



CREATING, MANAGING AND SUPPORTING SPACES FOR YOUNG ADULT EXPERTS AND PEERS FINAL REPORT 2019

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*"We have a powerful
potential in our youth, and
we must have the courage to
change old ideas and
practices so that we may
direct their power toward
good ends."*

Mary Mcleod Bethune

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INTRODUCTION

Creating, Managing and Supporting Spaces for Young Adult Experts and Peers (2018) was first imagined in mid-2018 as a culminating event of the Housing Outreach Project-Collaborative (HOP-C). Led by young adult Peer Specialist, Mardi Daley and a team of front-line workers and researchers, the full-day Design Lab was meant to bring diverse stakeholders together on the premise of building better understanding and policies for organizations that do (or want to do) peer support with young adults.

Everything about the day was deliberate. Registrants were assigned seats based on their position and organization to facilitate networking at different levels of experience. Upon entering the Ballroom at the 519, participants were given a survey to fill-out which gauged current attitudes and understanding of peer support positions, policy and application to the sector. The Lab saw over 50 attendees from more than 15 different youth-serving agencies across Ontario!

The event began with a land acknowledgement and opening remarks from Adam Vaughan, MP. Dr. Sean Kidd followed with a presentation about HOP-C and its application to youth homelessness and mental health interventions, and then the Community Forum began.

Not only was the Design Lab meant to be informative, it was also meant to begin the waves of change in imagining peer roles for young adults. This report is a summary of the findings from the day with minimal additions and edits to the content.

My job as a young adult Peer Specialist is to elevate the voices of young people to influence the policies which directly affect them. I help educate organizations and bring to life the realities of peer work for young adults to go beyond tokenistic practices and transform them into meaningful moments on a young person's path to recovery – a path neither linear nor simple.

Inside this report you will find recommendations for Organizational Readiness, Ethical Inclusion and the Peer Role. Both peers and non-peers alike must feel valued and supported as we evolve to be more person-centered and equitable in our practices. This is just the beginning.

Mardi Daley

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Mardi Daley, H. BA is a Peer Support Specialist who, since 2015 has co-authored multiple resources and spoken at a number of conferences related to engagement and hiring practices of young adult peers in the workplace. Her work includes contributions to the by-youth, for-youth "MY" Guide, Best Practices for Hiring Young Adult Peers and most recently, she led a multi-level cross-agency stakeholder Design Lab to further develop strategies for the ethical employment of young adult peers.

Mardi has worked with LOFT Community Services, A Way Home Toronto, Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, the Centre for Mindfulness Studies and Woodgreen Community Services promoting best practices for Peer Support.

Mardi holds an Honours Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto and is currently pursuing consulting opportunities with youth-centered services. In the near future, Mardi will head her own firm, Lived Experience Lab, which will offer development, training and resources for those pursuing Peer Support.



Egag Egag, H. BA, is a Practicum Student at LOFT's TAY program, a first year student in the MSW program at the University of Toronto, and a SSHRC Canadian Graduate Scholarship - Master's recipient. Prior to pursuing an MSW, Egag spent 3 years working in the Forensic Division of the Complex Care and Recovery Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Egag has worked on research involving forensic clients at CAMH and research related to CAMH's Forensic Early Intervention Service (FEIS) - in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS). Egag's research interests primarily revolve around student mental health, and mental health service seeking behaviours and outcomes of racialized and immigrant peoples.

ABOUT US

Housing-Outreach Project Collaborative

The Housing Outreach Program-Collaboration (HOP-C), which involves a team of mental health professionals and peer support workers helping young people transition out of homelessness, has been operating since 2015. Under the leadership of CAMH researcher Dr. Sean Kidd, HOP-C has shown great promise, leading to improvements in housing, education and employment for many of the youth who took part.

Since late 2018, HOP-C has expanded to capacity-building and scaling efforts to help improve outcomes for youth participants who engage with mental health and housing systems.

LOFT Community Services

LOFT is a multi-service organization with programs tailored to the needs of individuals with complex challenges that include mental health issues, substance abuse and homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless.

While our values remain consistent across all our programs, LOFT tailors each program to respond to a different set of needs. It takes more than a cookie cutter approach that will serve the diversity of individuals who are part of the LOFT community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Housing Outreach Project-Collaborative (HOP-C) would like to thank our many partner agencies, **the 519** and the individuals who made *Creating, Managing and Supporting Spaces for Young Adult Experts and Peers* (2018) possible.

Keynote Speaker – Adam Vaughan, MP

Adam Vaughan is a Liberal member of the House of Commons in the federal government. He is the member of Parliament for Spadina-Fort York, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. From 2006 to 2014 he was a Toronto city councilor who represented Ward 20 Trinity—Spadina. Prior to Mr. Vaughan's career in politics, he was a radio and TV journalist and an activist. Mr. Vaughan was recently appointed to chair an **Advisory Committee on Homelessness** composed of experts and stakeholders to support the renewal of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy

Land Acknowledgement – Cynthia White

Cynthia White is a Traditional Healer for Aboriginal Services at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

HOP-C Partners

Covenant House
Local Poverty Reduction Fund
Province of Ontario
Psychiatry – University of Toronto



Mission

To create an environment of mutual learning discussing the integration and onboarding of peers into organizations and programming.

To allow services that provide assistance to young people a safe place to network, share resources and create a forum for learning.

To collect data about existing processes, practices, and beliefs about hiring young adult peers in a community wellness and recovery sphere.

To provide space to young adult experts to teach organizations about what they need to succeed and how to positively impact service delivery.

To propose a new set of Best Practices for hiring and supporting young adult peers in the mental health and housing sector.

How to Use this Report

This report is designed to:

- Share collective knowledge and findings about the current state of young adult peer support in the community wellness and recovery sphere
- Further define peer support
- Outline guiding questions and solutions about peer support work
- Provide recommendations for those wishing to develop and engage with peer support within their organization/program

Methodology

1. **Deliberate co-design:** Participant seating was assigned in order to promote a culture of collaboration between peer workers, front-line workers, researchers and administrative leadership.
2. **Solutions-Focused:** Use of “Community Forums” to generate answers to frequently asked questions and also allow participants to create and answer their own burning questions.
3. **Knowledge-Building:** Presentations, speeches and panels from industry specialists highlighting exemplar models of peer support
4. **Practice:** Allowing participants to simulate co-design and program-building as a collaborative to note the difference in design and flow when including youth stakeholders at every level.
5. **Fun:** Incorporating activities like mindful movement, “snow-ball fights” and music to keep creativity and energy flowing all day.

Guiding Questions

The Community Forum had predetermined questions to build consensus and knowledge in particular areas of peer support. These questions were:

Why include people with lived experience?

