



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Waterloo Wellington



SELF HELP &  
PEER SUPPORT

# The Supervision Needs of Peer Workers in Non-Peer Settings



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# Outline

- Context
- Supervision needs of peer workers
- On-going training needs of peer workers
- Models of supervision
- Essential elements of peer worker supervision

# Context



# Definitions

**Peer Supervisor:**  
Someone who supervises a peer worker who has the experience of having been a peer worker themselves.

**Non-Peer Supervisor:** Someone who supervises a peer worker who has never been a peer worker / provided formalized peer support themselves.

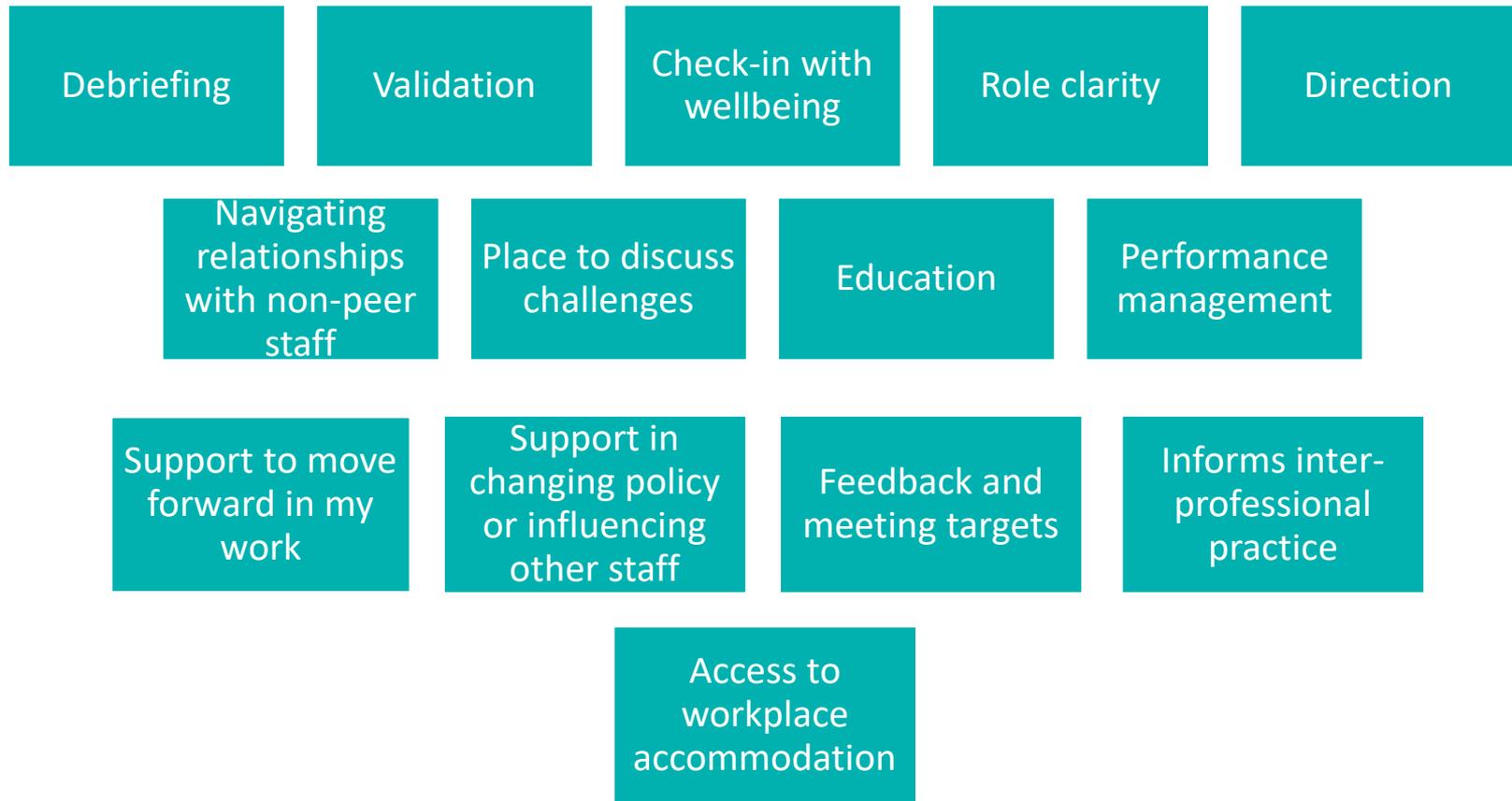
**Non-peer services/ settings:** Settings or services where people access mental health and addictions help or treatment and are not run by consumer-survivors.

# The Value of Supervision

- Effective supervision is crucial to the support of peer role in a non-peer setting
- Supervision can minimize peer drift and prevent burnout
- Peer worker supervision provides space to reflect on professional practice and improves practice
- Many peer workers indicate that their supervisors often lack an understanding of peer support roles
- External supervision may be most effective in helping peers to reflect on their role

(Chinman, Hamilton, Butler, Knight, Murray, & Young, 2008; Daniel, Turner, Powell, & Fricks, 2015; Orwin, 2008; Swarbick & Nemec, 2010; Acker, 1999; Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, 2010)

# What Peer Workers Want From Non-Peer Supervisors



# Challenges with Non-Peer Supervision

Too focused on targets or numbers

Lack of understanding about the amount of work we do

When supervision goes from supportive to intrusive

Infrequent or rushed supervision

Lack of understanding about peer support work

Worrying about using lived experience in supervision

Supervisor desire to quantify the experience of peer support can dismiss the person's narrative

