



VALUES, PRINCIPLES, AND ETHICS OF PEER SUPPORT

CORE VALUES PEER SUPPORT

PEER SUPPORTERS BELIEVE IN RECOVERY AND DEMONSTRATE RECOVERY VALUES

PEER SUPPORTERS BELIEVE in a person's ability to recover and that there is hope about the future. Recovery is about meeting and accepting a person for where he/she is at and at the pace in which he/she will move forward. An individual's greatest strength is who they are.

Recovery is a process, a journey designed by the individual. Peer supporters value:

- **Hope** – Recovery cannot occur without hope. Peer supporters encourage hope, focusing on people's strengths and abilities.
- **Empowerment** – provides individuals with opportunities to exercise control and power with respect to their lives.
- **Self-determination** – recognizes and honours that individuals will make their own life decisions.
- **Meaningful choice** – recognizes that individuals have the right to make their own choices, and we encourage people to make informed decisions. All individuals are entitled to the dignity of risk that is inherent in making choices.
- **Diversity and inclusion** – peer supporters strive toward the elimination of prejudice and discrimination on the basis of mental health and/or addiction issues.

PEER SUPPORTERS WORK FROM A LIVED EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

THE INTENTIONAL SHARING of personal lived experiences of addiction and/or mental health issues are the cornerstone of peer support work. Through sharing lived experiences an authentic, empathetic relationship is created between the peer supporter and the person supported. This relationship that is unique within the mental health and addictions system. When working from a lived experience perspective peer supporters will:

- **Value the Shared Common Experience and the Lived Experiences** of individuals with a mental health and/or addiction issue (peers). This shared lived experience provides a context that allows people to work together. From that shared common experience a relationship begins, that allows for a common starting point which can lead to different and deeper understanding of what that experience means and how it defines and shape our present situation.
- **Value Shared Responsibility and Shared Accountability.** Each person shares in the responsibility of making the relationship meaningful for themselves and each individual is accountable for their thoughts, feelings and actions with respect to the relationship.
- **Value the Non-Clinical Approach of Peer Support** – Peer supporters will not rely on clinical diagnosis, and will avoid labeling or treatment in peer support. While information about clinical interventions may be discussed and provided treatment is not the outcome, principle or nature of peer support.



PRINCIPLES OF PEER SUPPORT

RECOVERY SKILLS

Individuals will have opportunities and will be supported in their efforts to learn and achieve the following:

- **Personal development** – Peer supporters focus on supporting individuals to learn skills and providing opportunities that allow for personal growth.
- **Leadership** – Peer supporters provide opportunities for others to learn and develop leadership skills.

RECOVERY IDENTITY

Individuals will be encouraged and supported to see themselves as people with unique strengths and abilities.

- **Promote wellness** – Health is more than the absence of illness. Peer supporters take a wellness approach that encourages healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Foster holistic approach** – Peer supporters recognize each individual as a whole person. A peer worker's interactions support self-awareness and consideration of all aspects of an individual's life.
- **View people as having a life beyond the Addiction and Mental Health System** – Individuals leave the system. Peer workers help people to move on in life and ensure that people are aware of services still to them available if needed. People are not viewed as, or expected to be, life-long participants.

RECOVERY COMMUNITIES

Peer supporters recognize the importance of a valued social role and recovery-focused environment and:

- **Treat all individuals with dignity and respect**
- **Support individuals to view themselves as valuable and contributing community members**
- **Support the community to become a place where individuals recover**
- **Use recovery-oriented behaviour that is respectful and without prejudice, bigotry or discrimination**

RECOVERY RELATIONSHIPS

Peer supporters will nurture:

- **The growth and contribution of peer to peer connections**
- **The role that family and friends play**



PEER SUPPORTERS ENGAGE IN ETHICAL WORK

PEER SUPPORTERS WILL¹:

- Uphold the values and principles of peer support work.
- Intentionally share their lived experience of mental health or addictions issue with integrity, awareness, and honesty.
- Respect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality within the limitations of program policies and the law
- Foster personal wellbeing, recovery, and resilience.
- Be trauma-informed and adhere to the principles of trauma-informed practice.
- Not knowingly expose a peer / person supported to harm.
- Work within the scope of peer support practice and not engage in the provision of therapy, or other clinical services while carrying out their duties as a peer supporter.
- Maintain healthy boundaries with people they provide support to and not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with people supported or take advantage of a peer relationship for personal benefit, material or financial gain.
- Follow the policies of their organization. If conflict between the values and principles of peer support and the policies of their organisation exists the peer supporter will actively address this.
- Not engage in practices that could negatively affect the public's confidence in peer support.
- Work to strengthen their practice by engaging in professional development and training that relates to peer support work.

¹ Adapted from Peer Support Accreditation and Certification Canada