What is the value to you, your organization, your stakeholders, donors etc.?

What are some exciting examples of including peers in your workplace?

Think funding, programs, policies, pathways, job creation etc.

What are challenges and risks of including peers in the workplace? How can we be preventative?

How can we increase buy-in for the young adult peer role? In other words, how can we incentivize this position for the worker?

What errors have you or others made working with people with lived experience? How can we prevent these from happening? What are the solutions?

What supports do peers need to do their job well? Eg. Supervision, accommodations etc.

“If we want people with lived experience, some of that is going to be active. We can’t just expect people to split off their challenges and leave them outside.”

Executive Summary

Value of Peer Support

1. Including young adult peers builds trust with the organization, stakeholders and peer workers themselves. There is value at every level, particularly due to the potential impact on service in terms of creating meaningful programs and systems engagement for clients.
2. The impact of including peer support increases capacity to work within diverse groups, mutual learning and the building of relevant resources, tools and services.

Barriers to Peer Support

1. Generating peer-programming is difficult because there is a lack of available government-prioritized dollars and trainings for shifting workplace culture and implementation.
2. The most common pushback from non-peer staff around the inclusion of peers is about boundaries, role expectations, power sharing, stigma, and confidentiality.
3. The most common barriers for peers engaging with lived experience work are systemic: HR does not have the tools to standardize the peer role, project frameworks are created without peer input, and academic hierarchies sometimes separate teams into sub-committees which leave peers doing arts-based projects while researchers do the 'seemingly important' work.
4. There are times when it is not appropriate to include a peer role. The top-reported reason was a general lack of preparedness and a gap in understanding how the role would be meaningful to the organization or program.
5. A peer role should not be included if it conflicts with existing roles (eg. unionized environment) or there is a conflict of interest in a person's case.
6. Ask how your hiring process filters candidates. Where do you find your peers? Look at underlying assumptions in your process and try to understand how they can be problematic. Hiring must always look at peers as individuals, instead of general lived experience.

Organizational Readiness

1. Organizational readiness includes assessing staff and management buy-in, policies and sustainability before engaging in the hiring process
2. Change management and onboarding is difficult for peers and non-peers alike. The recruitment process (particularly the HR process) and fear of tokenization from those who may not have a complete understanding of power-sharing and co-design contributes to this.
3. Prepare for turnover: non-peer staff turnover can create confusion for peers, especially when supervision structures change. Peer staff turnover can directly affect program delivery and rapport in the community.

4. When preparing for a peer role, look at the positions as more than low-level employment and try to provide meaningful responsibilities that foster a greater sense of inclusion and power-sharing.
5. Build peer roles from the ground up by including people with lived experience in the project planning process as well as educating all employees about how to work alongside young adult experts and peers.
6. Increase buy-in for those who are skeptical about including peers ensure policies have been developed around the peer role in the workplace.
7. Accountability is created through policy, support and transparency. This can include explaining boundaries between peers and co-workers, peers and clients, peers and students and peers with other peers. Providing supervision is the best way to facilitate accountability.
8. Bringing young adult peers into your organization means taking responsibility for the mechanisms that keep peers employed: accommodations, professional development and mitigating risks. The peer role should include proper compensation, creative and exciting work, networking opportunities, professional development and low barriers to engagement (eg. Contributions to research where possible if the person is interested, access to transportation etc.)
9. Appropriate hiring, training and support will facilitate the development of hard and soft skills while helping the peer feel like a full member of their team.

Inclusion

1. Inclusion must be felt by everyone – not just be a tagline. Ethical inclusion means striving for transparency, fairness and honesty at all times. It also means striving for solutions and pathways that are mutually beneficial to everyone.
2. In an environment that fosters communication, peers will tell their supervisors if personal issues will interfere with work and workload. Pathways should never be prescribed when issues arise.
3. In order to move towards inclusion, there must be a decrease in tokenistic practices, volunteerism and low-compensation, and boundaries to peers' engagement with programs and/or participants. There should be an increase in accommodations, supports and putting clear expectations in place.
4. It is advised that more than 1 lived experience expert be hired in case one needs to step back from the role.
5. Safety should be felt by everyone on the team; peers and non-peers alike.
6. There is a need to: Collaborate instead of compete, compile knowledge and make it accessible, innovate and try new ideas and methods, and uncover the issues within organizations to Best Practices can be shared

Organizational Readiness

How will we know we are ready?

Before embarking on the journey of including young adult experts and peers in your workplace, you must first assess your organizational readiness.

Organizational Readiness can be assessed by asking:

Is there executive buy-in for creating and supporting peer positions in my organization?

Are there mechanisms and policies in place to promote and protect young adult peers?

Who will be accountable for managing these processes?

Will our program be able to utilize peers without tokenizing them?

Is there resistance to these positions, and if so, from where?

Will our peer program be sustainable?

Who will be responsible for change management, particularly for the departments that will work directly with peer workers?

Generating Buy-In

Why include young adult peers in the workplace?

The value of including experts and peers in your workplace is multi-dimensional. When thinking about how to make a case for peers, think about all of the people this works affects:

- Organization
- Clients
- Your Peer Workers
- Donors

“Having peers keeps us grounded. Having peers give direct feedback to a board of directors keeps the board grounded in experience.”

Value of Peer Support



A note on Donor Engagement:

When engagement is **done well**, peers feel comfortable sharing their experiences with donors which can add context beyond statistics to change people's minds when considering funding.

When peer support is **not done well**, it can be exploitative; because people with lived experience get nothing out of it. Peers must be allowed to be genuine. Give them their own voice. Be transparent about how and where stories will be used.

A Note on Research and Policy

Research is more authentic when peers are on the development team. However, research teams that engage with peers often fail to arm them with the hard skills for post-research careers and next steps resulting in peers staying employed at the same level.

There has typically been a lack of accountability from the research community to ensure peer research positions are paid competitively and allow for mobility.

We recognize that it is a struggle to provide recognition for the skills and knowledge peers have, but institutional support is everyone's responsibility.

Why is generating buy-in difficult?

- ❖ “Let’s have youth” has not been an effective attitude towards engagement
- ❖ Board of directors’ communication style may not align with peers’ communication style
- ❖ Executives do not have time and can be uncomfortable with change and shifts in internal power dynamics
- ❖ Transparent discussions between boards and peers can be difficult to facilitate
- ❖ Difficult to find trainings for shifting workplace culture and implementation
- ❖ Lack of government prioritized dollars for peer programs

Impact of Peer Support

Increases capacity to work with more diverse youth

Mutual learning between peers and non-peer staff to work more effectively

Better understanding of the relationship between self-disclosure and work

Leads to relevant and beneficial resources, tools and services

Grounds privileged perspectives

Pathway to job creation

Allows therapeutic conversations that are not clinical

Change Management

How should we be prepared for during the transition to include young adult experts and peers?

