

The Value of Peer Support: A Core Service in Ontario

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Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that we are joining from across Ontario from Aboriginal land that has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples from the beginning. As settlers, we're grateful for the opportunity to meet here, and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land for thousands of years. We recognize that Indigenous practices of health and well-being have been in place in this territory for over 10,000 years and are maintained to this day. As healthcare leaders, we have much work to do ourselves to do our part and support the de-colonization of children's healthcare systems.



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The Value of Peer Support: A Core Service in Ontario



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Disclosure Statement

I will be presenting in my role as Director of Support House's Centre for Innovation in Peer Support. Ideas, opinions, and comments described in these slides and during this presentation are my own and are not representative of nor affiliated with my current appointment as Chair of the Health Minister's Patient and Family Advisory Council.

~ Betty-Lou Kristy

Support  **House**

 Centre for
Innovation in
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Betty-Lou Kristy



Richard Adair



Alyssa Gremmen



Ethan Hopkins





Support House's **Centre for Innovation in Peer Support** has both, direct service and systems support programming. Our Direct Service team provides wellness based, peer-led self-help and social connections programming. The Centre's Provincial, Systems & Partner stream is focused on supporting peer staff and their organizations, as well as organizations looking to implement peer staff through training, capacity-building, evaluation, research, knowledge brokerage, and quality improvement.



A Core Service

Core Service in Ontario

Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness: a Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System

Peer Support and Family Support identified as Core Services

for people with:

- low needs
- moderate needs
- severe or complex needs

Integrating Peer Support

Where?

- **Anywhere in a continuum of care:**
 - Providing: One to one support, group facilitation, intake supports, waitlist support, referrals and warm transfers, aftercare etc.
- **Hospitals**
 - Emergency Departments, Overdose Aftercare, Psychiatric Units/Programs, Outpatient Programs Cancer care, Diabetes care etc.
- **Community Services**
 - Health, Family Supports, Mental Health & Addiction, Justice, Harm Reduction, 2SLGBTQ+, Sex work, Sexual Assault etc.
- **Advisory Boards**

Case Study: Enhancing and Sustaining Peer Support Initiative

In 2014, the need for peer support as well as the need for the support and training of agencies providing authentic peer support was identified as a priority in the Mississauga/Halton LHIN area.

“Enhancing peer supports is an essential component of a more coordinated and integrated mental health and addiction system that delivers high quality care for positive person experiences and outcomes to people in our communities”

- Bill MacLeod CEO, Mississauga Halton LHIN (2016)

Case Study: Enhancing and Sustaining Peer Support Initiative

Enhancing Peer Support

40+ positions

Hospitals, Residential Treatment, Employment services, Community based services

Sustaining Peer Support

Vision: Build capacity for peer support...and connect this pioneering initiative to the larger systems regionally, provincially and nationally.



Foundations of Peer Support



Our Definitions

What is peer support?

“Peer support is intended to be rooted in hope through an empowering and empathetic relationship between people who have a similar life experience or circumstance in common”

Who is a peer worker?

“Someone who has a similar life experience or circumstances to yours. They have engaged in special training and skill development to enhance their ability to support you in living the life you want.”

- Centre for Innovation in Peer Support

Values of Peer Support

Source: Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2013). Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support.

Hope and Recovery

Acknowledging the power of hope and the positive impact that comes from a recovery approach

Integrity, Authenticity and Trust

Noting that confidentiality, reliability and ethical behaviour are honoured in each and every interaction

Self-Determination

Having faith that each person intrinsically knows which path towards recovery is most suitable for them and their needs, noting that it is the peer's choice whether to become involved in a peer support relationship

Dignity, Respect and Social Inclusion

Acknowledging the intrinsic worth of all individuals, whatever their background, preferences or situation

Empathetic and Equal Relationships

Noting that the peer support relationship and all involved can benefit from the reciprocity and better understanding that comes from a similar experience.

Lifelong Learning and Personal Growth

Acknowledging the value of learning, changing and developing new perspectives for all individuals

Health and Wellness

Acknowledging all aspects of a healthy and full life

Values in Action

The Centre for Innovation in Peer Support recognizes that peer support is made up of values based actions.

17 values based action statements were developed. These are the Peer Support Values in Action

These statements are validated and reliability tested, the items cannot be changed or altered.

