



Game Changers

The Power of Peers and Family Partners

Judicial Commission on Mental Health Summit
October 2025

Sommer Alexander, JI-RPS Texas Harm Reduction Alliance

- Sommer is a passionate advocate, educator, and Re-entry Peer Support Specialist dedicated to promoting equity and dignity for individuals impacted by the system across Texas. In her dual roles with the Texas Harm Reduction Alliance and as the Texas Chapter Coordinator for TimeDone, Sommer works at the intersection of social justice, restorative justice, and reentry support.
- With lived experience and deep empathy, she empowers individuals navigating life after incarceration by providing critical education on legal rights, voting access, community resources, and strategies for overcoming the 40,000+ collateral consequences tied to a criminal record. Through statewide outreach, events, and peer support, Sommer helps people reclaim their narratives, rebuild their futures, and advocate for systemic change. Her work is rooted in harm reduction, recovery, and meeting basic needs—recognizing that lasting transformation begins with dignity and opportunity.



Melissa Porter, LCDC, RPS Houston Recovery Center

Melissa Porter is a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC) with an Associate of Applied Science in Human Resources/LCDC from Lone Star Community College and a wide range of professional certifications, including Community Health Worker (CHW), Peer Supervision Specialist (PSS), Recovery Support Peer Specialist (RSPS), Mental Health Peer Specialist (MHPS), and Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS/IC&RC ICPR). She currently serves as a Criminal Justice Case Manager at the Houston Recovery Center, bringing extensive experience in peer support, admissions counseling, and community outreach through previous roles with Temenos CDC and Santa Maria Hostel Inc. Her career has also encompassed program coordination, maternal recovery initiatives, and client advocacy, reflecting her deep commitment to supporting recovery, mental health, and justice-involved populations.



Angie Tyler, CPF Integral Care, Austin

Angie Tyler is a Bilingual Certified Family Partner with nine years of experience, currently serving on a First Episode Psychosis (FEP) team in Austin, Texas. A former foster parent and juvenile probation officer, Angie brings a wealth of lived and professional experience supporting families and individuals navigating mental health and intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) services. She has presented at FEP conferences and has led trainings for Family Partners across the state, advocating for family voice and culturally responsive care in every setting.



The power of Lived Experience

- Everyone has invaluable “lived-experience”
- Story transforms the conversation
- You can use it in leadership, supervision, presentations, etc.

What's the story you'd tell?

- A challenge you faced (difficult client, career change, supervision challenge)?
- The choice you made.
- The outcome of that choice

Game Changers: The Power of Peers/Family Partners with Justice-Involved Populations

- How does this presentation spark your imagination?
- What possibilities does this open up for you?
- What are some modest early steps you can take?
 - Looking for grants
 - Discussing with colleagues
 - Speaking with peer/family partner experts for technical assistance.



How to Reach Our Experts in Peer Services

- Sommer Alexander, salexander@harmreductiontx.org
 - Melissa Porter, mporter@houstonrecoverycenter.org
 - Angie Tyler, angie.tyler@integralcare.org
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