Transitioning to include peers in the workplace is not easy. There is often pushback from non-peer staff as peers sometimes come from directly within organizations and/or programs as client-participants.

Issues often arise around:

- Boundaries
- Role Expectations and Power-Sharing
- Stigma and Tokenization
- Confidentiality

Understanding the risks

In order to prepare your organization for change, there must be a collective understanding around the risks associated to peer work for all stakeholders: The peer, the non-peer staff and the organization.



Client Relationships with young adult peers also have risks. For example, there may be confusion around same-age social dynamics or boundaries outside the workspace. As well, peers may not be fully equipped for all client situations that arise on the job.

Understanding the challenges

Even though your staff may be on-board with including peers in programming, challenges can still exist when **implementing** the role.

Peer Role + Mobility

Lack of clarity around the difference between “peer support” and “youth engagement”

In research/policy, teams fail to arm peers with skills for next steps, even though research is more authentic with inclusion

Remaining employed at the same level

The peer community is still very small

Challenge with peers accessing services at place of work

Lack of clarity regarding when you stop being an “expert” and just an employee

Need for more flexibility, but not lack of structure

“Imposter Syndrome” when running groups they used to attend

Working Environment + Stigma

Challenges	Needs
Organizations that do children’s aid are generally not trusted in the community	Inclusion in design processes
Recruitment process: some youth do not have references (even though it is an HR process)	More spaces for peers to participate in (eg. policy groups, interviews etc.)
Peers fear being viewed as incompetent by clinicians if they have questions or need advice	Mutual respect and power sharing for all colleagues
Disconnect in services when non-peer staff do not understand the role of peers	

“Some people expect youth to open up right off the bat, share their trauma, and yet they don’t honour these peoples’ stories. They just put them into a report and then don’t follow up or support the youth.”

Understanding the barriers

HR Standpoint: Employee training needs to be standardized, but how is this implemented when peers do not come from the same background?

Projects: Project frameworks are sometimes already set regarding peer workers which can cause them to struggle to create spaces for themselves on teams and/or projects.

Academic Hierarchy: Sometimes teams are separated based on committees (eg. 'Expert committee') and people with lived experience are left doing arts-based awareness projects instead of the "seemingly important" work.

In order to move forward, we must confront these questions:

Buy-In

How do we get executives to step out of their comfort zones?

How do you promote peers in a unionized environment?

What is the resistance and where is it coming from?

What is the evidence for the peer role?

If there is no research, how do we make a case?

Programming

What are the effective peer engagement models?

How do we frame the need for peer support workers to show that they fill gaps other staff cannot fill?

Cost

How do we show the value of the money being put into peer programs?

What is the cost and time factor? How do we find the bottom line?

What kind of funding is there, how does it relate to government priorities?

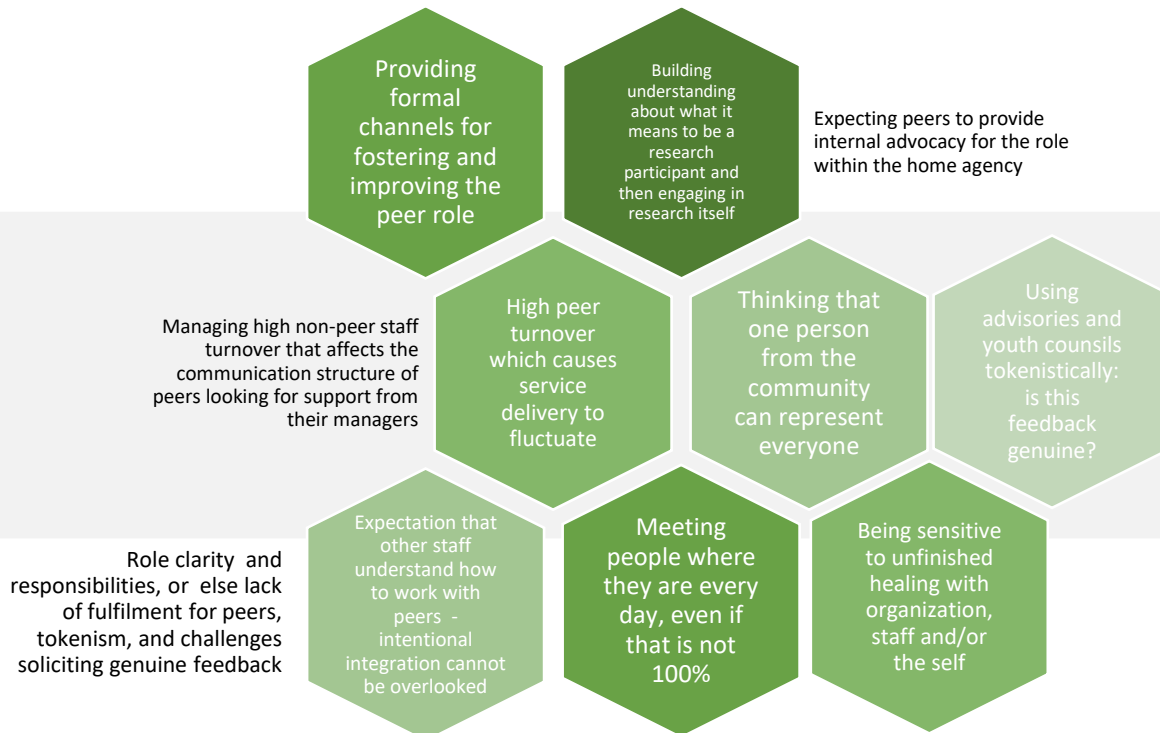
What if you don't have money to cover the cost of evaluating your peer program to show early success?

“Reformation is the process to have more open communication.”

Common Errors and Solutions

when trying to include young adult peers

There must be more attention paid to:



Suggestions for Improvement

1. Employers should stop looking at peer-positions as low level employment jobs by adding things to the work, even admin-based things.
2. Look at peers as more than the voice of young adults; giving them more responsibility fosters a greater feeling on inclusion.
3. Comradery in the workplace allows for new ideas and resolutions.
4. Allow youth to question how the organization operates understanding it is possible for the organization to be wrong.
5. Make sure youth are visible throughout the organization to promote power sharing.