Values in Action

1. **The peer support worker** reminds me that my health and wellness is unique to me
2. **The peer support worker** tells me about their experience in a way that is meaningful to me
3. **The peer support worker** gives me encouragement
4. **The peer support worker** shares information with me, e.g., community resources that are available, different learning opportunities
5. **The peer support worker** helps me explore options open to me when I have a decision to make
6. **The peer support worker** does not express disapproval of me or the choices I make
7. **The peer support worker** tells me they believe in me
8. **The peer support worker** tells me my feelings and opinions are worthwhile

Values in Action

9. **The peer support worker** genuinely listens to me
10. **The peer support worker** follows through on commitments they make
11. **The peer support worker** discusses confidentiality with me
12. **The peer support worker** tells me that I am not alone in my experiences and struggles
13. **The peer support worker** encourages me to do things for myself instead of doing things for me
14. **The peer support worker** learns from me and I learn from them
15. **The peer support worker** reminds me that I have the right to express my needs
16. **The peer support worker** demonstrates ways they take care of themselves
17. **When I meet with others in a group, the peer support worker** tells me that I can participate in a way that is comfortable for me and the group



The Peer Support Role





What it is and what it isn't...

The Peer Support Role is

- Intentional values based behaviours
- A relationship directed by persons engaging in services
- Sharing of lived/living experience
- A unique role within circles of care
- Skilled work and expertise

The Peer Support Role is NOT

- Formal counselling
- Therapy
- Sponsorship
- Medical advising
- Friendship
- Case management

What it is and what it isn't...

Tasks and duties should

- Align with the core values of peer support and values in action
- Allow for the peer worker to use their lived experience
- Provide opportunity to connect with individuals in a way that builds rapport and facilitates connection with services / team
- Align with service and organization goals
- Makes use of the peer worker's skill set

Tasks and duties should not

- Conflict with peer values and values in action
- Be prescriptive/push an agenda
- Include providing clinically based practices (therapy, medication, assessments)

- Philips et al., 2019

Common Peer Support Activities

- Connect people with resources and referrals
- Meet 1:1 with people to share and explore experiences
- Provide reassurance and support to someone in crisis
- Do recreational activities with individuals
- Support people in court
- Take people to appointments
- Help people communicate with other providers
- Provide assistance with grocery shopping, and transit navigation
- Listen
- Help people identify goals
- Facilitate and co-facilitate peer support and recovery groups
- Coordinate service recipients volunteering as a group
- Administration and documentation

- Philips et al., 2019

Common Peer Support Activities

Providing support to other staff and to the mental health and addiction system

- Training other staff about peer support
- Conference presentations
- Talking with other staff about the realities of mental health / addictions and the impact of misperceptions and discrimination.
- Committee work
- Promotion of a better understanding of the individual experiences of mental illness, substance use/addictions supporting change at an organizational level
- Team meetings / supervision
- Program planning, evaluation and reporting

- Philips et al., 2019

Common Myths

Common Myths

- *Myth #1: Peer workers are less educated than other mental health and addiction workers.*
- *Myth #2: Peer workers will “dump” their experiences on people they are supporting – doing more harm than good.*
- *Myth #3: Peer workers will encourage the people they work with not to take medication.*
- *Myth #4: Peer support is anti-psychiatry / anti-system*
- *Myth #5: Peer support workers require special treatment*

- Philips et al., 2019



The Evidence and Benefits of Peer Support



Peer Support Outcomes and Impact

- Reduction in symptoms
- Decreased substance use
- Increased medication adherence
- Increased self-efficacy
- Development of coping and interpersonal skills
- Adoption of healthy behaviours
- Improved daily functioning and quality of life
- Increased goal setting and recovery planning
- Improved social functioning and expanded social networks
- Increased ability to reframe experience and re-construct identity
- More empowered and hopeful

- CMHA Waterloo Wellington

Impact on Mental Health and Addiction System

- Fewer and shorter hospitalizations
- A reduced need for intensive mental health services
- Increased service-user satisfaction with treatment
- Better communication with service providers¹
- Peer supporters model recovery, decreasing stigma and altering attitudes among mental health providers
- Services become more recovery-oriented and person-centered when they employ peer staff
- Involving peer staff in systems-level planning leads to more innovative policies and programs

- CMHA Waterloo Wellington

Peer Support Integrity, Quality and Impact Survey

The Centre created a validated tool to measure...

