

Helping People with Mental Illness for Social Inclusion: Exploring the Experiences of Promoting Social Inclusion in Halfway Houses

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Abstract

“Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” has recognized the equal right of the persons with disabilities to live in the community and with choices equal to others. All nations thus shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community. In Taiwan, the promotion of social inclusion for persons with mental illness has been contained in the institution evaluation indicators, used to manage and supervise halfway houses. This paper aims to explore how the halfway houses accumulated social inclusion experiences while implementing psychiatric rehabilitation, particularly when the people with mental illness still suffer stigma and discrimination within Taiwanese society. Adapting the qualitative in-depth interview, a total of 9 halfway house professionals who actually took part in social inclusion services were recruited through purposive sampling and snowball method. Data was collected from April

2013 to April 2015. The research found that there was a lot of stigma and prejudice attached to the halfway house. However, the institution still tried the best to promote social inclusion for 3 reasons: 1) effect of the evaluation indicators; 2) the professionals' perspectives of treating people with mental illness as ordinary people who could live in community; and 3) the professionals' experiences and reflection accumulated from practical services as well as education training. Diverse methods were carried out including: providing community services, planning or encouraging interactional activities, offering independent living training for residents, promoting friendship building and maintaining, strengthening the neighborhood relationship, assisting community employment of residents, and inviting the outsiders to halfway house or leading out halfway house to the outsider. Drawing conclusions from empirical evidence, the research not only made suggestions for social inclusion practice for the halfway house professionals but also provided practical advices on future policy making.

Keywords: Social inclusion, Halfway house, Mental rehabilitation institution, People with mental illness