Change Management & Organizational Readiness Solutions

- Educate employers on the process of checking and assessing readiness
- Provide a different hiring policy for young adult peers
- More 1:1 attention for peers to help build their capacity and sense of inclusion
- Role clarification and avoiding duplication of services
- Development of policy for peers who came from within the organization's use of services
- All staff must treat peers as fellow staff while being respectful of that person's time and expertise
- Include people with lived experience in the actual planning and development of projects
- Always strive to give people "real jobs" that will help them develop skills rather than doing seemingly unimportant and potentially tokenistic work
- Have flexible youth counsels that directly report back to directors
- Seek funding to support the peer role at all levels of government (eg. city, provincial, federal)
- Build the case for peer support to those that are skeptical
- Address contract roles and program shutdowns by considering peer role in budgets

"If an institution has the funding to hire people to write grant proposals, they probably have the money to engage young people from the very beginning; re-configuration of core funding to allow for this type of engagement at the start"

Consider This:

Peers may not want to self-disclose their 'story' more than once in the same forum

Building positions from the ground up with peers as consultants

Proposals should consult people with lived experience if meant to include them

Investing in capacity-building rather than over-extending staff abilities

Building trust outside of necessary work conversations will help everyone grow

People with lived experience often have the knowledge, but they have not been trained to share it

Allow young people to co-create policy from the ground up (eg. absenteeism)

Sometimes inclusivity means snacks and resources in all spaces

Language used to address peers should reflect their expertise

Recommendations for Generating Buy-In

Relate the program outcomes to the organization's mission statement; include delivery goals relating to the outcomes of peer support work

Collect and highlight positive stories and data. Use this as leverage with the board and execs

Connect peer work to donor dollars and look for a cost-benefit analysis that youth engagement is beneficial; Demonstrate mutual benefits for community, youth and organization etc.

Look to organizations that have started effective peer work

Look for windows of opportunity eg. Renewal of the Strategic Plan; How can peers be offered as part of the new plan?

Outline unexpected outcomes eg. Peers are better at engagement and more trauma-informed; peers help clients return to programming unlike ER/hospitals whose referrals do not connect with people

Ongoing advocacy for the role is required

Ethical Inclusion

What does it mean to be ethical in our approach to including people with lived experience in the workplace?

Inclusion is a common goal in community services and is regularly mandated into programming and grants. However, inclusion must be felt by everyone instead of just being a tagline.

Inclusion for people with lived experience in the workplace has often taken a tokenistic form. People are placed at the table, but their voices are not heard, the environment is not conducive to success and they are not part of the process.

Ethical inclusion means:

- **Striving for transparency, fairness and honesty in all processes related to people with lived experience;**
- **Striving to find solutions and pathways that advantage peers and non-peers alike;**
- **Never dictating a person's professional or personal recovery path;**
- **Creating an environment that fosters communication and safety;**
- **Being accountable at every level to the lived experience experts on your team;**
- **Understanding that ethical inclusion means the person feels respected and a part of the team and workplace.**

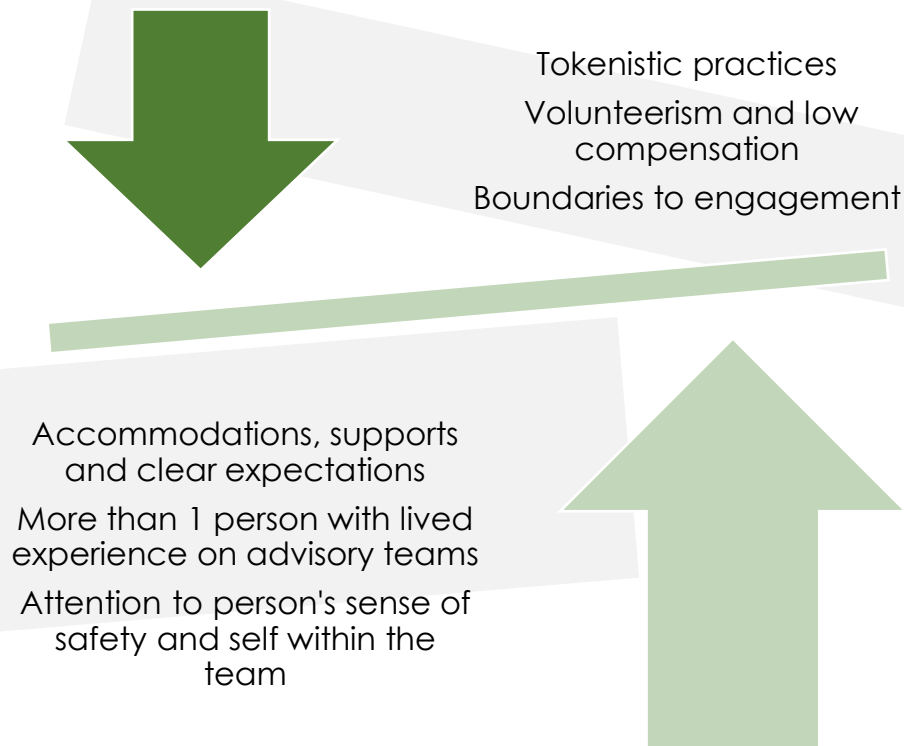
"It's a different feeling when other staff are going through struggles like divorce or the death of a family member. With peers everyone treats it like a crisis."

Inclusion at a Glance

“Inclusion starts at a high level of government: proposals need to include peers from the start and more dollars should be put aside to support initiatives that include people with lived experience.”

- Peer positions must move past lack of structure and traditional volunteerism particularly with young people
- Young adult peers want support and mentoring from other identified peers in the workplace
- Peers see and feel power imbalances and often do not feel like they are part of the team
- Respect for peers and their positions in the workplace benefits everyone
- Peers will need ongoing support through the onboarding process
- Flexibility is necessary

