

Four Decades of Service to Ontario's Mental Health!



Trauma-Informed Peer Support

for

Physical Trauma Patients

Draft Program Outline

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Trauma-Informed Peer Support for Physical Trauma Patients

Program Outline

Purpose

This peer support program is designed to empower individuals with lived experiences from physical trauma to become Trauma-informed Peer Support Workers. These dedicated volunteers will play a vital role in guiding physical trauma patients through their journey—starting from acute care, transitioning to rehabilitation, and successfully reintegrating into their communities.

By offering emotional, psychological, and practical support, these trained peers can make a profound difference in the lives of those who have faced trauma. Utilizing a trauma-informed and strength-based approach, the Peer Support Workers foster resilience and healing, ensuring that every patient/client feels understood, supported, and empowered in their recovery.

Principles for Trauma-Informed Peer Support

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Description</i>
Safety	In peer support, safety is foundational—it allows people to open up, connect, and heal. Peer Support worker creates environments (physical and emotional) where individuals feel secure and respected. Emotionally Safe ✓ People feel respected, heard, and not judged. ✓ Share experiences without fear of ridicule or rejection. ✓ Boundaries are honoured, and confidentiality is maintained. Physically Safe ✓ The environment is created so threats, harassment, or violence are eliminated. ✓ Protocols are in place and adhered to for handling crises or emergencies. Psychologically Safe ✓ Clients feel empowered to express themselves honestly. ✓ Vulnerabilities are met with compassion, not criticism. ✓ There's a culture of mutual support and trust. Culturally Safe ✓ Diverse identities and experiences are acknowledged and respected. ✓ Language and behaviour are inclusive and non-discriminatory.

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Description</i>
Trustworthiness	Maintain transparency, consistency, and clear boundaries. Confidentiality ✓ What's shared in private stays private unless someone's safety is at risk. ✓ Respect boundaries around personal stories and sensitive information. Reliability ✓ Follow through on commitments (showing up on time, doing what you say you'll do). ✓ Consistent in communication, behaviour and support. Honesty ✓ You speak truthfully, even when it's difficult. ✓ You're transparent about your own experiences and limitations. ✓ Non-judgmental attitude. Acceptance ✓ Meet people where they are. ✓ Accept others without criticism or shame. Empathy and Respect ✓ Listen actively and validate others' feelings. ✓ Treat everyone with dignity, regardless of their background or choices.
Peer Empowerment	Highlight individuals' strengths instead of focusing on what's 'wrong', helping peers focus on resilience, and self-determination. ✓ Encouraging self-determination ✓ Sharing lived experience ✓ Building confidence ✓ Promoting equality ✓ Fostering skills and strengths
Choice and Collaboration	People lead their recovery: They decide what support they want and how they want to receive it. No pressure or fixing: Peer supporters don't tell others what to do—they offer options, not instructions. Respect for autonomy: Everyone's path is different—and that's okay. <i>"You are the expert on your own life."</i>

Principle	Description
Cultural Humility	Respect diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences Lifelong Learning and Self-Reflection ✓ Acknowledging that we don't know everything about others' cultures—and being open to learning. ✓ Reflecting on our own biases, assumptions, and privileges. ✓ Recognizing power imbalances. Understanding how systems of power and privilege affect people. ✓ Striving to create more equitable, respectful relationships. ✓ Respecting each person's lived experience. Valuing each person as the expert in their own life and culture. ✓ Avoiding stereotypes or assumptions. ✓ Being open and curious. Asking questions with genuine interest and care. ✓ Listening genuinely and without judgment. <i>"Cultural humility is not a destination—it's a lifelong journey."</i>
Do No Harm	Avoid re-traumatization by using universal trauma precautions and validating lived experience: Respecting Boundaries ✓ Not pushing someone to share more than they wish. ✓ Honouring emotional, physical, and cultural boundaries. ✓ Avoiding judgment or advice-giving. Listening without trying to fix or diagnose. ✓ Offering support, not solutions. ✓ Being trauma informed. Understanding that people may have experienced trauma and being sensitive to triggers. ✓ Creating a space that feels safe and predictable. ✓ Maintaining confidentiality. ✓ Checking your own biases and reactions Being aware of how your own experiences and emotions might affect others is important. ✓ Practicing self-awareness and humility. ✓ Practice intentional Peer Support sharing. <i>"Support should never come at the cost of someone's safety, dignity, or autonomy."</i>

Trauma-informed Peer Supporter Role

A trauma-informed peer supporter is someone who offers support with an understanding of how trauma affects people emotionally, physically, and psychologically. This approach is rooted in compassion, safety, empowerment, and lived/living experience.

