

Revised National Standards of Practice for Peer Support Kick-Off Event

Project Overview

The original *National Standards of Practice for Peer Support* were developed in 2013 to guide the practice and training of peer support. This project will gather national feedback on the peer support values articulated in 2013, with particular attention to the perspectives of Indigenous, Black, racialized, and other equity-deserving communities. It will identify gaps and opportunities to advance equity and justice and ensure that future guidance documents reflect the diversity and evolution of peer support across Canada.

The first outcome of the project will be the development of a “Living Our Values” Toolkit that addresses historical exclusions, supports the peer support community over the next decade, and provides a foundation for future revised practice documents.

The project will also establish a nationally recognizable process for building consensus on peer support guidance and develop partnerships that can support future national approaches to accreditation, certification, and standardization. Any additional practice documents will be determined collaboratively with the peer support community as the work evolves.

Questions and Answers

- 1. Is the goal of the standards to reduce barriers to peer support practice, and how will the project ensure that the standards do not create additional barriers?**

Reducing unnecessary barriers is an important consideration in the development of any revised guidance documents. The project will examine the existing peer support values, including barriers created through historical exclusions and inequities.

The process will include broad national engagement, with particular attention to the perspectives of Indigenous, Black, and racialized peer supporters, programs, and

communities. This will help identify where standards may unintentionally exclude people or create requirements that are inconsistent with the values of peer support.

The intention is to develop practical, values-based practice documents that support the peer support community while recognizing and respecting regional contexts and approaches.

2. Will the project address ongoing or recurring certification requirements, such as regular certification renewal? (*Original example: paramedics renewing certification annually.*)

The current project is focused on creating revised practice guidance documents; it is not developing specific requirements for ongoing certification or certification renewal. That said, the revised practice guidance documents will directly inform updated certification requirements.

The project will also build partnerships and establish a nationally recognizable process for developing future approaches to accreditation, certification, and standardization. Suggested improvements to Peer Support Canada's certification program, including possible recertification requirements, are actively being considered and implemented as resources allow.

Any changes to PSC programming would need to be developed in consultation with the peer support community and grounded in the values, principles, and diverse experiences of peer supporters.

3. How can people get involved with the BIPOC Advisory Committee?

Peer Support Canada and PeerWorks are taking a relationship-building approach to forming the Provincial/Territorial and BIPOC Advisory Committees. We're actively holding conversations with people who may be a good fit to learn about their expertise, skills, and connections to communities and stakeholders. Our goal is to bring a range of perspectives and skill sets to both committees. If you think you'd be a good fit on either of the committees, please feel free to email us at info@peersupportcanada.ca or info@peerworks.ca to express your interest in connecting with us.

4. Will the standards include family, caregiver, and loved-one peer support? For example, peer supporters who support other caregivers or family members.

Yes. Family, caregiver, and loved-one peer support will be included in the standards. This includes peer supporters who draw on their lived/living experience as a family member, caregiver, or loved one to support others with similar experiences. See the question below for more information about how the standards may apply across different peer support contexts.

5. Will the standards be grounded in a recovery framework, or broad enough to apply across different forms of peer support, including in communities where recovery may not be possible, such as those supporting people with terminal illness?

The project will use a national survey and focus groups to gather broad input and work toward consensus on language for the revised peer support practice documents. Our hope is that the revised values will be broad enough to apply across different types and settings of peer support, rather than being tied to a particular sector. If this is not an achievable outcome, we'll be abundantly transparent about how that decision was made, and about who the practice documents are geared towards.

6. What key challenges or problems in the field are the standards intended to address? Are there specific areas that are informing the standards and the deliverables of this initiative?

The project is responding to the need to revisit and update the peer support values developed in 2013 so they reflect how peer support has evolved over the past decade. It will examine gaps and limitations in the current values, including how historical exclusions and inequities have shaped the understanding of peer support.

The project will also consider whether the current values clearly articulate what is distinct about peer support. Revisiting the values provides an opportunity to more clearly articulate the advocacy and systems-change functions of the practice, and consider how they can help address challenges such as role drift and co-optation.

Particular attention will be given to the perspectives of Indigenous, Black, and racialized peer supporters, programs, and communities to ensure that the revised values reflect diverse experiences and support greater equity and inclusion.

7. How will this project connect with or build on other peer support development projects that are happening in different settings or sectors? For example, the CAMH project on best practices for peer support in RAAM

clinics. How are organizations such as Peer Support Canada and PeerWorks being involved or consulted in these projects?

PeerWorks and Peer Support Canada are not currently involved in CAMH's project on best practices for peer support services in RAAM clinics.

This project includes a substantial knowledge mobilization component. We're inviting organizations from across the sector such as CAMH, MHCC, CMHA, Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Standards Association, Imagine Canada etc. to help shape the work and champion its outputs.

We're also considering practical resources to support organizations in putting the practice documents into action. These could include facilitated training on embedding the concepts in practice, implementation toolkits, and accreditation for peer support training and service programs that demonstrate fidelity to peer support practice.

8. How will the standards ensure that a focus on quantitative outcomes and numerical targets does not compromise the integrity of peer support practice? How will qualitative information - such as relationships, trust, lived experience, self-determination, and outcomes identified as meaningful by people receiving peer support - be given sufficient weight?

