or questions posted on bulletin boards.
- **Peer recognition:** Build in moments during community meetings or shift hand-offs to acknowledge peers who demonstrated a value.
- **Community connection:** Invite participants or members to share how they experience the organization's values in action.

Ways to Extend KOVA Beyond Team Meetings

In Team Meetings	• Rotate facilitators so staff take turns leading value discussions. • Dedicate a few minutes at the end of meetings to ask, *"Where did we see our values today?"* • Use values as a guide for problem-solving or decision-making.
In Community Wellness Centers	• Open community meetings with a short reflection on one of the values. • Post value on bulletin boards. • Encourage members to recognize peers or staff who demonstrate the values ("values in action board"). • Include values as part of orientation for new staff, interns, and volunteers.

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Discussion Session Facilitator's Outline

Preparation (for the values discussion facilitator)

- Schedule the discussion session at the beginning of the month.
- Review the discussion outline thoroughly before delivering.
- Complete the worksheet yourself so you have examples to share.
- Distribute the handout (the "values worksheet") via email and in mailboxes a few days before the meeting. Ask people to bring a copy and come prepared to discuss.

Timing: 20 minutes total

Introduction 3 minutes **Discussion** 12 minutes. **Wrap up** 5 minutes

Session Flow

Orient to KOVA Session (about 1 minute)	• **Say:** "Today, we're spending 20 minutes on our 'Keeping Our Values Alive' discussion." • **Share:** The handout and briefly explain that this activity is part of a five-month agency-wide project.
Introduce the Value (about 2 minutes)	• **Say:** *"Today, we're focusing on the value of [name the value]. This is the [first/second/etc.] topic in our KOVA series."* • **Ask:** Team members to take turns reading short sections from the handout to review definitions and examples.
Discussion (about 12 minutes)	• Encourage everyone to share or record responses in chat (if virtual). • **Discussion Prompts:** • Why is this value important to our work? • How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work? • What's an example of how you demonstrated this value recently? • How will you apply this value in the coming week?
Wrap Up (about 5 minutes)	• **Say:** *"Today, we talked about how to keep the value of [name the value] alive in our work."* • **Summarize:** Key themes and ideas shared by the group. • **Invite reflection:** *"Over the next week, notice how your actions reflect this value."*

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Facilitation Tips

- Encourage participation from everyone.
- Acknowledge and appreciate all contributions—provide constructive feedback as necessary.
- Model the value being discussed.
- Keep the discussion focused and on time.
- Have a note-taker and share discussion notes shortly after the session.

Follow-Up

- Ask at the next team meeting: "How did you demonstrate this value this week?"
- Refer to the value during meetings, planning, and decision-making.
- Share examples with leadership about how your team is living the value

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WORKSHEET

Relationships as the means for growth and connection

What each of us can do to live this value:

- We use language that is strengths based.
- We praise and offer recognition often when interacting with others
- We use active listening, acknowledging what you don't know, and asking for greater understanding.
- We hear/use respectful language in all conversation.

Think About:

- **Building strong relationships** is an important part of the CSPNJ/CEC mission.
- **Trust** is an important foundation for relationship building.

Why is this value important to our work?

How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work?

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WORKSHEET

People's potential and their ability to grow and change

What each of us can do to live this value:

- At every opportunity we openly and genuinely acknowledge others' strengths, assets, and gifts.
- We use language that is strengths-based.
- We encourage one another to seek or create learning opportunities to build skills, knowledge, and assets.
- We offer one another guidance to increase ability to manage responsibilities and self-care.

Definitions:

- **Potential -** *ability, capacity, promise, aptitude*
- **Growth** - *progress, advancement, development*
- **Change** - *modify, adjust, transform, alter*

Think About:

We are committed to maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude, believing that everyone can move in the direction of a more meaningful and productive life.

Why is this value important to our work?

How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work?

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WORKSHEET

Self-sufficiency through interdependence

What each of us can do to live this value:

- We support one another to care for ourselves and care for one another.
- We support people in building connections with one another and communities.
- We encourage each other to seek opportunities and natural supports to build skills.

Definitions:

- **Self-sufficiency** - *meeting own needs without help*
- **Interdependence** - *mutual reliance*

Think About:

We are interdependent, since we live and work in communities and our lives intersect with others every day. We all need help at times. We all benefit from social support and encouragement.

With that help, support, and encouragement, we are able to manage stressors and daily responsibilities in ways that make us feel self-sufficient.