Integrity

The degree to which peer support services align with the values of peer support

Quality

The degree to which peer support affect **PES**'s feelings about services they are receiving?

Impact

The degree to which **PES** believe they are experiencing certain impacts in their day-to-day life because of peer support

...from the perspective of **People Engaging with peer support Services**

Case Study:

In 2019 our LHIN funded partners distributed this survey to 332 people engaging in peer services across a number of programs.

Integrity

The mean (average) score for all items was very positive, people were experiencing the values in action

Quality

80% of identified emotions were positive emotions with peer support

Impact

75-80% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with each impact statement

Meeting with a Peer Worker

“Somebody cares about me.”

“XXXXX makes me feel like my future will be a solid and positive life experience.”

“Meetings helped me be more in tune with my own directions-feelings.”

“No matter how I felt before my meetings with my peer support worker, I came out of the meeting feeling better & more optimistic than I did going in.”

What do supervisors say?

- “Amazing work with clients”
- Sharing journeys on panels and in presentations personalizes services and informs service provision
- Presentations on peer work – expands peer support connections, referrals and understanding etc.
- Peers in therapy group sharing from personal experience is working well
- Sharing perspective and peer views in team meetings allows for different perspectives
- Involvement in client consultations – helps other team members connect with people engaging in services
- Increased connection at meetings and during groups



Training and Learning Opportunities



Provincial, Partner and System Supports

Virtual Learning Centre & Resource Hub

Peer Staff, Supervisor & Team Trainings

Mentoring and Consultation

(Implementation, Peer Support Practice, Quality Improvement)

Peer Professional Development Webinar Series

Communities of Practice

Implementation Resources

Peer Support Practice Resources

Validated Peer Support Evaluation Tool

Peer Support Core Competencies Training

- Recovery and Wellness
- Peer Support Foundations
- The Peer Role + Working as a Team
- Communication Basics
- Connecting through our Experiences
- Peer Support Relationships
- Ethics and Boundaries
- Trauma Informed Care Practices
- Stigma and Discrimination
- Culture, Diversity and Worldview
- Social Determinants of Health + Advocacy
- Self Determination and Stages of Change
- Supporting Someone Experiencing Crisis/Distress
- Wellness Planning
- Resiliency

Staff and Supervisor Trainings

Staff Values in Action Training

1 day training for Peer Supporters working for Organizations

An opportunity for trained professional Peer Supporters working within organizations to further enhance their skills and understanding of their role.

Introduction to Peer Staff Supervision

An introduction to Peer Support and how to best support Peer Support positions within your organization

Peer Professional Development Webinar Series

- Understanding Peer Support
- Ethically Navigating Boundaries with People Engaging in Services
- Welcome to the Centre for Innovation in Peer Support
- Our Virtual World: A Toolkit for Implementing Virtual Group Services
- Supporting our Wellness in the Workplace
- Sharing Your Personal Journey for Public Speaking and/or Advisory Engagement

Communities of Practice

Peer Staff

Family & Caregiver Peer Staff

Supervisors of Peer Staff

Resource Hub

- Peer Support Practice Resources
- Organizational Resources for Peer Support
- Evidence & Research related to Peer Support
- Quality Improvement
- Engagement with Lived Experience

Mentorship and Consultation

- Implementation and Integration of Peer Support
- Peer Support Practice
- Lived Experience Engagement
- Quality Improvement

Growing Peer Support Skills

Trainings

Wellness Recovery Action Plan
(Level 1 and 2)
Brief Action Planning
Non Violent Crisis Intervention Training
First Aid and CPR
Suicide Support Trainings
(ASIST, SafeTalk, Suicide to Hope)
Mental Health First Aid

Training topics to learn more about:

Harm Reduction
Cultural Competency
Grief and Bereavement
Wellness and Mindfulness
Mental Health/Addiction
Anti-Oppression
Trauma informed Care Practices
2SLGBTQ+

Always consider how professional development aligns with the values and practices of Peer Support

Closing

“Peer support workers understand, they have “walked the walk”, they may not have had the same experiences as me, but we all feel pain, sadness, depression, anxiety, anger...their willingness to share personal experiences with me and others makes a big difference”

- PSIQUI Survey respondent

Thank You!

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<https://supporthouse.ca/peer-services/>



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