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People helping people help themselves

We support anyone in their mental wellness journey through listening, shared-experience, and belonging

What is Peer Support?

Peer Supporters are people who have a lived experience with a mental illness and are now in recovery. They understand a lot about mental health because they have been there themselves. They have taken specific training for the role in addition to their personal experience. Peer Support is based on empowering individuals to take the lead on cultivating their own mental health recovery. Peer Support is about health and ability, not illness and disability. Peer relationships are built around a mutual understanding and trust, and are designed to be a compliment to traditional clinical care programs and not to replace them.

What is Oxford Self Help (OSH)?

Oxford Self Help is a Drop in Center that provides various programming such as support groups related to diagnosis including Mood Disorders, PPMD and Schizophrenia Support. Educational groups such as Anger Solutions, budgeting, self-care, and photography. Wellness groups such as mindfulness, and meditation. Psychosocial rehab groups around eating healthy and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Social/Activity groups which includes crafts and card games. Geographical coverage is achieved through drop-in programs and support groups in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll.

What is the role of a peer supporter?

Peer Supporters assist in demonstrating hope and possibility of recovery through:

- Empowerment and self-determination through non-judgemental listening
- Support to work through difficult feelings and thoughts
- Connections to other agencies, system navigation and information on community resources.
- Support with personal issues such as shelter, housing, food, hygiene, and recreation.
- Assistance in increasing social connections
- Person-centered goal setting and/or problem solving
- Support to family members who would like to understand their loved one's experience better

How do I refer myself or someone else to the Peer Support Program?

A referral can be made by emailing peers@cmhaoxford.on.ca or by calling 519-539-8055. A Peer Supporter will schedule an initial meeting with the individual where goals for peer support will be discussed.

Will the Peer Supporter provide counselling or become my friend?

The Peer Supporter can provide supportive listening, but they are not counsellors. If you require counselling services, they can help connect you to services in the community. The Peer Supporter offers friendly support, but not friendship as the role is bound by an ethical code of conduct. If you wish, they can support you in expanding your social circle by connecting you to groups where you can develop natural friendships. Meetings usually are one hour in length and can occur for up to one year; this is determined and assessed along the way based on your goals. A Peer Supporter will establish their availability with the peer, which may be limited to Oxford Self Help hours of 10am-4pm.

What training does a Peer Supporter receive?

Peer Supporters have received training through the Ontario Peer Development Initiative. They have done 50 hours of a supervised internship in preparation for the role. A Community of Practice exists in the way of monthly meetings which include ongoing training, education and the opportunity to debrief with other Peer Supporters.

Will the Peer Supporter be able to give me rides to appointments or assist with errands?

A goal of the program is to help you become more independent. If, for example, you have difficulty with transportation, a Peer Supporter can support you in setting goals to overcome such a barrier. This might include helping you become more familiar with where you live and how to get around on your own.

What are my responsibilities if I become involved with the OSH Program?

CMHA services and programs are voluntary. Keeping meeting times with a Peer Supporter makes for a productive, meaningful experience. If you wish to end the rapport or have any concerns or feedback, you can contact the Peer Supporter and/or the Manager of Peer Support.