



Implementing Peer Staff Roles: Critical Reflection Questions

The following are a set of reflective practice questions intended for three particular audiences who have an impact on the implementation of peer staff roles.

- Managers and supervisors;
- Co-workers of peer staff; and
- Peer staff who work independently or as part of a team.

These questions are designed to act as a catalyst for meaningful reflection or conversation. These questions were designed from a peer perspective.

Questions for Everyone

The following questions may be useful for anyone who is or may have a working relationship with peer staff.

1. What is the value of shared lived experience for the recovery process?
2. What does the recovery model mean for your practice? How does the way you think about recovery effect how you think about the role of peer staff?
3. What is the appropriate role for peer staff in a mainstream mental health and addiction agency?

Questions for Managers

The following questions may be useful for managers including directors and those who provide either direct managerial or clinical supervision.

Directors

1. Why are we hiring (or have we hired) peer staff? What motivates our decision? What value will peer staff bring to our organization and the people we serve?
2. How do we, as an organization, demonstrate that we value the participation of peers in all aspects of decision-making, including peer roles?
3. What values and principles guide the way we structure peer job positions? What would it look like to structure a peer job position in a way that values equity, job security, and recovery?
4. How are we ensuring that peer staff don't face unnecessary barriers to advancement in their careers in

COMMON IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

- Access to accommodations
- Application process
- Career pathways / advancement
- Clarity of purpose
- Compensation
- Cooptation
- Employment status
- Identity conflict
- Isolation
- Maintaining good mental health and well-being
- Overworked and overextended
- Relationships with non-peer colleagues
- Relationships with service users
- Resources to meet job requirements
- Role clarity
- Supervision
- Training
- Using lived experience

Source:

Harrison, J., Read, J., Blum, K., Dickie, B., Lauzon, S., Silk, W., & Sodtke, L. (2016). A Reflective Practice Tool for Mental Health and Addiction Agencies that Employ Peer Staff. Self Help, CMHA WWD.

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order to fully realize the leadership of people with lived experience in our organization and society?

Supervisors

1. What role should supervision play in enabling peer staff to use their lived experience effectively? How might shared lived experience effect supervision? How do I, as a supervisor, use my lived experience effectively in supervising peer staff?
2. How can our existing staff have a better understanding of peer roles? Do my expectations of peer staff differ from my expectations of other staff? If so, how and why?
3. How do my personal or professional experiences affect the way I provide or facilitate accommodations for peer staff?
4. How might team structure and processes need to look different to ensure that they are inclusive of peer staff?

Questions for Co-workers

The following questions may be useful for co-workers of peer staff from various disciplines and may be part of a multidisciplinary team.

1. Does working with a peer colleague raise any concerns for me about my own position? If so, how and why?
2. How is peer work similar and different from the work that I do, for example, use of self, boundaries, beliefs about recovery? How do these similarities and differences affect the way I work with my peer colleagues?
3. How does working with a peer colleague affect the way you think about recovery?
4. When experiencing challenges with peer colleagues: What are the roots of this challenge? How does the structure and culture of our organization or team contribute to challenges that I experience with my peer colleagues? How does my colleague's lived experience influence the way I perceive the challenge and the potential solutions for addressing it?
5. In what ways does the work of my peer colleagues broaden the services and enhance client care? In supporting clients at our agency how does "success" look similar and different in my work compared to the work of my peer colleague?

Questions for Peer Staff

The following questions may be useful for peer staff that work independently or as part of a team in a mainstream mental health and addiction organizations.

1. What role does relationships with other peer staff play in the way you understand and perform your role as a peer staff?
2. What kind of support from your team is important for you to be effective at your job in a way that is healthy?
3. Whose responsibility is it to educate your co-workers?
4. Do the relationship boundaries that you engage in as a peer staff change in different contexts or relationships? If so, how and why?
5. What are the benefits and challenges of using your lived experience in your work as a peer staff? How should you use your lived experience to effectively support others?

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