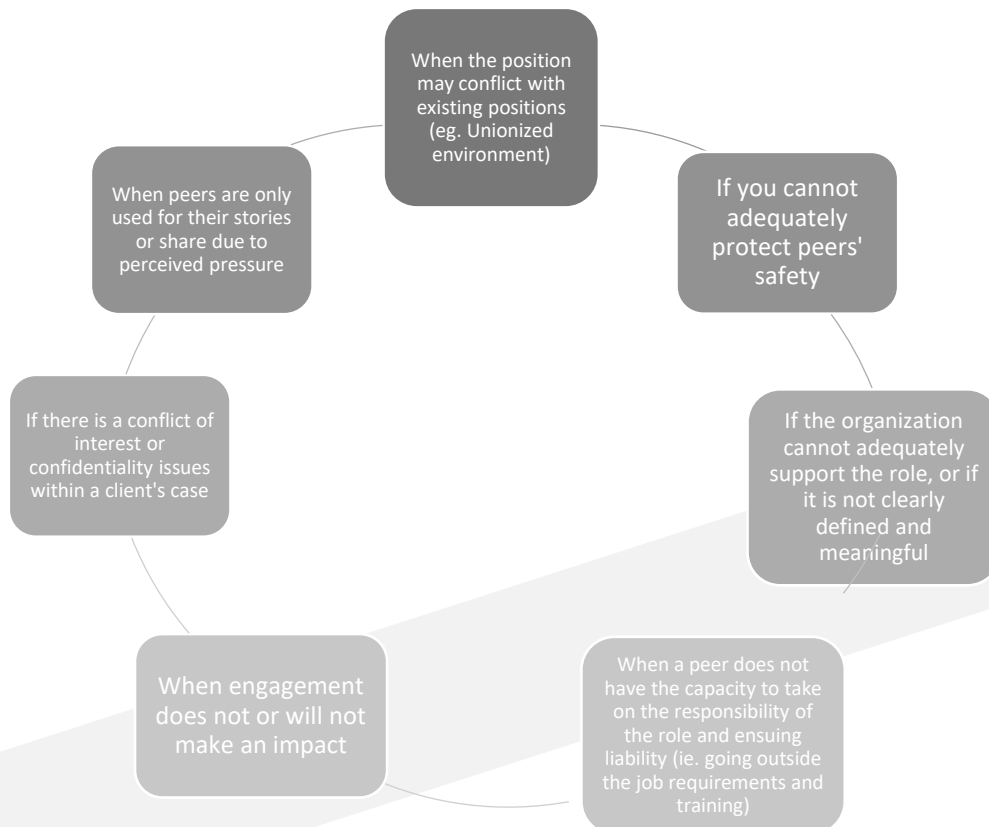
Challenge: over-expecting from peers while having expectations that are set too low



When is it **not appropriate to have a peer role?**

Although adding a peer role to the workplace is based on ethical inclusion, it is not always appropriate.

One of the *most reported reasons* against including peers (from peers themselves nonetheless) is an overall lack of preparedness and gap in understanding about how the role would be meaningful in an agency or project. Employers have a responsibility to explain the purpose behind the work and to be transparent about the ups and downs of the role in order for the person to make an informed choice about whether or not it is a good fit for them. See below for scenarios when it is not appropriate to include a peer role:



"We give so much of ourselves only to get 6 hours a week and a reference letter. This is emotional work, it takes a lot and we risk re-traumatizing ourselves. When you are not properly compensated, it shows you don't care or value peers".

A Note on Accountability

In order to build and keep trust with young adults, supervisors and managers must show a commitment to accountability. Unfulfilled promises or follow-up will damage the relationship between the organization, the peer and subsequently the peer's relationship to the work.

Accountability can look like, but is not limited to:

Policy

- Providing clear job structure, expectations and list of boundaries
- Ensuring training is in line with colleagues
- Providing a network of the workplace: *who do I go to for what?*
- Treating peers as staff eg. Making sure workspaces are shared, not segregated except upon request
- Clearly explaining boundaries between peers: peers; peers: co-workers; peers: clients

Support

- Providing transportation passes for work-related situations
- Providing access to resources a peer can fall back on if necessary
- Dialogues and action where possible around career pathways and ongoing training
- Supervision and daily de-brief if necessary

Transparency

- Creating a dialogue regarding available hours, scheduling and pay (ie. Is this position part-time, casual etc.)
- Transparency in donor stories and how they will be used

Questions to answer:

Will the expert or peer gain something from this program?
Is my organization ready to take on the responsibility of including young adult leaders?

Is our engagement with the peer going to be meaningful?
How will we manage accountability for this position?

When a young adult peer is struggling, questions often arise about their readiness for the position; but are these things mutually dependent? (eg. Loss of housing while employed)

Strategies to Promote Ethical Inclusion

Offer peers priority access to services, housing, etc. as able

Provide peers support, offer to put their position on hold while they receive services and allow them space to step back when security, stability or mental health are challenged

Ask peers what they feel they are capable of and how the organization can support them instead of assuming their ability

Partnering with another organization can be helpful to externally support peers

Peers should be able to create a strategy for coming back to work on time if they require time off to deal with personal setbacks

“It’s unfair to ask people to do this work and not support them.”

“Counseling should be available at least for a few sessions – that’s not much. There should be minimal mental health and addictions support for all staff.”

Exercise flexible expectations with peers going through personal challenges

Utilize supervision

Organizations should stop being reactive and put systems and policies in place in advance of peers requiring extra support. There must also be space for the unknown variables as there may be a need for supports people did not expect

“It is ethical and safe to include peers with active mental health and addictions issues. We need to have spaces that allow peers to say they are going through this, because even if you don’t, there will be people like this. Having options to disclose is important.”

The Peer Role

How do we prepare for a peer role? What is included in a peer role?

Bringing young adult peers into your organization means taking responsibility for the mechanisms that keep peers employed: **accommodations, professional development and mitigating risks.**

Young adult peers can be the most vulnerable in a workplace as it is not uncommon for the role to be someone's first job. Hence, appropriate hiring, training and support will facilitate the development of hard and soft skills while helping the peer feel like a full member of their team.

The peer role should include:

- Proper compensation
- Creative and exciting work
- Networking opportunities
- Opportunities to contribute to research (where possible)
- Professional development
- Low barriers to engagement (eg. transportation, safety)

Hiring Practices

Hiring practices that are transparent facilitate trust in stakeholder communities.

All of the facets of a 'normal' hiring process should be included (eg. Job posting or application, vetting, interviews etc.)

If there is a specific demographic being appealed to through the peer role it should be listed in the job posting.

Be aware of favouritism – pushing for the 'good' or 'popular' youth can close a door of opportunity for others.

Ask how your hiring process filters candidates. Where do you find your peers? Look at underlying assumptions in your process and try to understand how they can be problematic.

Hiring must always look at peers as individuals, instead of general lived experience.

Accommodations, Development and Training

There are questions in the community services sector about whether training for experts and peers needs to be formalized or not.

There is also confusion about whose responsibility it is to pursue peer training: the organization's or the peer's?

It can also be recognized that clinical support is different than peer support. Peer support is often directed at emotionally supporting the client's needs through story-telling and experiences.

“Having a “panel of experts: that is not prepared or briefed properly gives a dual disservice – to the people listening and to the people participating as experts. Training people in public speaking and facilitation would be important in situations like this.”

“There is a difference between clinicians helping youth and peers providing emotional and/or crisis support “

Accommodations

Having appropriate accommodations in place is important to every step of incorporating a peer role. For example, “instead of reference letters, are there phone calls we can make to the person's community for a character reference?”

Find a **communication** platform that can be used professionally and safely. Safety and confidentiality must be felt on both sides. This includes in-person procedures as well as electronic. When speaking about grants or funding, it is helpful to use language that is accessible or give explanations for acronyms being used and how they are applied.