This is an important consideration in developing the revised values and standards. Peer support is relational and person-centred, and its impact cannot always be captured through quantitative measures or numerical targets. Through the national survey, focus groups, and broader engagement, we hope to develop language that reflects the importance of relationships, trust, lived and living experience, and self-determination.

The project will also explore how peer support can be evaluated in ways that recognize non-clinical outcomes, such as reduced isolation and loneliness, increased capacity to cope, and a greater sense of control.

Our goal is for the revised values and standards to uphold the integrity and unique nature of peer support, and to encourage evaluation approaches that reflect what matters to the people receiving support.

9. Are we developing Mental Health Peer Support Standards of Practice to replace the current standards? And how does certification or accreditation fit into this work?

The current work is intended to update the existing Peer Support Values and Standards of Practice, originally published via MHCC: [Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support](#). The National Peer Supporter Certification program will be updated based on the outputs of this project. Decisions about what these updates to the certification program will look like, will be made in collaboration with the community once clear practice documents have been created.

10. How will the project engage peer organizations that may not be connected with organizations such as Peer Support Canada or PeerWorks? This includes organizations working in areas such as substance use, homelessness, and shelters.

We're working very hard to share information about this project and engage organizations and communities across a range of settings and practice areas. We recognize that reaching people beyond established peer support networks will require a range of approaches, including word of mouth, community referrals, paid promotion, and varied modalities of participation.

If you're connected to this work, please help spread the word. Share the presentation recording, let others know the project is underway, and encourage peer organizations and supporters (**especially those not connected to Peer Support Canada, PeerWorks, or other established networks**) to get involved and share their perspectives.

11. Will there be a publicly accessible list of the key problems or priorities that the standards project is working to address throughout the process? If so, could the broader peer support community contribute to or help shape these priorities?

The project is gathering input from the broader peer support community throughout the process to help identify the key issues, needs, and priorities that should be considered in revising the standards and values. The national survey, focus groups, and other engagement opportunities are important ways for peer supporters, organizations, and other stakeholders to help shape this work.

As the project progresses, we will share more information about the themes and priorities emerging from this engagement. As we learn, we'll work to make sure that

we're as transparent as possible, and that our community members benefit from the information we're gathering.

12. Will organizations be able to develop and certify peer supporters using curricula based on the new standards? What will the process be for organizations or curriculum developers who want to develop training programs based on the standards?

We encourage organizations and curriculum developers to use the updated standards and values as the foundation for peer support training. Organizations may offer training and certificates of completion.

Peer Support Canada's National Peer Supporter Certification Program is the national certification program that assesses candidates against the National Standards of Practice. Creating additional certification pathways against differing standards could duplicate this existing process and cause confusion about what certification means, thereby contributing to confusion about the practice as a whole.

We will consider how best to support organizations and curriculum developers in applying the updated practice documents, including through accreditation frameworks, implementation toolkits, and training.

13. Are there resources available for someone who is helping develop a peer support program but does not have formal peer support training, while having significant lived experience as both a caregiver and survivor? (*This question was specifically raised in the context of developing a peer support program in partnership with a major hospital network in Ontario.*)

There are resources available to support individuals and organizations developing peer support programs, and lived/living experience is an important foundation for peer support work. *At the same time, having lived experience does not necessarily replace the need for training and knowledge of peer support principles, values, and practices when developing a program.*

We would encourage anyone developing a peer support program, particularly within a healthcare setting, to become familiar with existing peer support resources, values, and standards, and to seek opportunities for peer support education and connection with

others working in the field. As this project progresses, the updated standards and values may also provide a useful foundation for organizations developing or strengthening peer support programs.

Peer Support Canada offers consultation services, to help organizations that are working to implement or improve upon existing peer support services. More information about these services can be found here: <https://peersupportcanada.ca/consultation-services/>

14. Has the project consulted with organizations or leaders in the United States to support shared learning? For example, SAMHSA, the National Association of Peer Supporters, or Pat Deegan and Associates.

Yes - we are currently actively connected with representatives doing similar work in Australia, Norway, Scotland, the UK and the United States. We're also keen to connect with additional leaders who have undertaken this work and learn from their approaches and outcomes.

15. Will the revised knowledge matrix be developed collaboratively with communities of practice and curriculum developers to support the development of accessible peer support training programs? How will the standards account for the fact that barriers to training and practice can vary significantly depending on the population and context - for example, different educational, accessibility, or literacy needs?

At this stage, the project is focused on developing revised practice documents, beginning with a Peer Support Values Toolkit. Decisions about additional practice documents, such as a Knowledge Matrix, will be made in collaboration with the community.

We recognize that peer support training and practice can look different across populations and contexts. Accessibility, educational background, literacy, and other potential barriers must be considered. By grounding the standards in values such as dignity and social inclusion (as understood and applied by peer supporters) we hope to encourage organizations that offer training or deliver peer support programs to pay greater attention to barriers to access.

Learn More and Stay Involved

To learn more, watch the [recording of the project kick-off webinar](#). For questions or to express interest in connecting with the project team, contact Peer Support Canada at info@peersupportcanada.ca or PeerWorks at info@peerworks.ca. You can also [sign up for Peer Support Canada's mailing list](#) or [the PeerWorks mailing list](#) to receive project updates and hear about opportunities to share your perspectives and get involved.