



PEER SUPPORT SOUTH EAST ONTARIO

Peer Report Card - 2017

*May you be well in your journey, have support when you require it
and find peace in knowing you don't travel it alone.*



Peer Support South East Ontario

April 19, 2017

At the start of a new day I want to take a few minutes to remind myself how grateful I am for the important work you and the team at the Kingston Peer Support Centre do on behalf of those in the community and for peers and allies in local institutions such as Burr 4.

I enjoyed getting to know you there and the follow up with peers at 60 Queen Street doing activities such as Gratitude reflections and the WRAP program is making a difference in my life.

I have also been a beneficiary of the YMCA pass as all of Peer Support participants and I have especially enjoyed going there a couple times last

*Once you become a peer you remain one;
and this is a badge I wear with Pride!*

week. The staff at 60 Queen Street made the access easy and quickly for me.

Funny how gratitude can go missing in the moment. However, I really have enjoyed putting together the WRAP and look forward to concluding it with Devon and Gary in the coming days - when things are more at ease.

I also hope that my interest in becoming a peer representative for PSSEO at Kingston is something that can continue to be a benefit to the centre. I understand there may be a nomination process and that may need to happen before what I believe is an upcoming meeting in May which I would like to attend, if eligible.

I remain impressed with PSSEO, I am bolstered by the spring season, renewal and gratitude for the new buds and crocuses which are everywhere.

D. M (Met on Burr; now attends Centre regularly)

Experience

(April 15, 2017) R. Y.



We meet at this place from which we gain some sustenance!

By sharing a meal and a coffee we create a bond which helps us through the day.

The first time I came to Peers I fell asleep and was awakened by the staff.

I continue to come here even though I have found much of my old self.

Once you become a peer you remain one; and this is a badge I wear with Pride!

So we have all experienced something which has left its mark!

For us all I hope this will be a temporary Way Station, on life's journey! I for one will not forget the people I have met, or the supportive and empathetic Staff.

R. Y. (May 2017)

Donna I thought I would send something your way about the positive experience I have gained through my contact with Peers of the Round Table. Life is a journey and I look at all aspects as knowledge gained a long the way!



Evaluation Letter

When I first met Miranda I could tell right away that she was a committed individual. She was always in the moment and I knew that she was always listening to me. Not once (in two years) did she miss any of our appointments. This made me feel important and her advice enabled me to overcome my problems. In the past, I was going through some very tough times but Miranda assured me that everything would be alright. She told me that she had gone through similar life experiences allowing me to feel at ease.

To whom it may concern:

Approximately two years ago I had the pleasure of meeting Miranda. She came to KGH, at the ITTP program to inform us of the benefits of the Peer Support Program. At this time, I was hospitalized due to major depression and suicidal ideations. Her presentation was excellent and I knew that I could benefit from the services offered by this program. I signed up for the program because I knew it would be difficult for me to transition to life outside of the hospital.

When I first met Miranda I could tell right away that she was a committed individual. She was always in the moment and I knew that she was always listening to me. Not once (in two years) did she miss any of our appointments. This made me feel important and her advice enabled me to overcome my problems. In the past, I was going through some very tough times but Miranda assured me that everything would be alright. She told me that she had gone through similar life experiences allowing me to feel at ease.

In the past, Miranda and I did several fun activities together. Which included playing basketball with another peer, fishing and not to mention several outings around town. Proving that she was willing to go above and beyond what was required of her as a peer support worker. When I felt down she was always able to make me smile. Her sense of humor and taste in music was similar to mine. Making our outings together extremely fun.

Miranda has made me a better and more confident person. I am not as shy as I once was and this allowed me to step out of my shell. In turn, led to me to having two long-term relationships and I am so grateful for her services. I would recommend her to be a support work to anyone who needs it. I will miss her a lot although I will always have the memories we made together. I can never repay her for what she has done for me.

~ J. F. (TDM Match)

Peer Supporter: Miranda Elgie



Testimonials

I find that Peer support is really helping me, it give me someone who understands and has helped me through some tough things in the past months. I wish I had of know about this program a long time ago, it is a great program and I am glad I have my peer support person now, I don't know if I could of made it through the last few months. Please keep this program going it's been a great help.

