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The Value of Peer Support


What is Peer Support?
Peer support, the “process of giving and receiving encouragement and assistance to achieve long-term recovery,” is not a new concept in health care.
Across conditions, peers “offer emotional support, share knowledge, teach skills, provide practical assistance, and connect people with resources, opportunities, communities of support, and other people” (Mead, 2003; Solomon, 2004).
In behavioral health, peers offer their unique lived experience with mental health and/or substance use conditions or as parents/care-givers to a child with a mental health/substance use disorder to provide support focused on advocacy, education, mentoring, and motivation.



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The Case for Peer Support

- Peer support is an evidence-based practice for individuals with mental health conditions or challenges, and their families.
- Both quantitative and qualitative evidence indicate that peer support lowers the overall cost of behavioral health services by reducing re-hospitalization rates and days spent in inpatient services, increasing the use of outpatient services.
- Peer support improves quality of life, increases and improves engagement with services, and increases whole health and self-management.



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The Value of Peer Support

Who is a Peer?

In behavioral health the word "peer" is generally used to refer to someone who shares the experience of living with a psychiatric disorder and/or addiction with another or as a parent/care-giver to a child with a mental health/substance use disorder. In that narrow context two people living in these situations are peers, but in reality most people are far more specific about whom they would rely on for peer support.

It is up to the individual receiving support to decide whom they can relate to as peers. Accordingly, awareness and understanding of cultural diversity and relativity is essential.

- Peer support services should strive to recruit a diverse cadre of peers so that people with a range of backgrounds and experiences might find the possibility of connection.

What are some of the inherent problems in matching peers?



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The Value of Peer Support

What a Peer Supporter Is/Does	Is Not/Does Not
A person in recovery	A clinician
Shares lived experience	Gives professional advice
A role model	An expert or authority figure
Sees the person as a whole person in the context of the person's roles, family, community	Sees the person as a case or diagnosis
Motivates through hope and inspiration	Motivates through fear of negative consequences
Supports many pathways to recovery	Prescribes one specific pathway to recovery
Functions as an advocate for the person in recovery, both within and outside of the program	Represent perspective of the program
Teaches the person how to accomplish daily tasks	Does tasks for the person
Teaches how to acquire needed resources, including money	Gives resources and money to the person

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The Value of Peer Support

What it is & What it isn't

Helps the person find basic necessities	Provides basic necessities such as a place to live
Uses language based on common experiences	Uses clinical language
Helps the person find professional services from lawyers, doctors, psychologists, financial advisers	Provides professional services
Shares knowledge of local resources	Provides case management services
Encourages, supports, praises	Diagnoses, assesses, treats
Helps to set personal goals	Mandates tasks and behaviors
A role model for positive recovery behaviors	Tells person how to lead his/her life in recovery
Provides peer support services	Does whatever the program insists he/she do

SAMHSA's Bringing Recovery to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS) 2012

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Innovations in Peer Support

- Peer-Run Supported Housing (Mental Health)
- Recovery Residences (Addiction Recovery)
- Peer-Run Employment Support/Coaching Services
- Self-Directed Care Brokers/Coaches
- Maternal Peer Specialists
- Forensic Peer Specialists
- In Jails and Prisons
- Veteran Peer Specialists and Peer Support Technicians
- VA Community Integration Specialists




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Innovations in Peer Support

Additionally, peers are working under several business models to provide peer support services through Medicaid managed care. In many cases peers work for peer-run organizations who contract with managed care organizations (MCOs) and in others they work for traditional service providers who contract with the MCOs.

This is the first step towards achieving peer support throughout the health care industry. Some of the managed care companies are subsidiaries of private health insurance companies, and the data they are collecting will be of great benefit in moving peer support into private practice.



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Importance of Training and Certification

In 2016 The University of Texas and the Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health compiled a survey of certification programs and the number of certified peer specialists in the US. At that time there were 41 states with certification programs and approximately 24,000 individuals certified.

Although no formal surveys are available since that time, we do know that there are now 47 states with certification and an informal poll of state certification agencies puts the number of certified peers at over 35,000.

California has passed legislation to implement a certification process, but it has not been enacted at this time. The State currently employs over 6000 peer specialists who have received trainings regulated by local authorities or even by providers.

What is the certification process in Nebraska?



