

Peer Support

What is peer support?

It is a supportive relationship between people who have a lived experience in common. This experience may be related to their own mental health, or that of a loved one. Peer support can be emotional, social or practical support. It is meant to provide support and mentoring without directing a person's recovery journey.

Peer support workers are not case managers, clinicians or therapists. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the positive outcomes associated with peer support provided in conjunction with clinical supports in mental health.

Peer support is rooted in the knowledge that hope is the starting point from which a journey of recovery must begin.

- Mental Health Commission of Canada

What does peer support look like?

Peer support:

- Can be provided in both group and one-to-one relationships
- Can take place in community groups, clinical settings, and workplaces

This range of accessibility is important, as it can influence a person's day-to-day interactions in their communities, clinics, workplaces and more.

For example:

- You could incorporate a peer support worker into the care team or link to an accredited peer support worker program.
- Peer support can be informally provided by groups of peers who have experienced similar issues in their recovery.
- You could employ a peer support worker on an Assertive Community Treatment team.
- Peers could share their experience of substance use treatment and recovery with a group currently in residential addiction treatment.

Peer support can range from informal friendship to more formal clinical care.

Informal peer support includes things like:

- A clubhouse or walk-in centre
- Self-help or mutual peer support

Formal peer support includes things like:

- Workplace peer support
- Community or clinical peer support
- Clinical, conventional or mental health system peer support

Spectrum of types of peer support