Truly ,

- G. C.

1. While I was in hospital I received excellent peer support. When I was first admitted to the hospital, Donna from peer support came to my room and explained to me what peer support was about, and told me about the groups on Thursdays. Donna said that she hoped that she would see me there.
2. My time in the hospital was a very difficult time, and Donna from peer support was very helpful. I was coming off a lot of medication and I was having a lot of struggles. There was a situation on the ward that became very hard and overwhelming for me to deal with. I felt that I couldn't do it alone. I had Donna's support right from the start, she was awesome! Donna helped me write letters and she attended all the meetings that I had to attend over the months that it took and she was with me supporting me every time. With Donna's support she made me feel like I meant something and My voice needed to be heard. Thanks Donna!
3. I found the peer support group very beneficial. It got me out of my room every week and I found myself talking to patients and doing crafts, at times or just sitting and watching and listening, but I was getting out of my room.
4. I absolutely think that peer support should continue to be available in hospitals, because in my opinion without it alot of patients that are in hospital have no other supports before they come into the hospital. They have never heard of peer support and I think that without peer support in the hospital they wouldn't have any support in the hospital as well, as a former patient we really need support as it really helps with your recovery while in the hospital.

Anonymous TDM Providence Patient (Aug 31st/17)

I never heard of Peer Support until I ended up here (Burr 4). I can't believe this awesome service exists! I delayed my discharge by an hour so I could go to one more group with Donna. It was so cool to be able to talk about my illness with someone who has one. It gave me hope that I can be well and learn how to manage my illness. I'm not a lost cause!

-Anonymous



Peers of the Round Table, Kingston Centre:

- “It is somewhere safe and clean; there are no drugs or high people. I feel safe and it helps me to stay on track. I am so grateful for the laundry services as I am on ODSP. It is so expensive to do and I don’t have machines at my apartment. Having clean clothing is part of my wellness.”
- “Lunch is healthy and affordable. I eat at PORT every day.”
- “Centre gives and is part of my routine. I love to take care of PORT and give back!!”
- “Good opportunity to get out and make time for self-care. Helps keep me not depressed. I look forward to going every morning when I wake up.”
- “So important to have a clean and safe place where people support us. Not with bad pad pasts but with positive people moving forward!”
- “Great to meet up every day and share what’s going on”
- “We would definitely recommend it to others for their wellness”
- “LOVE connecting and sharing with staff!!”



Peer Testimonials

My experience with my peer supporter has been nothing short of amazing. We meet each week either at Starbucks or the peer support centre for an hour. It really grounds me. My relationship with Jeff has been great and it goes both ways as we are truly peers. Just talking about how I'm feeling, what I've been doing the past week, things that have impacted my mood, treatments etc. gives me hope. This support has been invaluable to me. I have not had to go back to hospital due to support like this and others in my family, friends and community at large. I am so grateful for peer support. I hope this feedback helps to ensure others benefit as much as I have.

I would recommend this service to anyone with a mood disorder.

- G. L.



Testimonials

Peer Testimonials Continued....

When I first decided to get support from the peer support program, I wasn't sure what to expect. But I know I was lost and wanted to try something different after leaving the hospital and completing ITTP.

I feel it was what I needed because I really needed help opening up my world.

I was lucky to get matched with someone who is transgender because I am transgender and this really helped me throughout my transition journey. I felt really supported when I needed someone to ask questions and talk to about what I could expect. So some of my best times have been just getting coffee or bubble tea and talking things out that I would normally stuff down, and continue to be afraid of life.

Doing activities on my own is really difficult and intimidating and I'd rather isolate. My match helped me get out to games night at Minotaur. This was huge for me because I really needed to be around decent people to interact with and gain some confidence on my recovery journey. I have also been able to get out ice skating during the winter and go to the movies.

I also learned that through the support program, we have access to the Y so I have been going to Yoga with other people in the program as well as other classes. Going to the gym has ALWAYS helped keep me well, and since I had to give up my gym membership, I have been able to go to the gym again!

It has been so much fun doing things I would normally avoid because of anxiety or depression. I'm so grateful for peer support because I have come so far in just under a year!

