



# Canada Beyond The Blue

Peer Support Guide, Policy & Procedures

## INTRODUCTION

Canada Beyond The Blue and each Chapter recognizes the positive impact that a Peer Support Program has on individuals in our community/membership. The Peer Support Program ascribes to the missions, objectives and core values of Canada Beyond The Blue.

### WHAT IS PEER SUPPORT?

Peer Support is a process in which individuals with a shared or common experience offer support to their peers. Peer supporters experience their own mental health or life issues and therefore are in a unique position to offer support to others in order to improve the quality of their lives.

Peer Support includes all necessary activities and actions that help improve or enhance another person's recovery or quality of life and ability to cope with daily life and set and achieve goals. Individual requirements vary but activities may include going for walks, coffee, shopping, help with completing tasks, etc.

Peer Support is helping build relationships between peers that promotes respect, trust and warmth and empowers.

In order for Peer Support to be effective, everyone involved should recognize that consumers are capable of participating and should be an integral part of their own recovery/healing process.

### PEER SUPPORT MODEL

Canada Beyond The Blue uses an Informal Model.

An informal structure program is characterized by mutual aid, social and recreational companionship that are provided through self-help and one-on-one support. Everyone involved is a volunteer. Confidentiality is a basic requirement. The structure respects consumer choices, is flexible and easily accessible. The program may have a facilitator. No formal training is required and the format meets individual needs. This type of peer support requires no specific financial supports; people pay their own expenses and meet at a location agreed upon by the Peer and Peer Support Team Member.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Show a warm and open demeanor/personality and a desire to understand others
- ✓ Practice a genuine commitment to good mental health and wellbeing, for self and others
- ✓ Support fellow law enforcement officer's spouses/significant others reliability

- ✓ Have good self-awareness, know your limits
- ✓ Become informed about mental health: what it means, how to improve one's mental health, how to recognize sign and symptoms in others
- ✓ Stay connected with your community, peers, family, friends, etc.

## THE HELPING SKILL

1. State your concern

“I noticed you're not yourself lately...”

“I noticed you have been missing work a lot and haven't been socializing...”

2. Identify the problem

Ask “what's the problem?” “Is there a problem you want to share?”

3. Explore alternatives

Brainstorm with them how to solve the problem.

4. Predict consequences

Explore the pros and cons of each solution.

5. Ask what they're going to do

Ask what solution they are going to follow through with.

6. Express support

Check in often and stay supportive.

## SUICIDE

### WARNING SIGNS

- ✓ Sudden changes in behavior, emotions and/or appearance
- ✓ Giving away possessions
- ✓ Previous suicide attempts
- ✓ Verbal statements about suicide
- ✓ Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- ✓ Isolation from family, friends, work, etc.
- ✓ Preoccupation with death

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- ✓ Ask directly if this person is thinking about suicide or considering suicide
- ✓ Listen and be supportive
- ✓ Take the situation / threats seriously
- ✓ Do not agree to secrecy
- ✓ Connect with trusted resources
- ✓ Take care of yourself / debrief / seek help

For more information visit: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

## CONFIDENTIALITY

### GUIDELINES

- ✓ Everything said to you in your role as a Peer Supporter should be kept to yourself/kept confidential
- ✓ In supervision/debriefing, speak about the issues raised but do not disclose information that would identify the individual
- ✓ If you choose to write down any details of your Peer Support conversations, write them down immediately and put them in a secure place
- ✓ Only identify the individual who has sought your help in the circumstances agreed in your Peer Support service (see breaking confidentiality) and then only to the coordinator(s) responsible for the Peer Support service
- ✓ Always consider your surroundings when having a confidential conversation – who may be able to hear you – should you close the door or move elsewhere?
- ✓ Always consider the security of where records are kept especially if computer based

### BREAKING CONFIDENTIALITY

You will need to break confidentiality if, at any time, the health or safety of the person seeking your help or any other person is at risk of serious harm or death. Situations in which confidentiality will need to be broken:

- ✓ There is disclosure or evidence of physical, sexual or serious emotional abuse or neglect
- ✓ Suicide is threatened or attempted
- ✓ There is disclosure or evidence of serious self-harm, including drug or alcohol misuse that may be life-threatening

If you are unclear if the above criteria has been met during a Peer Support conversation please consult your Program Coordinator.