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Importance of Training and Certification

As the peer movement continues to grow across the country, the peer workforce is increasingly seeking opportunities to demonstrate the specialized knowledge and skills peers possess and the benefits of including peers on individual's treatment teams. In order to be a successful peer, one must possess a combination of skills that, when taken together, indicate that the person possesses the level of knowledge and skill required in the profession, occupation, or role. As a relatively "new" workforce, it is incumbent upon peers to demonstrate their high standards of conduct, education and experience. One of the best means of doing so is to establish professional training and education credentialing programs that are designed to reliably measure an individual's competency. (Hendry, 2015)



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Importance of Training and Certification

When peer support specialists work in publicly funded services, peer support specialists are required to meet certain government and state certification requirements. In order to "credential" a person in a profession, one must first be able to define the core competencies of the profession. If you do not know what the on-the-job expectations of a peer are, you cannot build a program to measure competency in the delivery of peer services. Correctly identifying core competencies is critical to the success of any program that seeks to discriminate between "those who know and can perform the job adequately" and "those who do not know and are unable to perform the job adequately."



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Importance of Training and Certification

In order to assure reliability and validity, it is critical that a recognized method to establish core competencies is followed. Further, all other decisions about competency standards – such as formal education requirements, content-specific training requirements, and on-the-job experience and supervision requirements must be directly linked to the core competencies. In short, if someone is being asked to complete specific requirements to earn a credential, the requirements need to be related to the core competencies of the profession.

- All training requirements should reflect core competencies.
- All testing instruments should measure the candidate's possession of core competency knowledge and skill.
- All on-the-job experience and supervision requirements must reflect what peers are doing on the job.

What trainings are available in Nebraska? How are they paid for?



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Importance of Training and Certification

Mental Health America's advanced certification, the National Certified Peer Specialist credential has the following 6 domains with 55 core competencies:

- Foundations of Peer Support: 12 core competencies
- Foundations of Healthcare Systems: 12
- Mentoring, Shared Learning and Relationship Building: 9
- Activation and Self-management: 11
- Advocacy: 4
- Professional and Ethical Responsibilities: 7



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Importance of Training and Certification

The fundamental purposes of a credentialing program include:

- **Protecting the public**
- Establishing standards for professional knowledge, skills and practice
- Assuring that credentialed professionals have met the standards of practice

In order to achieve these goals, the credentialing organization must ensure that core competencies are identified in a reliable and valid manner.

Discuss Scope of Practice




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The Decision to Implement and/or Improve Peer Support Services

Peer support provides many important benefits to the individuals the behavioral health system serves:

- Increased satisfaction with services
- Ensuring that individuals are directly involved in the important decisions that drive the services they receive; activation of self-management
- Role models for recovery
- Enhanced quality of life as determined by the individuals
- Reduction in re-hospitalization rates
- Reduced inpatient days



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The Decision to Implement and/or Improve Peer Support Services

These provide a number of benefits for providers:

- Increased self-management and feelings of ownership in treatment leads to greater commitment to follow treatment decisions.
- Enhanced quality of life is an important marker for enhanced whole health.
- Improved outcomes such as reductions in re-hospitalizations and inpatient stays result in dramatically lowered costs, thus allowing providers to provide services to more people.
- Peer support has a dramatic effect on other staff in understanding and believing in a recovery model of care. (Peer Support Toolkit 2017)
- Non-peer staff experiences greater job satisfaction as service recipient's lives improve.

(SMI Adviser, 2019)

What other benefits to providers can you think of?




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Preparing an Organization for the Introduction of Peer Support

In order to create fundamental change in an organization it is important that senior leadership supports the change and can articulate it to the agency and staff.

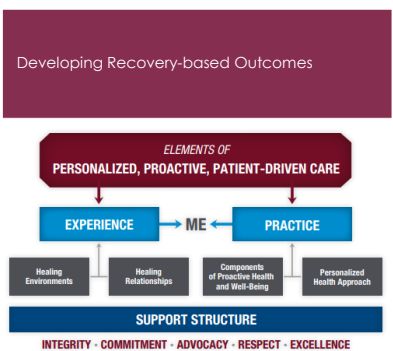
"For culture change to occur, a ...prerequisite is for someone in a position of significant authority and leadership in the agency to announce that a recovery-focused transformation process is an agency-wide priority."

*Joe Schultz, Clinical Director, NET
(Peer Support Toolkit, 2017)*



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Developing Recovery-based Outcomes



ELEMENTS OF PERSONALIZED, PROACTIVE, PATIENT-DRIVEN CARE

EXPERIENCE ↔ **ME** ↔ **PRACTICE**

SUPPORT STRUCTURE

INTEGRITY - COMMITMENT - ADVOCACY - RESPECT - EXCELLENCE
Capturing Personalized...2014

- The addition of peer support to a mental health service team helps the team change to a more person centered, recovery-oriented culture and to become more understanding about the people they serve. (Miyamoto, Tamaki, 2012)
- When an organization shifts from a medical or clinical model of care to a recovery-oriented or person-centered approach some power shifts from the provider to the individuals receiving services, thereby creating a more collaborative decision-making approach. (Peer Support Toolkit, 2017)

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Preparing for the Addition of Peer Support




• The City of Philadelphia Dept. of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services published their Peer Support Toolkit in 2017.
<https://cbhids.org/peer-support-toolkit/>

The Toolkit is a roadmap to introducing peer support into an organization.