- Cameron - CPS

I currently have a peer support and attend many groups that are very helpful. All of this gives me an opportunity to get out of the house and provide some structure to my day. The peer support I have allows me to do things again. Having someone to encourage you to go and someone who will go with you and do the activity you want to do. Without peer support it is unlikely I would participate in the activities I do. Currently I have a peer support who goes swimming with me, goes for a walk, listens when I am struggling and makes suggestions. She also lets me know of groups that are going on that would be beneficial for me to attend. The groups offer an opportunity to speak with those who are going through the same thing you are. It is also an opportunity to meet new friends.

Peer Support has so much to offer. What is really nice is when two peer supporters get together and do something that involves four instead of two. I would encourage this more as it gives an opportunity to meet new folks.

I speak very highly of Peer support and the program ITTP which is offered at KGH and Peer support is shared with patients in the hospital.

I would recommend to anyone who needs help be a part of any of the programs you do offer. Thanks to all who help make this happen it is greatly appreciated and much needed. It is hard when you are dealing with a mental illness and the peer supporters help to make life manageable with a mental illness.

- Anonymous - CPS



Testimonials

Going out for a coffee with my Peer weekly has been the thing that has kept me going. I understand my Dr is busy. I get that. But sometimes I just wanted to talk a bit more to feel better or not so “crazy”. Peer support gives me that. A chance to work things out with someone who has been there and accepts me for where I’m at. I’m glad my Dr. suggested it.

- **G.R.**

I can’t wait for Thursday mornings at 10am! Donna brings coffee and cookies and we talk about stigma, share ideas on wellness and other stuff. We also play fun games and have dance parties too. Thursdays make the rest of the week a bit better. I don’t feel judged.

- *Anonymous PC Patient*

I understand the Clinical stuff is important. I do. But since having access to Peer Support on this stay, I see how they belong together. Having someone to talk to, who has lived experience, has helped me understand my illness more. And how I can take responsibility for my own wellness and stop blaming others. I think when I get out this time, things will be different. I hope so at the least. I plan to call Donna to get matched up. I trust her.

- *Anonymous PC Patient*

I'm not the best with memory but if I haven't yet I just wanted to say Devon really is an awesome guy! We've just *hung out* for the 2nd time now and it really does help me feel more confident that I can take better control of my situation. Having a good person like him to mentor me threw things I don't understand or have never done is just literally the greatest thing to happen to me. Thank you very much for helping me meet him and doing what you do! Keep rocking it, you rock star!

- **M. T.**

Hi, my name is Mary. I am a parent of 3 children with special needs. My daughter is 35 and she has FASD. She lives in Toronto. My son is 30 and has Down Syndrome. My grandson, (but raising him as my son) is 10 and has Autism. Also three and a half years ago I woke up and could not walk. I now use a walker and hand controls in my car.

My peer support person came into my life at a very lonely time. I was raising the boys on my own due to my husband deciding to live at our restaurant Tues - Sun. Due to long drive home. I became very lonely and had no adult conversation. I'm also dealing with aging parents - my Mom has dementia and my Dad has cancer. I felt like the world was swallowing my up and I could not breathe. My therapist told me about the Peer Support Program. I called and a short time later I was connected with someone who became my best friend. She took me out of the house and for lunch. I sure needed this. Seeing my peer support person every Friday has given me the opportunity to talk and recharge my batteries for the next week. I start to get anxious on Thursday knowing I am going to see her on Friday. This program has changed my life and I'm sure it has done the same to many other clients.

I hope the peer support program will be around for many years to help others like myself.

- Mary



Three Doors Down - Picton Centre:

As the last rays of sunlight
Slowly sink out of view
Also do the feelings
Of my inner strength
Darkness slowly filling
That empty void
Depression follows soon after
Leaving you feeling
So all alone
Right behind you
A light is shining brightly
Turn yourself around
Reach out, grasp that light
Let us raise you up
Out of that darkness of despair
Join Today!
-The Picton Wellness Group – M.L.M.



Three Doors Down has helped me to maintain my mental health wellness. The staff are amazing and they help me if/when I have issues. They also have provided a safe place to discuss and work through my addictions. Being open daily keeps me accountable and gives me a positive, social environment.