# Peer Workers: The Role of Peer Supervision

How to be a better  
peer worker

Personal wellness  
and recovery

Role clarity

Problem solving

Work wellness  
planning

How the peer  
worker relates to  
their knowledge  
base

# Literature:

## Peer Support Specific Supervision

- Provides space for reflective practice
  - Esp. Around drawing from and communicating lived experience.
- Identifies areas for growth and setting professional goals
- Provides peer support specific information and insights
- Recognizes when drift or co-optation is occurring and helps peer worker to increase awareness and address it
- Recognizes and acts upon barriers the peer worker is facing
- Explores use of lived experience (esp. around stigmatized experiences)
- Discusses boundaries and dual relationships
- How to discuss workplace accommodations with their non-peer supervisor

(Tucker, Tiegreen, Toole, Banathy, Mulloy, & Swarbrick, 2013; Chinman, et al., 2008; Harrison, 2015; Culbreth & Borders, 1999).

# On-Going Training and Development Needs of Peer Workers

Learning about self-care

Getting and staying grounded in peer support theory and practice

Direction and learning on how to do peer support

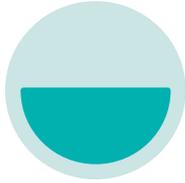
Building institutional memory of peer practice

Learning from other peers in informal setting

“Book” learning / educational opportunities

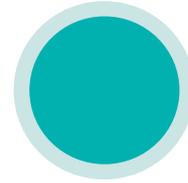
Feeling validated for personal experiences

# Supervisory Roles



## ***Non-Peer Supervisor/ Agency Supervisor***

- Responsible for peer workers day-to-day direct practice
- Sets the tone for how peer work is valued on the team
- Performance measurement
- Not obligated to share personal lived experience
- Encourages peer to access accommodations/ supports when necessary
- Champions peer support work at a senior level



## ***Peer Supervisor / Practice Mentor***

- How to make best use of lived experience in environment
- How to navigate w/ co-workers and make use of lived experience with co-workers
- Practice lead: know and understand the scope of peer support practices,, guide and coach, mentor
- Advise the supervisor when there is a disconnect
- Uses lived experience
- Reflective practice based

# Words of Wisdom from Peer Workers to Their Supervisors

My story is a part of my work

Listen and be supportive of my needs

I can feel isolated as the single non-clinical voice at the table

It is appropriate and encouraged and valid for a peer to share experience and trust that I will do so intentionally

Welcoming a peer to the team can be challenging, know about the implementation issues for peer roles

The core to peer worker effectiveness is my ability to share lived experience with the people accessing services

Learning is mutual

# Peer Drift

The risk of peer staff losing the attributes of being a peer and adopting a clinical or non-peer approach to service delivery.



# Models of Supervision



## Solo Non-Peer

- Peer drift likely to occur
- Few non-peer supervisors have the knowledge of how peer support is evolving to effectively provide all the support a peer worker needs
- Conflicts with philosophy of peer support



## Team Peer + Solo Non-Peer

- Drift less likely
- BUT supervisor may not recognize drift until everyone is lost sea
- May be inadequate if supervisor does not value the peer perspective



## Solo Peer-Led

- Best for keeping peer grounded /avoiding drift
- Can lead to role being isolated if only “different” one on the team



## Shared Peer & Non-Peer

- Both supervisors have defined role / strong role clarity and good communication between supervisors
- Difficult to do properly
- Can lead to over-supervision



## Peer Coaching / Mentoring + Non-Peer Supervision

- Peer mentor/coach keeps peer grounded and provides peer support modality specific helping and learning. N
- on-peer supervisor manages performance
- Allows for full integration to the team
- Generally preferred model

• Requires role clarity

# Essential Elements of Effective Peer Worker Supervision

- ✓ Reflective practice based
- ✓ Frequent
- ✓ Modality specific:
  - ✓ How are peer workers using their lived experience?
  - ✓ What issues around being “prosumer” are they experiencing?
  - ✓ How are they adhering to the values of peer support? Where are they being challenged in doing so?
  - ✓ Provides **guidance** on issues specific to peer work
- ✓ Goal is adherence to peer support values

# Reflective Practice

Opportunity	Examples
Co-Learning	How the supervisor and peer can learn/explore together
Self-Reflection	What is my motivation? How is this impacting me? What are my boundaries? Am I grounded in Peer Support Philosophies?
Impact	What is the impact of these practice on the participants? What are the ethical considerations?
Scope of the Role	Is _____ within the scope of the peer role? Why or why not?

# Peer Worker Supervision Needs by Setting

## Peer-Led Setting

- Stigma from outside departments or agencies

## Non-Peer Setting

- More intentional around grounding in peer support values
- More attention to team dynamics, agencies policies and culture

# The Role of Peer-Led Initiatives

- Offering on-going training and education on emerging issues in the field
- Providing peer support specific supervision to other agencies peer workers
  - Engaging in shared supervision or providing coaching/mentoring to peer workers
- Developing local peer worker communities of practice
- Promoting better integration of peer roles into mainstream services

# Tool-Kit for Supervising Peer Workers in Non-Peer Settings

- In development, goal of completion Spring 2018
- Focus is on better equipping non-peer supervisors with how to:
  - Support and supervise peers
  - Improving understanding of what peer support looks like in non-peer settings
  - Pay increased attention to role planning and implementation issues
  - Includes vignettes from peer workers on their experiences
- Completed workshop series on peer work in non-peer settings:
  - Understanding Peer Support
  - History of Peer Support
  - Planning and Implementing Peer Staff Roles
  - Supervising Peer Workers
- Also developing reflective practice toolkit for peer workers in all settings

## Contact Information

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