

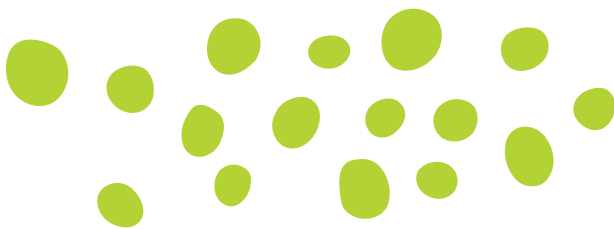
PEER SUPPORT IN ACTION

Peer support is transforming health care in Canada for people with mental health and substance use health concerns. Research shows it helps make people *feel* better and helps them *get* better, so it is playing an increasingly important role in the mental health and substance use health care system.

Here's how and where it fits into the system.

First, what is peer support?

Peer support happens when someone with their own experience of a mental health or substance use health issue joins forces with you in your recovery. A peer supporter is a professional who is trained to support you by listening, sharing strategies and helping you to problem-solve. For more, see: *What is Peer Support Exactly?*



It is unique care on its own.

Whether one-on-one or in groups, peer support offers emotional and practical support you can't always get elsewhere. We might want or need different kinds of help than doctors or counsellors can provide. That's where peer support comes in. Peer supporters go along on your recovery path with you, help you navigate the system, and offer insights that other providers might not have. Their support fills gaps in health care and can complement other kinds of care.

It can get there early and head off illness.

Tragically, waiting for care in the mental health system has become the norm. When people have to wait, they often get worse. Peer support can get ahead of illness and prevent concerns from snowballing.

It can make it easier to get support.

Not everyone feels ready to seek mental health care. Peer support can be the ideal entry point for those who are reluctant to seek help or aren't connected to more formal health care services. It can be more comfortable and supportive than other kinds of care because it is based on shared experience.

It reaches more people.

Peer support can reach people where other services aren't available such as in rural communities. Not only do peer supporters offer shared experience of mental health and substance use health concerns, they may also share culture and language with the people they support. As a result, peer support can improve services for racialized communities, newcomers, and people who don't speak French or English.

It makes other mental health care better.

Increasingly peer supporters are finding their place on various service teams, like in hospitals, on crisis teams, and on teams that provide ongoing care. When peer supporters are part of mental health care teams, their experience makes those services more effective, because it puts people at ease and increases trust.



It is a bridge to other care.

Peer supporters might be the first contact when starting a service or the bridge between services, so peer support plays a crucial role in helping individuals make a smooth transition from one service to another.

For more information, see: *The Power of Peer Support* and *What is Peer Support Exactly?*

Financial contribution from



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada