



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Introduction to the Campus Peer Support Training Curriculum

BACKGROUND

Thank you for your interest in the Campus Peer Support Training Curriculum. The curriculum and associated resources were made possible through a Health Canada-funded pilot project to create and implement a standardized peer support training program for students in post-secondary schools across Canada. The program was co-developed with input from post-secondary schools, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Divisions/Branches/Regions, Peer Support Canada, peer supporters, and other community service providers and experts.

We would like to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the partners of the pilot program that worked tirelessly to make this project a success.

- University of Prince Edward Island
- University of New Brunswick
- Trent University
- Medicine Hat College
- University of British Columbia
- CMHA Prince Edward Island
- CMHA New Brunswick
- CMHA Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge
- CMHA Medicine Hat

We would also like to express our gratitude to the project funders. Production of the documents and curriculum has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada. And we would also like to thank Sleep Country Canada for their funding support and raising awareness of the importance of youth mental health.

We would also like to acknowledge Taylor Newberry Consulting for their role with assessment and evaluation and identifying opportunities for improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this guide is to share the resources and strategies that were developed as part of the training curriculum with interested groups looking to implement the materials in whole or in part. This guide is both for organizations planning to launch a new peer support training program on campuses and for those who already have operational campus peer support programming in place but are looking for additional resources. We acknowledge that peer support can look different in different settings, but for the purpose of this program, peer supporters were hired based on their lived experience with mental health and/or substance use.

Approach

Through a train-the-trainer approach, post-secondary schools partnered with local CMHAs to be trained and to deliver the programming. Trainers, whom we call Facilitators, from each of the partner sites were trained on the curriculum and were provided with strategies on how to teach the content.



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The Facilitators went on to train hired peer supporters at each of the campus sites. CMHAs were community mental health partners providing expertise in peer support and mental health resources. They received training and co-facilitated the training to peer supporters and provided ongoing assistance and encouragement to campus partners and peer supporters. The campus partners administratively led the programming at each of their sites. In addition to training, they supervised peer supporters, held regular debriefs and check-ins and promoted the programs at their respective campuses.

Resources

The materials available as part of this training program include:

- Orientation: facilitator guide, program overview, orientation slides and handouts on peer support values and program requirements
- Standard Design: 5 modules that cover the following:
 - Module 1 – Peer Support Overview, Personal Strengths, Campus Roles & Responsibilities, Peer Support Statements
 - Module 2 – Sharing Personal Experiences, Building Trust, Biases & Power Imbalances, Creating Welcoming Spaces
 - Module 3 – Wellbeing, Resilience, Stress vs. Crisis, Substance Use Health
 - Module 4 – Listening to Understand, Sharing Experiences, Questioning Techniques, Inclusive Language
 - Module 5 – Crisis Situations, Self-determination, Local Support Situations
- Intensive Design: Condensed training covering similar topics as the standard design but in a way that can be delivered over the course of two days.

Assessment materials such as an evaluation guide with focus group and survey questions are available upon request.

A statement acknowledging the Canadian Mental Health Association is required when referencing and promoting the program and any of the materials.

Considerations

As you review and apply the concepts and resources, we would like to offer the following considerations in developing and implementing a post-secondary peer support training curriculum, more details of which can be found in the year 1 evaluation report (English only).

- A dedicated space is important to provide a safe, private and consistent environment for peer support. While we understand that it can be difficult to find reserved space on campuses, sharing space is an option that has worked well at some of the sites.
- Peer supporters must be fairly remunerated for their work.
- While a condensed two-day training curriculum was developed, we recommend the standard training session so as to dedicate enough time to the concepts and materials.
- Regular check-ins and debriefs are very important for peer supporters to continue learning, to feel supported, and to share their experiences and learn from each other.



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- BrightSpace was the learning management system (LMS) selected and used as part of the pilot. This is one of many platforms available to support online learning. The benefit of using an LMS as part of this pilot was that all content was easily accessible from a central location and provided the opportunity for peer supporters to share questions and ideas through discussion forums.

We thank you for your interest in the materials and hope they are beneficial to the work that you do. If you have any questions on the background of the project or the materials provided, please contact Katherine Warzecha, National Project Portfolio Manager, at kwarzecha@cmha.ca.