Make sure **support** is available from outside the organization. Have clinical staff present at large events to ensure peers do not feel overwhelmed.

Try to work within peer's availability and geographic area if possible.

Questions to Answer

How do we evaluate and obtain feedback from youth positions and co-op students who may only be present once per week?

Should peers schedule time together?

Should more senior peers offer mentorship?

How can we allow more diverse peer positions into the workplace without underpaying people?

How can we be more culturally aware and appropriate when approaching barriers to engagement?

How can we deal with absenteeism and sick days?

Is it possible to have a reflexive HR process?

Can we create a culture that doesn't stigmatize self-disclosure of peer and non-peer staff?

Collaboration and Next Steps

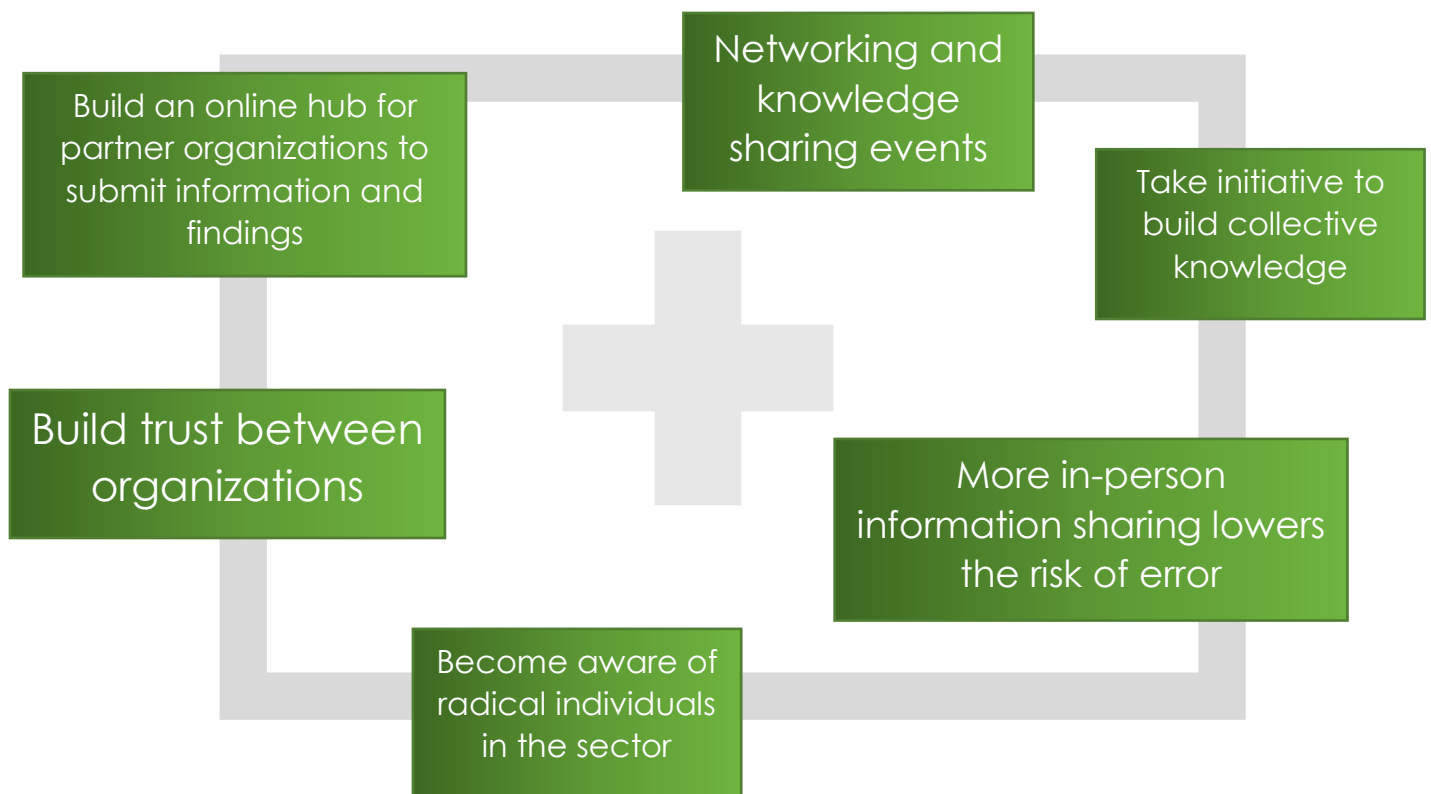
What is happening in the sector? How can we communicate better? Are there opportunities for collaboration?

There is a need to:

- Collaborate instead of compete
- Compile knowledge and make it accessible
- Innovate and try new ideas and methods
- Uncover the issues within organizations so best practices can be shared

“There is a lack of teamwork and trust in this sector compared to the health sciences/medical sector; probably because money is a big issue in information sharing and there are too many organizations with the same goal.”

Strategic Suggestions



APPENDIX

A. Organizations working with young people with lived experience

Harm Reduction Peer Team

Peers will be training staff on the counselling team, perform liaison with the clinical director and other workers to flag areas for improvement

Knowledge mobilization programs

Clinician and peer work in DBT group facilitation and workbooks. Peers re-wrote sections of DBT book from non-stigmatizing viewpoint

National Youth Council, YMCA

Welcome Basket Program

Helps patients land in communities – peers help each other achieve program goal

John Howard Society

Integration program with peers: wanted a program that gives people leaving institutions. Peers able to provide feedback on questions and intakes to make system work better

Woodgreen

Currently building a peer support model-Slowly and intentionally

Exciting- young people involved from beginning

Youth transition advisory board who hired the manager and designed the project- they are still involved

The plan is to transition youth from advisory role to something more asking them- what was lacking, what support are you looking for?

Not a lack of services- Relationship component

Challenging for professional workers – lived experience relationships are critical

A Way Home Toronto

Utilizes language of calling people with lived experience “Experts”

Pays people at a good rate (\$24/h for co-chairs) which encourages participation

Honorariums seen as good and bad – they don't provide security but if you're on social assistance these positions don't have to be included in your monthly income

SKETCH Working Arts

Program participants write blogs where they explain their art and practice/experience and how engaging with the arts has changed their life
Paying people to run social media for events

HOP-C North/Dilico Anishanabek Family Health

Many youth with great artistic skills in Thunder Bay
Arts engagement opens up the doors to creative expression and helps youth believe that they have these skills
Youth have engaged more because they feel like their knowledge is valuable
Youth advisors on each project + 5-10 youth on each project with emphasis on honoraria and hiring community development advisors and advocates
Elders provide support: allows supports to come from and be delivered to the community
Youth keep people accountable to delivering on the items they want/need
Included added cultural practices, elders, youth discussions: gives youth an outlet to heal in their own way
Transitional peers – to navigate youth to more resources

LOFT Community Services – Transitional Age Youth

A part of multiple research projects and grants that have peers written in
Peers co-facilitate evening treatment groups, DBT, drop-ins etc.
Peers exist on multiple platforms (eg. Peer mentor, peer case manager, peer specialist)
A lot of support within organization for these youth positions

Covenant House

Had project with peer researchers, but programming needed more people with lived experience (eg. Sex workers – peers need to come from similar background in order to create a non-judgmental feeling)
Research projects are often so limited and have peers drop off at the end of a project; they should be given avenues of support post-project
Having someone with experience makes it a different discussion than a 'white male researcher' asking triggering questions and gives experience a whole different frame

CAMH

Lived experience in all aspects of research process (planning, data collection, editing report)
Steering committee structured process
Struggle with union environment and HR – self disclosure is tricky especially in interview questions.

