

PEER SUPPORT —NOVA SCOTIA—

Desired Characteristics - Peer Supporter-Peer Supporter Coordinator

Peer Support Nova Scotia provides social support services to persons receiving mental healthcare through the NSHA and supports their transition over to community-based peer support. *Mental Health Innovations (N.S.)* is the contracted service provider of this program.

There are two major components of this position:

1. **Peer Supporter** – work directly with clients of NSHA by providing social support. This compliments any clinical care they are receiving; and
2. **Peer Support Coordinator** – Develop a community-based network of peer supporters through partnerships with local organizations.

What is Peer Support?

“ A Peer Supporter is someone who uses their lived experience with mental health (either personally, or through supporting a loved one) to inspire hope and empower others in similar situations by providing social and emotional support. ”

Peer Support is not counselling. Peer support is grounded in hope, empowerment, and recovery. It provides hope as the Peer Supporter (PS) has also lived through a similar experience and has found their way to a path of recovery. Peer support is based on relationships in which each person is considered equal within the relationship and self-determination is highly respected.

Characteristics of a Peer Supporter:

Have lived experience with mental health challenges (includes substance use issues), & are now on a path to recovery.

Have a desire to support others experiencing challenges related to mental health and/or addiction.

* Note: For positions with this program, applicants must have personal lived experience as opposed to one who has a family member who has mental health/addictions issue.

**The following competencies for Peer Supporters have been identified by
Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada)**

1. **Hope** - Operates from a sense of hope expressing confidence that others will be successful in their own personal journeys of recovery. Strives to model realistic optimism and a belief that even in difficult situations positive choices can be made.

2. **Demeanour** - Is sensitive to what another might be feeling, demonstrates a capacity for non-judgmental empathy, and responds from an equal, genuine, and sharing point of view. Selectively self-discloses own experience in a manner that ensures the relationship remains peer focused.

3. **Interpersonal Relations** - Interacts in a manner that honours the dignity of others and strives to build positive respectful relationships. Strives to make others feel comfortable and conveys genuine interest in their peer. Even in a difficult or tense situation strives to maintain a level of respect and consideration for the other.

4. **Communication** - Listens with empathy and without judgement, holding their peers in unconditional high regard. Uses communication styles and skills to improve understanding and adapts the style and tone of communication to suit the listener and the situation. Communicates using recovery language and emphasizes the strengths of their peers.

5. **Self-Management & Resiliency** - Understands the importance of self-care and stress management and models the practices that work best for them to remain healthy while supporting others. Strives to maintain calm and diffuse stressful or challenging situations.

6. **Flexibility & Adaptability** - Is open to new ideas, deals comfortably with ambiguity, and adjusts plans or behaviours to better suit a given situation. Is willing to be openminded and compromises when needed.

7. **Self-Awareness & Confidence** - Interacts in a manner that demonstrates a balance of self-confidence with openness to the thoughts and opinions of others. Self-reflects and understands that personal thoughts and attitudes can influence their behaviour and actions.

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