

**CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN PEER SUPPORT**

# **Guiding Standards of Peer Support**

Mental Health Commission of Canada's Peer Support Values

Centre for Innovation in Peer Support's Values in Action

Peer Support Canada's Code of Conduct, Principles of Practice and Core Competencies

**Support  
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Centre for Innovation in Peer Support (Centre) is embedded in Support House. The Centre promotes & facilitates the meaningful engagement, empowerment and enhanced capacities of people with lived experience and families, as well as effective peer support services regionally, provincially, nationally and internationally. Copyright 2022© by Support House and Centre for Innovation in Peer Support. All rights reserved worldwide. This guide may be freely reproduced and distributed. Citation of the source is required under copyright law.

# How to Use This Resource

## Intent

The Centre for Innovation in Peer Support identifies five widely recognized guiding works as the *Guiding Standards of Peer Support*. Together they set the foundation, identify necessary competencies, guide professional boundaries and identify authentic, values-based, best practices that uphold the fidelity of peer support. These works have been compiled for ease of reference in this resource.

## To Cite this Document

You may with proper citing share resources within this document for your own purposes. We ask that you cite the individual works separately, rather than this document as a whole so that proper recognition is given to those who have contributed to these works. We have included citations for the works below for your ease of reference:

### Values of Peer Support:

Sunderland, Kim, Mishkin, Wendy, Peer Leadership Group, Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2013). *Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support*. Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>

### Peer Support Values in Action:

Support House: Centre for Innovation in Peer Support. *Peer Support Values in Action*

### Code of Conduct:

Peer Support Canada. *Peer Support Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from: [www.peersupportcanada.ca](http://www.peersupportcanada.ca)

### Principles of Practice :

Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). (2016). *PSACC National Certification Handbook*

### Core Competencies:

Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). (2016). *PSACC National Certification Handbook*

## Legal

The views represented herein solely represent the views of the Centre for Innovation in Peer Support. Information in this document should not replace your own research and due diligence. The information used to create this resource draws on the experience of the Centre and public sources, referenced throughout. The materials in this resource are general guidelines only. This resource is not intended to provide legal advice. If there is a discrepancy between this document and any applicable legislation, the legislation will always prevail.

# Values of Peer Support



Mental Health Commission of Canada  
Commission de la santé mentale du Canada

## Hope and Recovery

Acknowledging the power of hope and the positive impact that comes from a recovery approach

## Self-Determination

Having faith that each person intrinsically knows which path towards recovery is most suitable for them and their needs, noting that it is the peer's choice whether to become involved in a peer support relationship

## Health & Wellness

Acknowledging all aspects of a healthy and full life

## Empathetic & Equal Relationships

Noting that the peer support relationship and all involved can benefit from the reciprocity and better understanding that comes from a similar experience  
(common threads of connection)

## Dignity, Respect & Social Inclusion

Acknowledging the intrinsic worth of all individuals, whatever their background, preferences or situation

## Integrity, Authenticity, & Trust,

Noting that confidentiality, reliability and ethical behaviour are honoured in each and every interaction

## Lifelong Learning & Personal Growth

Acknowledging the value of learning, changing and developing new perspectives for all individuals

**Source:** Sunderland, Kim, Mishkin, Wendy, Peer Leadership Group, Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2013). Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support. Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>

**[Want to learn more? Click here!](#)**

Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2013). Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support.

# Peer Support Values in Action

The Centre for Innovation in Peer Support recognizes that peer support is made up of values based actions and is not necessarily defined by task oriented work. Using the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Core Values of Peer Support, the Centre has facilitated the creation and promotion of 17 expectations for peer support workers known as the Values in Action.

Through a research process people engaging in services identified the following statements as integral actions of peer support services, setting these expectations for Peer support workers to use these Values in Action in their work. It is an organization's role to support the peer worker in their ability to act on these values in action within their role.

**These statements are validated and reliability tested, the items cannot be changed or altered.**

- **The peer support worker** reminds me that my health and wellness is unique to me
- **The peer support worker** tells me about their experience in a way that is meaningful to me
- **The peer support worker** gives me encouragement
- **The peer support worker** shares information with me, e.g., community resources that are available, different learning opportunities
- **The peer support worker** helps me explore options open to me when I have a decision to make
- **The peer support worker** does not express disapproval of me or the choices I make
- **The peer support worker** tells me they believe in me
- **The peer support worker** tells me my feelings and opinions are worthwhile
- **The peer support worker** genuinely listens to me
- **The peer support worker** follows through on commitments they make
- **The peer support worker** discusses confidentiality with me
- **The peer support worker** tells me that I am not alone in my experiences and struggles
- **The peer support worker** encourages me to do things for myself instead of doing things for me
- **The peer support worker** learns from me and I learn from them
- **The peer support worker** reminds me that I have the right to express my needs
- **The peer support worker** demonstrates ways they take care of themselves
- When I meet with others in a group, **the peer support worker** tells me that I can participate in a way that is comfortable for me and the group