B. Pre-Event Questionnaire

Please identify the stakeholder group(s) you represent. Select all that apply

- Peer Support Worker Client/Program Participant Researcher
- Service Provider (case manager, program coordinator, clinician etc.)
- Administrative/Service Leadership (supervisor, manager, director etc.)
- Prefer not to say

1. Are you or have you been a part of the hiring process for young adult peers? Yes ___ No ___
2. If applicable, please check beside the number of paid employees your organization/program has
 ___ 0-10 ___ 11-30 ___ 31-50 ___ 51-75 ___ 75-100 ___ 100+ ___ unsure
3. If applicable, please check beside the number of unique young adult clients your organization/program serves
 ___ 0-25 ___ 26-50 ___ 51-100 ___ 101-250 ___ 250+ ___ unsure
4. Lived experience workers are visible in all aspects of programming and fully able to participate in my workplace. Yes ___ No ___ Unsure ___
5. My workplace culture is supportive of peer-led initiatives. Yes ___ No ___ Unsure ___
6. What topics are you most interested in learning about today?

How much to you agree or disagree with each of these statements:

Set 1

1 = completely disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = unsure; 4 = somewhat agree; 5 = absolutely agree

Young adult peers should be selected from within their home agency/organization	1	2	3	4	5
Advisories, projects and programs only need 1 person with lived experience on their teams	1	2	3	4	5
Young adult peers should be visible in all aspects of programming and advisory	1	2	3	4	5
Including young adult peers increases organizational capacity	1	2	3	4	5

Set 2

1 = completely disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = unsure; 4 = somewhat agree; 5 = absolutely agree

I understand the unique role(s) a lived experience/peer worker can hold in the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the difference between a case manager and peer support worker	1	2	3	4	5
Being a lived experience worker positively effects that person's own recovery	1	2	3	4	5
Client-participants feel more comfortable talking to someone with lived experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I can describe a situation where a peer support worker would be the most efficient for addressing client-participant needs	1	2	3	4	5
Peers should be able to share their "story" confidently to others upon request	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the risks associated with peer work for the worker	1	2	3	4	5

Set 3

1 = completely disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = unsure; 4 = somewhat agree; 5 = absolutely agree

Hiring policies should accommodate young adult peers with non-violent criminal records	1	2	3	4	5
Peer workers should be formally employed (ie. payroll, not honoraria) within organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
People with lived experience should be held to the same professional standards (eg. Tardiness, discipline etc.) as other front-line staff	1	2	3	4	5
Supervision is valuable, but not necessary for Young adult peers to succeed on the job	1	2	3	4	5
Only stabilized (ie. Housed, sober etc.) people with lived experience should be hired	1	2	3	4	5

C. Pre-Event Questionnaire Analysis and Findings

Young adult peers should be selected from within their home agency/organization

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	0(0%)	1(5.6%)	1(7.7%)	1(33.3%)	2(15.4%)	1(100%)	6(9.7%)
Unsure	5(35.7%)	8(44.4%)	5(38.5%)	1(33.3%)	8(61.5%)	0(0%)	27(43.5%)
Agree	9(64.3%)	9(50%)	7(53.8%)	1(33.3%)	3(23.1%)	0(0%)	29(46.8%)
Total	14	18	13	3	13	1	62

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders agree. Client/program participants are equally divided, whereas most researchers are unsure on this. Additionally, the only person in the "other" category disagreed

Advisories, projects and programs only need 1 person with lived experience on their teams

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	13(86.7%)	17(94.4%)	14(100%)	3(100%)	13(100%)	1(100%)	61(95.3%)
Unsure	2(13.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(3.1%)
Agree	0(0%)	1(5.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(1.6%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category disagreed with this.

Young adult peers should be visible in all aspects of programming and advisory

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Unsure	2(13.3%)	2(11.1%)	0(0%)	1(33.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(7.8%)
Agree	13(86.7%)	16(88.9%)	14(100%)	2(66.7%)	13(100%)	1(100%)	59(92.2%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

Including young adult peers increases organizational capacity

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Unsure	2(13.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(66.7%)	2(15.4%)	0(0%)	6(9.4%)
Agree	13(86.7%)	18(100%)	14(100%)	1(33.3%)	11(84.6%)	1(100%)	58(90.6%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this. Most client/program participants were unsure about this.

I understand the unique role(s) a lived experience/peer worker can hold in the workplace

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	1(6.7%)	0(0%)	2(14.3%)	0(0%)	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	4(6.25%)
Unsure	1(6.7%)	1(5.6%)	1(7.1%)	0(0%)	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	4(6.25%)
Agree	13(86.6%)	17(94.4%)	11(78.6%)	3(100%)	11(84.6%)	1(100%)	56(87.5%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

I understand the difference between a case manager and a peer support worker

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	3(20%)	0(0%)	2(14.3%)	0(0%)	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	6(9.4%)
Unsure	3(20%)	2(11.1%)	3(21.4%)	1(33.3%)	2(15.4%)	0(0%)	11(17.2)
Agree	9(60%)	16(88.9%)	9(64.3%)	2(66.7%)	10(76.9%)	1(100%)	47(73.4%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

Being a lived experience worker positively effects that person's own recovery

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	1(6.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(1.6%)
Unsure	2(13.3%)	2(11.1%)	2(14.3%)	0(0%)	2(15.4%)	0(0%)	8(12.5%)
Agree	12(80%)	16(88.9%)	12(85.7%)	3(100%)	11(84.6)	1(100%)	55(85.9%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

Client-participants feel more comfortable talking to someone with lived experience

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Unsure	1(6.7%)	1(5.6%)	2(14.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(6.2%)
Agree	14(93.3%)	17(94.4%)	12(85.7%)	3(100%)	13(100%)	1(100%)	60(93.8)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

I can describe a situation where a peer support worker would be the most efficient for addressing client-participant needs

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(21.4%)	0(0%)	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	4(6.2%)
Unsure	2(13.3%)	4(22.2%)	2(14.3%)	0(0%)	3(23.1%)	0(0%)	11(17.2%)
Agree	13(86.7%)	14(77.8%)	9(64.3%)	3(100%)	9(69.2%)	1(100%)	49(76.6%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

Peers should be able to share their "story" confidently to others upon request

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	4(26.7%)	5(29.4%)	7(50%)	0(0%)	4(33.3%)	0(0%)	20(32.3%)
Unsure	2(13.3%)	4(23.5%)	1(7.1%)	0(0%)	4(33.3%)	0(0%)	11(17.7%)
Agree	9(60%)	8(47.1%)	6(42.9%)	3(100%)	4(33.3%)	1(100%)	31(50%)
Total	15	17	14	3	12	1	62

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this. Researchers were equally divided on this matter.

