

National Practice Guidelines For Peer Supporters

“Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”

- SAMHSA Working Definition of Recovery (Last updated in 2011)

The practice of peer support requires that all parties **believe and understand** that recovery is possible for all those who experience traumatic, psychiatric, or substance use challenges. For these youth and young adults, the likelihood of long-term recovery increases with effective and consistent support. Peer support has been shown, through research and practical application, to be highly effective in achieving these outcomes. Peer supporters across the country have established the following core values as the central ethics guidelines for peer support practice:

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| 1. Peer support is voluntary | 7. Peer supporters are honest and direct |
| 2. Peer supporters are hopeful | 8. Peer support is mutual and reciprocal |
| 3. Peer supports are open minded | 9. Peer support is equally shared power |
| 4. Peer supporters are empathetic | 10. Peer support is strengths-focused |
| 5. Peer supports are respectful | 11. Peer support is transparent |
| 6. Peer supporters facilitate change | 12. Peer support is person-driven |

The field of peer support is at a critical moment in its evolution. Research supports the value of peer support for those who are overcoming mental health and substance addiction challenges. Thousands of trained peer support providers are busy working in an extensive array of settings; however, questions remain regarding the roles, duties, and philosophies of peers.

To create a broader understanding, reduce workplace tensions/frustrations, and develop roles for peer supporters, the establishment of a universal set of practice standards is necessary. Such standards function to enable peer support workers, non-peer staff, program administrators/ developers, funders, systems administrators, researchers, and policymakers to better understand the values held by peer supporters, and the appropriate roles and responsibilities that can and should be carried out by peer support providers in a fashion that benefits all.