# Code of Conduct



## As Certified Peer Supporters we adhere to the following Code of Conduct:

- I will act ethically, according to the values and principles of peer support
- I will treat all people with respect and dignity
- I will respect human diversity and will foster non-discriminatory activities
- I will honour the rights, beliefs and personal values of individuals
- I will behave with honesty and integrity in providing support to peers
- I will respect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality within the limitations of program policies and the law e.g. potential harm to self or others
- I will not knowingly expose a peer to harm
- I will not take advantage of the peer relationship for personal benefit, material or financial gain
- I will respect the boundaries of peer support work and will not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with the peers that I support
- I will not provide peer support in a manner that negatively affects the public's confidence in peer support

**Source:** Peer Support Canada. Peer Support Code of Conduct.  
Retrieved from: <http://www.peersupportcanada.ca>

[Want to learn more? Click here!](#)  
[Peer Support Canada. Peer Support Code of Conduct.](#)

# Principles of Practice



**The Principles of Practice embody the character of the relationship and the philosophy of the work.**

## **Peer supporters:**

- Recognize the importance of an individual approach to recovery.
- Honour and respect where each individual is in their own unique journey of recovery recognizing that the focus is on the process and not just the end result.
- Facilitate the self-determination and the empowerment of peers to take an active role in their recovery and wellbeing.
- Recognize that the goals, values and beliefs of their peers may not be the same as their own.
- Are collaborative in building equal, open and trusting relationships with peers.
- Share their lived experiences in a manner that demonstrates compassionate understanding and inspires hope for recovery.
- Ensure that the knowledge gained from personal experience is used in a manner that contributes to the well-being of the peer and that the relationship is always peer-focused.
- Maintain mutually agreed upon limits and boundaries in the peer support relationship.
- Respect external limits and boundaries within the context of their role as a peer supporter.
- Practice self-care, monitor their own wellbeing and are aware of their own needs, as well as promote self-care for their peers.
- Play an active role in connecting peers to other resources and are open to seeking help when needed.
- Are collaborative with community partners, service providers and other stakeholders.
- Aspire to be current within their field of practice by remaining up-to-date regarding available resources, especially those that are locally available, and by engaging in continuous learning.

**Source:** Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). (2016). PSACC National Certification Handbook

[Want to learn more? Click here!](#)

[Peer Support Canada. Peer Support Certification Handbook](#)

# Core Competencies



**The competency standards describe the peer supporter's abilities and skills that are developed through a combination of life and work experience, training and education, and include individual personal effectiveness.**

The following competencies are those that have been identified as essential to meet the requirements for certification as a peer supporter.

**A certified peer supporter demonstrates skills and abilities within the following competencies:**

## Hope

Operates from a sense of hope expressing confidence that others will be successful in their own personal journeys of recovery. Strives to model realistic optimism and a belief that even in difficult situations positive choices can be made.

## Demeanour

Is sensitive to what another might be feeling, demonstrates a capacity for non-judgmental empathy, and responds from an equal, genuine, and sharing point of view. Selectively self discloses own experience in a manner that ensures the relationship remains peer focused.

## Interpersonal Relations

Interacts in a manner that honours the dignity of others and strives to build positive respectful relationships. Strives to make others feel comfortable and conveys genuine interest in their peer. Even in a difficult or tense situation strives to maintain a level of respect and consideration for the other.

## Communication

Listens with empathy and without judgement, holding their peers in unconditional high regard. Uses communication styles and skills to improve understanding and adapts the style and tone of communication to suit the listener and the situation. Communicates using recovery language and emphasizes the strengths of their peers.

## Self-Management & Resiliency

Understands the importance of self-care and stress management and models the practices that work best for them to remain healthy while supporting others. Strives to maintain calm and diffuse stressful or challenging situations.

# Core Competencies



## **Flexibility & Adaptability**

Is open to new ideas, deals comfortably with ambiguity, and adjusts plans or behaviours to better suit a given situation. Is willing to be open-minded and compromises when needed.

## **Self-Awareness & Confidence**

Interacts in a manner that demonstrates a balance of self-confidence with openness to the thoughts and opinions of others. Self-reflects and understands that personal thoughts and attitudes can influence their behaviour and actions.

## **Initiative & Commitment**

Is dependable and carries tasks through to completion. Demonstrates good judgement knowing when insight or assistance should be requested from another and are trustworthy when working independently.

## **Critical Thinking**

Engages in active listening skills to better understand a situation and recognizes that there is more than one way to look at an issue. Considers the possible implications or outcomes of their actions and, when asked, will help peers to explore the outcome or possible consequences of various options. Demonstrates good judgement in respecting the limits and boundaries of their role.

## **Teamwork**

Shares knowledge, ideas and resources with team members in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Strives to fulfill their role and responsibility within the team while respecting the roles and responsibilities of the other team members.

## **Continuous Learning & Development**

Strives to approach life and work in a curious manner, identifies areas where personal growth may be helpful, and takes advantage of opportunities to learn and develop. Recognizes the value of on-going personal growth and skill development and maintains a connection with a peer support community as a resource to stay 'grounded' in the work of authentic peer support.

**Source:** Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). (2016). PSACC National Certification Handbook

[Want to learn more? Click here!](#)

[Peer Support Canada Peer Support Certification Handbook](#)