Why is this value important to our work?

How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work?

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WORKSHEET

The dignity and diversity of each individual

What each of us can do to live this value:

- We value life experiences and challenges as an asset.
- We honor a wide range of cultures, traditions, and viewpoints.
- We listen with openness to understand people whose viewpoints and history differ from our own.

Definitions:

- **Diversity** - *variation, difference*
- **Dignity** - *self-worth, self-respect, pride*

Think About:

Differences among people create a richness within a community through a variety of tastes, traditions, opinions, and beliefs. For some people, and in some situations, those differences can create discomfort. It's important to recognize that each person has value and deserves respect. Learning about these differences can help us understand others and ourselves in a new way.

Why is this value important to our work?

How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work?

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WORKSHEET

Choices and the responsibility of choices

What each of us can do to live this value:

- We offer choices and preferences and, when relevant and possible, support
- We provide opportunities for people to share their preferences. When a person's choice or preference cannot be honored, the person is treated with respect and fairness
- We offer education about responsibilities that go along with choices.

Think About:

People make small choices every day. Many choices result in consequences, either short- or long-term, either for better or for worse, and maybe in ways we don't expect or in ways that affect others. Each of the choices that we make carries with it the responsibility for those consequences.

Definitions:

- **Choices** - *options, preferences, selections, alternatives*
- **Responsibility** - *obligation, task*

Why is this value important to our work?

How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work?

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WORKSHEET

Inclusive communities that promote a sense of belonging

What each of us can do to live this value:

- We use body language, facial expressions, and mannerisms that create a welcoming environment.
- We welcome everyone with a greeting and a smile
- In all CSPNJ/CEC buildings, websites, promotional documents, and images that reflect the local community (faces that "look like me")

Think About:

Definitions:

- **Inclusive** - *comprehensive, broad, not restricted*
- **Community** - *a group sharing something in common, such as identity or location; a feeling of fellowship*
- **Belonging** - *acceptance as a natural member*

Why is this value important to our work?

How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work?

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WORKSHEET

Innovation as a challenge to the status quo

What each of us can do to live this value:

- Welcome new ideas that have the potential for positive change for individuals or day-to-day operations
- Try new and different approaches to our work
- Publicly acknowledge new ideas that are adopted or inspire changes

Think About:

We believe in individuals' potential to change and grow and also in our ability as an organization to improve what we do, how we do it, and what we accomplish. Making improvements often requires creative thinking.

Why is this value important to our work?

How does this value guide what you do in your day-to-day work

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WORKSHEET

Peer Support

We believe that our greatest resource is the life experiences of persons working through their own recovery.

Definitions:

A **peer** is someone who is an equal—someone who shares common experiences, perspectives, or goals. In the workplace, being a peer also means working alongside others with mutual respect, trust, and shared responsibility. Within CSPNJ and CEC, the term "peer" carries an additional meaning: many of our staff identify as peers because they have lived through their own life disruptions related to trauma, mental health or substance use challenges, or criminal justice involvement.

Drawing on these experiences, **peer supporters** intentionally use the insights and skills gained through both life and professional training to support others on their wellness and recovery journeys. This approach is grounded in empathy, mutuality, and respect, creating relationships where both people can learn and grow.

Peer Support Services are individualized and strengths-based. They focus on helping people build wellness, hope, and resilience while developing the skills to live independently and purposefully. Whether among staff members or in services with individuals in the community, peer support helps strengthen connection, communication, and collaboration.

At its heart, **peer support** is about people helping people—recognizing that we all have experiences and strengths that, when shared, can foster healing, growth, and wellness for everyone involved.

Your thoughts:

Why and how is Peer Support important in your work?

In your role how can you use Peer Support qualities?

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WORKSHEET

Recovery

Recovery is a process through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

Definitions:

Recovery is a process through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. It is a personal journey that looks different for everyone. **Recovery-oriented services** focus on hope, empowerment, and self-determination. They build on each person's strengths and recognize that there are many pathways to recovery. These services promote environments where people are supported to make choices for themselves and to take an active role in their own wellness.

Key elements of recovery-oriented practice include:

- Promoting access and engagement
- Using strengths-based assessments
- Offering individualized support
- Encouraging community connection and inclusion
- Identifying and addressing barriers to recovery

Recovery-oriented environments create opportunities for people to build skills, develop resilience, and pursue meaningful goals in their lives and communities.