I understand the risk associated with peer work for the worker

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	1(6.7)	0(0%)	1(7.1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(3.2%)
Unsure	0(0%)	4(22.2%)	6(42.9%)	1(33.3%)	4(30.8%)	0(0%)	15(23.4%)
Agree	14(93.3%)	14(77.8%)	7(50%)	2(66.7%)	9(69.2%)	1(100%)	47(73.4%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

Hiring policies should accommodate young adult peers with non-violent criminal records

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	1(6.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(1.6%)
Unsure	2(13.3%)	2(11.1%)	0(0%)	1(33.3%)	2(15.4%)	0(0%)	7(10.9%)
Agree	12(80%)	16(88.9%)	14(100%)	2(66.7%)	11(84.6%)	1(100%)	56(87.5%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this.

Peer workers should be formally employed (i.e. payroll, not honoraria) within organizations

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	1(6.7%)	1(5.6%)	0(0%)	1(33.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(4.7%)
Unsure	3(20%)	0(0%)	3(21.4%)	1(33.3%)	5(38.5%)	0(0%)	12(18.8%)
Agree	11(73.3%)	17(94.4%)	11(78.6%)	1(33.3%)	8(61.5%)	1(100%)	49(76.5%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, admin/service leaders, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this. Client/program participants were equally divided on this matter.

People with lived experiences should be held to the same professional standards (e.g. Tardiness, discipline etc.) as other front-line staff

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	3(20%)	3(16.7%)	1(7.1%)	0(0%)	3(23.1%)	0(0%)	10(15.6%)
Unsure	3(20%)	8(44.4%)	2(14.3%)	1(33.3%)	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	15(23.4%)
Agree	9(60%)	7(38.9%)	11(78.6%)	2(66.7%)	9(69.2%)	1(100%)	39(61%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, admin/service leaders, client/program participants, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category agreed with this. Most service providers were unsure on this matter.

Supervision is valuable, but not necessary for young adult peers to succeed on the job

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	4(26.7%)	15(83.3%)	11(78.6)	0(0%)	10(76.9%)	1(100%)	41(64.1%)
Unsure	4(26.7%)	2(11.1%)	1(7.1%)	0(0%)	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	8(12.5)
Agree	7(46.6%)	1(5.6%)	2(4.3%)	3(100%)	2(15.4%)	0(0%)	15(23.4%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers and client/program participants agreed with this. Most service providers, admin/service leaders, researchers and the only "other" participant disagreed with this

Only stabilized (i.e. housed, sober, etc) people with lived experience should be hired

	Stakeholder Group N(%)						Total
	Peer Support Worker	Service Provider	Administrative/ Service Leadership	Client/Program Participant	Researcher	Other	
Disagree	9(60%)	10(55.6%)	5(35.7%)	1(33.3%)	10(76.9%)	1(100%)	36(56.3%)
Unsure	4(26.7%)	5(27.8%)	7(50%)	1(33.3%)	2(15.4%)	0(0%)	19(29.7%)
Agree	2(13.3%)	3(16.7%)	2(14.3%)	1(33.3%)	1(7.7%)	0(0%)	9(14.1%)
Total	15	18	14	3	13	1	64

Most peer support workers, service providers, researchers, and the only member of the "other" category disagreed with this. Most admin/service leaders were unsure, while client/program participants were equally divided on this matter.

Notable Findings

There was consensus amongst all participant groups on a large portion of the statements from the pre-event questionnaire. They generally disagreed on advisories, projects and programs only needing one person with lived experience on their teams. They generally agreed on young adult peers being visible in all aspects of programming and advisory. They understood the unique roles that those with lived experience and occupying peer work positions can hold and recognized them as distinguishable from case managers. They were aware of the positive impacts of peer work on both the recovery of peer support workers, and that clients would feel more comfortable talking to them. Additionally, they were aware of when peer support workers would be better suited to addressing client/participant needs, and the risks associated with peer work for the worker. Finally, they agreed on the need for hiring policies to accommodate peers with non-violent criminal records.

There were other instances where all but one or two participant groups diverged from group consensus on agreement. Most client/program participants were unsure of how including young adult peers increased organizational capacity. Researchers were equally divided on the expectation of peer being able to share their story "confidentially" upon request. Client/program participants were also divided on peers having been formally employed in organizations and on only stabilized peer workers being hired (with admin/service leaders also being equally divided). Service providers were unsure of people with lived experience being held the same professional standards as other frontline staff. Divergence from group consensus on disagreement also occurred. For example, peer support workers and client/program participants agreed with supervision being valuable but not necessary. Finally, client/program participants were divided, and most researchers were unsure on the statement of young adult peers should be selected from within their home agency/organization. This demonstrates varied levels of insights into the understanding of lived experiences and working conditions of peer support workers and how this differs from regulated health professionals who have been a mainstay in service delivery and management.

Analysis completed by Egag Egag

D. Post-Event Survey: Next Steps

Q: What additional assistance or resources will you need to implement what you have learned today?

- Network of peers, or peers who have broken "glass ceiling" of peer work
- Tool kit (how to's, guidelines, policies)
- Support from my colleagues who attended to help implement better training, wage, and hours
- Management + upper management to be involved in this work + hear these messages in order to fund, value this work
- Community hub of resources
- Community of practice
- Training on peer support and working with young people. Training that is geared towards non-frontline workers.

Q: What additional training (if any) would be helpful to implement better models of peer support?

- Peer support within unionized environments; assessing organizational readiness; peer skill building; supervising peers
- More conferences such as this
- Training for folks in power (managerial staff) about the value of peers
- In depth training on specific models (mentoring, advisory, research/evaluation)
- Expanding to broader youth/young adult expert knowledge to building programs (or improving/expanding on existing programs)
- More accessible peer support training

END