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Developing Quality Measures

In order to develop quality measures for a program that has added peer support there are some questions that need to be answered.

- What is the purpose of the program?
- Has the addition of peer support changed the purpose?
- What are the roles of the program staff?
- What are the specific roles of the peer support staff?
- What are the desired outcomes for the program. How do you measure success?
- Are the desired outcomes recovery-oriented?
- Do they need to be changed?
- Can you build in outcome measurements that can be used throughout the program?
- Can you develop a recovery-oriented evaluation process to gauge success?

What other question would you ask?




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Employing Peer Support Staff

- The selection and hiring of peer support staff is a critical element to the successful introduction or improvement of peer support services. As with all new hires it is critical that they are a good fit with existing staff and are sufficiently trained and prepared to provide a new level of services.
- The lived experience of peer staff should be as close of a match for the purpose of the program as possible. This is particularly important in enhancing the ability of the peer staff to build trusting relationships with program participants and to assist them in finding their personal path to recovery.

What does being a close match for the purpose of the program mean?



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Employing Peer Support Staff

- The creation of a job description that details the required experience, skills and knowledge of the applicant is important.
- This requires that the position be well defined.
- It requires that the process for onboarding the new staff and that the "onboarding" process is predetermined.




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Supervision for Peer Support

Most agencies have supervision models that can be adapted to peer support staff needs.

- Supervision is a critical aspect of effective peer support, in the sense that supervising a peer specialist is different than other behavioral health positions.
- Clinical support must be provided by a state specified licensed clinician.
- It is desirable that a qualified peer professional, provide day to day support.
- Existing supervisory staff can be used if they have a clear and detailed understanding of the nature and role of peer support and how it will be introduced to the existing program and staff.
- Supervision should be regularly scheduled and have the primary intention of ensuring that the peer support staff is supported in their work and guided in accomplishing the goals of their positions.
- Effective supervision should be strength-based and should focus on skills and professional development. (Hendry, Hill, Rosenthal, 2015)




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Supervision for Peer Support

Effective supervision contributes to greater job satisfaction, it increases staff morale, and above all it contributes to a higher quality of care. (SMI Adviser, 2019)

- It helps new staff members to integrate into the team.
- It provides job clarification and prevents "position drift".
- It accommodates the similarities and the differences of peer staff roles and boundaries compared to non peer staff.
- It provides new staff with problem solving skills when they encounter barriers in their work
- Mentoring/supervision can build ongoing relationships that can be mutually beneficial beyond the current positions.

Discuss supervision styles



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Supervision for Peer Staff

Things a Supervisor Should Know

- Supervision is all about relationships. The key to good supervision is developing an alliance between the peer staff and the supervisor.
- Ethics and culture have a strong influence on all supervisory interactions
- Supervisors are role models and need to show that everyone makes mistakes and can learn from these mistakes.
- Direct observation and specific feedback are especially effective in supervision.
- Supervisors have a unique position as an advocate for the agency, staff, and most importantly, the individual being served.

(Clinical Supervision and Professional...2007)



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Support for Peer Staff

Support for peer staff is essential.

- Many communities have specialized support groups for peer specialists.
- Others are available online.
- Having regular meetings of peer support staff can be very beneficial.
 - Peer staff can discuss their work and strategize over approaches
 - They can provide mutual support in dealing with job stress and other issues
 - They can work together to further clarify the roles of peer support in the agency and ways to improve or augment.

What kinds of support do you think peer staff may need?




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Successful Introduction of Peer Support

- The steps discussed here important but they are not the full answer to all the questions that may arise.
- Boundary issues need to be discussed. The relationships between support staff and the people they support is unique and often involves dual relationships may arise.
- Clinical staff may have many questions.
- Agency policies must be adjusted to fit the new culture.
 - Issues of education, dual relationships and criminal history will likely need to be discussed.

What kinds of dual relationships might arise?



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Discussion

- How familiar with peer support are you?
- How familiar are your agencies with it?
- What strengths can peer support bring to your work and agency?
- What kinds of problems or barriers do you see?
- What are some programs or services that might best benefit from the addition of peer support in your work?
- How do you feel about advocating for the addition or increase of peer support in your agency?



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Contact Us



 Mental Health America
 500 Montgomery Street
 Suite 820
 Alexandria, VA 22314
 [Facebook.com/mentalhealthamerica](https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthamerica)
 [Twitter.com/mentalhealtham](https://twitter.com/mentalhealtham)
 [Youtube.com/mentalhealthamerica](https://www.youtube.com/mentalhealthamerica)
 Patrick Hendry
 Vice President, Peer Advocacy,
 Supports & Services
phendry@mhanational.org



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