This is especially important in peer support settings where individuals may be healing from prior trauma.

Responsibilities and Duties:

- Share lived or living experience or experts by experience to foster hope and connection
- Offer emotional support and validation without judgment
- Help individuals identify their strengths and recovery goals (strengthen based support)
- Provide information about resources and options
- Model healthy coping and self-advocacy
- Respect boundaries and confidentiality
- Social Prescribing: referrals to non-clinical supports like art therapy, adaptive sports, or community groups

Training for Peer Supporters

Total 17 hours of training—topics covered:

- ✓ Peer Support fundamentals
- ✓ Understanding trauma and its effects on the brain and body
- ✓ Trauma-informed communication and active listening
- ✓ Boundary setting and ethical considerations
- ✓ Crisis de-escalation and referral protocols
- ✓ Cultural safety and anti-oppression practices
- ✓ Self-care and managing secondary trauma
- ✓ Intersectionality
- ✓ Social Prescribing

Support After Training

- ✓ Monthly Community of practice
- ✓ Weekly coaching with Peer Support Supervisor
- ✓ Learning Huddles
- ✓ Reflection and debrief sessions

Trauma-Informed Peer Support Program Activities

Activity	Description
One-on-One Peer Support	Scheduled sessions in person, by phone, or virtually Sessions run for six or eight sessions
Group Peer Circles or Groups	Facilitated peer-led support groups with two trained Peer Support Workers with shared themes (e.g., grief, adaptation, identity)
Drop-In Support	Informal peer support presence in hospital or community settings, can meet with family members who need support or patients within hospital rooms. Can be very informal.
Resource Navigation	Help accessing trauma-informed services, housing, food, and mental health care
Social Prescribing	Referrals to non-clinical supports like art therapy, adaptive sports, or community groups

Evaluation Metrics

- Participant satisfaction and feedback
- Peer supporter reflections and supervision
- Changes in self-reported well-being or connection
- Uptake of social prescriptions or community referrals
- Reduction in crisis service use or hospital readmissions

Evaluation Plan: Trauma-Informed Peer Support

Purpose of the Evaluation

- Assess the impact of peer support on participants' well-being.
- Evaluate how well the program aligns with trauma-informed principles (safety, trust, empowerment, choice, collaboration, cultural humility).
- Identify areas for improvement and growth.

Sample Evaluation Questions

- Did individuals feel emotionally and physically safe in the program?
- Are the peer supporters perceived as trustworthy and respectful?
- Do the individuals receiving support feel empowered and heard?

- Is the program culturally responsive and inclusive?
- What changes (if any) have individuals experienced in their mental health or recovery journey?

Methods and Tools

Mixed-Methods Approach: Quantitative

- Pre- and post-program surveys using Likert scales (“I feel safe in this group”).
- Attendance and engagement tracking.

Mixed-Methods Approach: Qualitative

- Anonymous feedback forms.
- One-on-one interviews or focus groups (voluntary).
- Storytelling or journaling (optional, creative formats).

Sample Tools—Trauma-informed survey with:

- Safety, trust, and empowerment scales.
- Open-ended questions: *“What has been most helpful about this support?”*
- Interview guide with trauma-sensitive prompts.

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent: Explain purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary nature.
- Emotional safety: Avoid triggering language; offer opt-out options.
- Anonymity: Use codes or pseudonyms; no identifying info in reports.
- Support: Have a plan if someone becomes troubled or triggered during evaluation process.

Data Analysis

- Quantitative: Use basic statistics (averages, trends).
- Qualitative: Thematic analysis—identify common themes and quotes.

Sharing Results

- Create a visual summary (infographic, poster, or report).
- Share findings with:
 - ✓ Peer supporters
 - ✓ Participants (in accessible language)
 - ✓ Funders or stakeholders

Using the Findings

- Celebrate successes and strengths.
 - Identify training or support needs.
 - Adjust program structure or delivery based on feedback.
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