## STEPS WHEN CONFIDENTIALITY NEEDS TO BE BROKEN

STEP 1: Discuss with the Peer that there is a need to break confidentiality and encourage him/her to speak to the appropriate resources themselves, and advise even if they do not wish for confidentiality to be broken, it is your obligation to do so – you do not require their consent if the criteria for breaking confidentiality is met.

STEP 2: Discuss the situation with Peer Support Coordinator responsible for the Peer Support service, preferably with the person's consent but even if she/he does not consent (with or without the person present). The Peer Support Coordinator will decide what action is needed and who needs to be informed, and they will keep a written record of all action taken.

STEP 3: You and/or the Peer Support Coordinator should discuss with the person seeking help any action taken and then continue to support him/her.

STEP 4: It is important to report the outcome back to the Peer and Peer Support Coordinator when they have needed to break confidentiality and consider debriefing sessions.

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

### SECTION 1: PEER SUPPORT RELATIONS

#### POLICY 1.0

Peers (the person receiving support from the Peer Support Program) will be informed of the Peer Support Policies and Procedures including the guidelines around breaking confidentiality, before any support relationship is established.

#### PROCEDURES

When a Peer contacts the Program Coordinator requesting Peer Support, they are to be provided with this Guide.

#### POLICY 2.0

Conduct of Peer Support Team Members must be exemplary and show leadership consistent with the Code of Conduct of the Canada Beyond The Blue.

## PROCEDURES

It is incumbent on the Program Coordinator to identify Team Members who will be good ambassadors of the Program and contributed to the reputation of the Program, or have furthered the Program with ideas and initiatives.

### POLICY 3.0

An unwarranted breach of confidentiality, inappropriate use of a Team Member's status, deterioration of performance in regular Peer Support Program duties, and/or criminal conduct shall be subject to dismissal from the Peer Support Program.

## PROCEDURES

Compliments, concerns or complaints regarding *conduct issues* of a Team Member should be forwarded, in writing, to the Program Coordinator.

Upon receipt of a compliment, the Program Coordinator is advised to contact the Team Member who is the subject of the compliment and express gratitude for their good work. The Program Coordinator should request permission from the Peer to use their testimony, named, or anonymously, in Peer Support Program documents.

Upon receipt of a complaint, it is the responsibility of the Program Coordinator to investigate the complaint fully, and to issue a report, in writing, to all involved parties including Canada Beyond The Blue Board of Directors and the Beyond The Blue Chapter Board of Directors, as to how the issue will be resolved. This process should be completed within two weeks of receiving the complaint.

Any Team Member who has been sanctioned under this Policy may appeal directly, within two weeks and in writing, to the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will review the appeal with the Canada Beyond The Blue Board of Directors and the Beyond The Blue Chapter Board of Directors, and issue a response within two weeks of receiving the appeal. The response of the Program Coordinator is not subject to appeal, nor will additional appeals on the issue be entertained.

### POLICY 4.0

Peer Support Team Members must inform the Peer Support Program Coordinator of any actions or situations that may impact Program credibility.

## SECTION 2: CONFIDENTIALITY

### POLICY 5.0

The relationship and its contents between Team Member and supported Peer is protected by confidentiality under all circumstances with the exception of those detailed by other policies in this section.

### PROCEDURES

Team Members must explain their responsibility to a Peer in maintaining confidentiality, including how such confidentiality is maintained in a support relationship, and the limitations of such confidentiality.

Confidentiality must be maintained if the Team Member requires advice or assistance in supporting the Peer from a fellow Team Member or a relevant professional, unless the Peer explicitly waives their right to confidentiality in writing. Such waiver must be explicit in identifying to whom confidential information can be released.

### POLICY 5.1

The requirement for confidentiality in the peer support relationship does not apply in situations where the safety of the Peer, or others, is at risk, or where there is a possibility or evidence of criminal conduct or child abuse.

### PROCEDURES

When safety is a concern, the situation will be treated as an emergency, and the Program Coordinator and any other appropriate person or professional will be advised immediately.

Seeking advice from appropriate professionals, without breaking confidentiality, is encouraged in deciding whether safety is a concern.

Disclosure of criminal conduct, including child abuse, will be treated under the Criminal Code of Canada.

### POLICY 5.2

The confidentiality provisions of Sections 5.0 and 5.1 are not protected by legal privilege.

