

MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA MAKING THE CASE FOR PEER SUPPORT

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is funding this project to inform provincial policy makers, funders and other stakeholders of the value of mental health peer support, and to give them guidance on how to strengthen peer support in their respective provinces. A group of international consultants with lived experience are gathering the information needed. The report will describe peer support activities across Canada and make recommendations on the integration of peer support into provincial and territorial mental health systems. The findings will also inform the MHCC Mental Health Strategy for Canada and other MHCC initiatives. A database of peer support initiatives across Canada will also be developed which may become part of the MHCC Knowledge Exchange Centre.

The investigation will consider the factors that influence the situation of peer support across Canada. Factors internal to peer support initiatives include values, benefits, governance, management, delivery and membership. External factors include legislation, policy, funding as well as mental health cultures and attitudes. The consultants are seeking contact with peer support initiatives throughout Canada.

WHAT IS PEER SUPPORT?

We are using a broad definition of peer support so we can discover the full diversity of peer support initiatives within Canada.

*We define **peer support** as any organised support provided by and for people with mental health problems. Peer support is sometimes known as self-help, mutual aid, co-counselling or mutual support.*

***Consumers/survivors** are people with lived experience of mental health problems*

*We define **peer support initiatives** as the programs, networks, agencies or services that provide peer support. They can be:*

- *Funded OR unfunded.*
- *Use volunteers OR paid staff OR both.*
- *Operate out of psychiatric consumer/survivor run organisations OR other agencies.*
- *Delivered by a group of peers OR by an individual peer in a team of professionals.*
- *A primary activity of the initiative OR a secondary benefit eg in a consumer/survivor business.*

***Please get in touch if you think your initiative fits this definition.
We want to hear your views!***

HOW WE'RE FINDING THE INFORMATION

The information for this project will be gathered through:

- Focus groups, interviews and written submissions from across Canada.
- International and Canadian literature searches.
- Data collection on the characteristics of peer support initiatives in Canada.

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ABOUT THE MHCC

The Mental Health Commission of Canada was established by the federal government in 2007 to focus national attention on mental health issues and to improve the health and social outcomes of people living with mental illness. It is based in Calgary, Alberta.

The MHCC has acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of peer support in a reformed mental health sector in its draft framework of a mental health strategy for Canada.

ABOUT THE CONSULTANTS

Mary O'Hagan initiated the survivor movement in New Zealand in the late 1980s, was a full time New Zealand Mental Health Commissioner from 2000-2007, and is now an international consultant.

Robyn Priest, an Australian living in New Zealand who has been involved in the user/survivor movement in both countries and has held management roles in mental health agencies.

Celine Cyr, a service provider with lived experience from Quebec who is involved in the user movement there and has trained users and professionals for the last 15 years.

Heather McKee is a survivor from Ontario, active in the movement there and across Canada, who works in knowledge transfer, research, policy and evaluation activities.

TIMELINE

Focus groups and interviews.

Late June/early July & all of September 2009

Deadline for written responses.

31 October 2009

Completion of draft report.

21 December 2009

Consultation on draft report.

11 January to 5 February 2010

Final report MHCC.

28 February 2010

ABOUT THE PROJECT COMMITTEE

The Mental Health Peer Support Project Committee is supported in its work by the MHCC Service System Advisory Committee. The Project Committee (PC) developed the vision for this project, and is working collaboratively with the consulting group on the project. The PC is made up of people living with mental health problems or illnesses from across Canada, and their allies. The members include: Loise Forest (Co-Lead), Laurie Hall (Co-Lead), Carol Adair, Mary Bartram, Andy Cox, Joan Edwards-Karmazyn, Susan Lynn Hardie (MHCC Associate Research Officer), Joe Leger, Steve Lurie, Tanya Shute.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the website

<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/Pages/ServiceSystem.aspx> for:

- The consultation questionnaire
- The database questionnaire
- The schedule of the consultation visits
- Updates on the project
- Email inquiries and feedback form

Or contact Robyn Priest

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