Your thoughts:

Why is an understanding of and a belief in Recovery important in your work?

In your role how can you be more Recovery-Oriented?

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WORKSHEET

Recovery Language

Definitions:

Strengths-based and person-first language is hopeful, empowering, respectful, and sensitive. It focuses on a person's abilities, goals, and potential—emphasizing what someone *can* do rather than what they cannot.

This type of language **puts the person before a label**, recognizing each individual as more than a diagnosis, condition, or circumstance. It highlights humanity, dignity, and possibility.

Strengths-based language is also **descriptive rather than judgmental.** It focuses on actions and experiences instead of making assumptions or using stigmatizing terms. It uses clear, plain words that promote understanding and connection rather than technical jargon or clinical language.

By choosing our words carefully, we help create an environment of respect and hope—one that supports wellness, inclusion, and the belief that everyone has strengths to build upon.

Your thoughts:

Why is recovery language important in your work?

In your role, what can you do to help yourself and others use Recovery Language?

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Examples of Strengths-Based and Person-First Language

Instead of Saying...	Try Saying...	Why Strength based/PersonCentered
"She's mentally ill."	"She's a person living with a mental health challenge."	Puts the person before the condition; avoids defining someone by an illness.
"He's a substance abuser."	"He's a person in recovery" or "a person working on his wellness."	Focuses on progress and effort, not stigma.
"They're noncompliant."	"They're choosing a different approach right now" or "They have concerns about the plan."	Avoids judgment; opens dialogue and collaboration.
"She's resistant."	"She's not ready to make that change yet."	Acknowledges readiness as part of growth, not defiance.
"He's homeless."	"He's unhoused."	Recognizes the person's humanity and that the situation can change.
"They're difficult to engage."	"They may need more trust and connection before engaging."	Shifts focus from blame to understanding and support.
"She relapsed."	"She had a setback but is continuing her recovery journey."	Emphasizes persistence and resilience.
"He's a schizophrenic."	"He's a person living with schizophrenia."	Uses person-first, respectful language.
"She's low functioning."	"She benefits from additional supports."	Focuses on needs and supports, not judgment.

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WORKSHEET

Relationship-Focused

Healthy relationships are those in which individuals get support and encouragement.
~Mark Duffy

Definitions:

A **relationship** is the way two or more people connect and interact—how they communicate, behave toward one another, and work through challenges together.

Supportive relationships are built on respect, trust, empathy, collaboration, and mutual understanding. In healthy relationships, people feel accepted and are free to be themselves.

CSPNJ was founded on the belief that people who experience life disruptions can heal and grow through **positive, uplifting relationships.** Supportive connections help people find hope, build resilience, and move forward in their wellness journey.

Your thoughts:

Why is being Relationship-Focused important in your work?

In your role, how can you be more Relationship-Focused?

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WORKSHEET

Trauma-Informed

Trauma-informed support emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety and creates opportunities to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

Definitions:

Understanding Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma refers to deeply distressing or disturbing experiences that can have lasting effects on a person's physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It may result from one event or repeated experiences that feel harmful or threatening. People often develop certain behaviors or coping patterns as a way to manage the impact of trauma.

Trauma-informed services recognize that trauma is common and that many people we work with may have experienced it. Understanding this helps us see that challenging behaviors are often rooted in attempts to cope, rather than in resistance or unwillingness to change.

Trauma-informed care is a strengths-based approach that promotes physical, emotional, and psychological safety. It focuses on building trust, offering choice, and empowering people to regain a sense of control. Because some situations can unintentionally trigger trauma responses, trauma-informed care also means creating policies, environments, and interactions that prioritize safety and avoid re-traumatization.

Your thoughts:

Why is it important to consider trauma when collaborating with peers?

What can you do to create an environment so people can be supported and succeed?

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Resilience

Fall seven times, rise eight. ~Japanese Proverb

Definitions:

Resilience is bouncing back from adversity, trauma, or other stressful situations, like heavy traffic, family and relationship difficulties, serious health problems, workplace pressures, financial troubles, or the loss of someone you care about. The foundation for resilience is self-care. **Self-care** is a set of planned and deliberate actions—things that you do daily or weekly to manage your stress, to get and stay physically healthy, and to create and re-create a sense of wellness in all of the dimensions (physical, spiritual, social, intellectual, financial, environmental, emotional, occupational).

Your thoughts:

Why is Resilience and wellness important in your work?

What can we do to support one another's wellness self-care?

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