## PROCEDURES

Team Members must advise Peers that, although the Program administratively provides confidentiality, such confidentiality may not be recognized in Court proceedings.

## SECTION 3: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

### POLICY 6.0

Team Members shall avoid conflicts of interests with Peers whenever possible.

### PROCEDURES

If a conflict of interest exists or develops between a Team Member and a Peer, the Team Member shall, whenever possible, refer the Peer to another Team Member, and follow-up to ensure continuity of care.

The Team Member must also inform the Program Coordinator of the conflict, while protecting the confidentiality of the Peer.

### EXAMPLES

A conflict of interest generally occurs when the Team Member and the Peer have a relationship outside the supporting relationship of the Peer Support Program. For example, the Team Member and the Peer may:

- Be members of the same religious or cultural organization
- Be members of the same club or association
- Be financially involved with each other
- Be in a supervisory relationship
- Be romantically or sexually involved, or married

These dual relationships may exist prior to the request for support, or develop during the supportive process. Potentially, dual relationships can compromise the supportive relationship, or lead to exploitation of the Peer. Because of these risks, they should be avoided whenever possible.



## SECTION 3: EDUCATION, TRAINING & SELF-CARE

### POLICY 7.0

Team Members should engage in a variety of educational and consultation activities to increase their competence in supportive roles.

#### PROCEDURE:

Team Members should continuously reflect on how their experience, attitudes, culture beliefs, values and stresses influence their effectiveness in a supportive role. Team Members should attend relevant training opportunities whenever possible.

### POLICY 8.0

Team Members should engage in self-care activities that help to avoid conditions that could result in an impaired support relationship.

#### PROCEDURE

Team Members should have a healthy life style.

Team Members can, at their own discretion, decline helping a Peer, if providing them support would put their own well being at risk, or if providing support would create a conflict of interest or compromise confidentiality.

## SECTION 4: MEDIA RELATIONS

POLICY 9.0: Peer Support Members must not engage with any media as it relates to any Peer Support Program activity.

#### PROCEDURE

Do not initiate or respond to any media concerning activities relevant to the Peer Support Program.

## SECTION 5: ADMINISTRATION

The Peer Support Program is committed to providing updated and current training opportunities to its Members, and providing a positive, supportive environment to learn and practice new skills.

### POLICY 10.0

For purposes of Program coordination, development, evaluation and training, periodic meetings shall be held involving Peer Support Team Members and the administration of the Peer Support Program.

### PROCEDURE

Periodic meetings will be scheduled for the Peer Support Team Members to discuss issues central to program growth, including program development and evaluation and training and development initiatives.

The Program Coordinator must be present at all such meetings.

## SECTION 6: PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

### POLICY 11.0

Resource allocation is at the discretion of the Beyond The Blue Chapter Board of Directors.

### PROCEDURE

If resource allocation becomes an issue, the Program Coordinator will make recommendations to their Beyond The Blue Chapter Board of Directors, who has final responsibility.

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## PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEER & CONFIDENTIALITY COMMITMENT

I understand that confidentiality as a foundation of the work of a Peer Support member is paramount.

I understand that any contact I have with Peers in the role of a Peer Support Team Member will be kept in the strictest confidence as outlined in this document.

I understand and agree to clearly inform individuals receiving my support about the limitations of confidentiality and of my role in these instances:

1. Threat to personal safety
2. Clear intent to harm another
3. Suspicion or disclosure of child abuse or neglect

I understand that I am acting on a volunteer basis for all activities relating to this Peer Support Program and I will not be compensated for my time or expenses that incur.

I understand that as a Peer Support Team Member I must adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this document and failure to do so may result in removal from the Program.

I have been provided with a copy of, and have read and understand this Peer Support Guide, Policy & Procedures.

This agreement shall be in place until it is revoked in writing by either the organization or the volunteer. Notices shall be sent to: [info@CalgaryBeyondTheBlue.com](mailto:info@CalgaryBeyondTheBlue.com).

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Peer Support Volunteer Name (Print)

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Peer Support Coordinator Name (Print)

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Peer Support Volunteer Signature

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Peer Support Coordinator Signature

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Date (dd/mm/yy)

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Date (dd/mm/yy)

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Signed at (city)

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Signed at (city)