- L. W.

Madoc Centre:

I really would like to share how much Peer Support has helped me in my life.

I have been coming to Madoc Support Center for over 10 years now and can't imagine where my life would be without the Peer Support I have received. I have spent numerous hours speaking with the Peer Support workers, and I find this service invaluable. It is their patience and attentive listening that makes me feel heard.

Having the Madoc center to attend daily has helped lift me out of the isolation I was living and has given me opportunity to gain friendships with people who to some degree understand my daily struggles. I do not feel judged by my peers, but instead loved for who I am.

I think it is wonderful that PSSEO has now branched out to Community Peer Support workers as a means to reach those still struggling who are unable to get to a center.

- R. C.



Clinical Testimonials:

Peer Support within Providence Care

This letter is in support of the ongoing partnership between Providence Care and Peer Support of South Eastern Ontario (PSSEO) specifically, the position of the on-site Community Peer Support Coordinator. This role began as part of a research project entitled the "Transitional Discharge Model" (TDM) through the Council of Academic Hospitals of Ontario and the Adopting Research to Improve Care program. A requirement of this position is that the incumbent have lived experience.

Providence Care, Mental Health Services (PCMHS) partnered with PSSEO to implement the project focused on connecting inpatients with a peer support in the community upon discharge. As a result of positive outcomes from the project, PSSEO received additional one-time funding from the South East Local Health Integration Network (SE LHIN) to continue having a Community Peer Support Coordinator working with PCMHS clients. At present, the Community Peer Support Coordinator works one to two days per week at PCMHS meeting with individuals and groups of clients connecting them with peer supports in the community. Currently, there are seven pairs of client-peer support enrolled in the Kingston area, one pair enrolled in the Trenton Area and two pairs enrolled in the Belleville area. There have been thirteen inpatients referred for enrolment in the program. Additionally, since August 2015, there has been a total of 219 individual attendances at peer support groups led by the Community Peer Support Coordinator on the inpatient unit.

Since inception, only one client who was matched with a peer in the community was readmitted to hospital. That admission was for a period of nine days versus our average length of stay at 30 to 90 days. We are now expanding the peer support service to the other two units in the Adult Mental Health program. Anecdotal feedback from discharged clients who are connected to Peer support in the community is extremely positive. The clinical teams in the Adult Mental Health program at PCMHS believe that having a community peer support coordinator on the units not only provides more holistic care but is an invaluable service.

- Darcy Woods-Fournier Senior Director, Hospital Mental Health & Kaili Gabriel Social Work Unit 3 - Wellness and Resistance

I wish to convey to you the wonderful job that Donna Stratton-Jinha is doing with the Peer Support on Unit 3 at PCCC Mental Health Services. The group she runs for the clients is something they look forward to and attend regularly. She is pairing clients in the community with great success. Peer Support presence alleviates a lot of tension and keeps people engaged in healthy productive ways.

- Judy Miller RPN Unit 3

Peer Support within the Intensive Transitional Treatment Program (ITTP)

As a new program to KGH and our community, ITTP had the opportunity to build a comprehensive, holistic outpatient program for individuals with mental health challenges. Peer support was seen as an essential part of the program. From the first meeting with Gary Laws in the summer of 2014, PSSEO has been a willing, flexible and supportive partner in the development of the peer support component within ITTP. Over the last 18 months, PSSEO has worked with us to continue to add peer support opportunities to an array of services offered. I have found the PSSEO employees to be compassionate, open, and flexible. They continue to be an integral part of ITTP.



Testimonials

Initially, PSSEO provided a one hour weekly Peer Support group within the ITTP group schedule. This has expanded to include a weekly coffee group for ITTP graduates at Peers of the Round Table, individual Peer Matching, and now a Peer Support group for the Inpatient Mental Health Unit. All of these components are beneficial to our program participants.

To date, approximately 700 people have participated in ITTP. When individuals have completed ITTP, we ask them to fill out a feedback survey and rate the various groups in terms of their usefulness. Program participants always rate the Peer Support group very high. One participant commented that they "found the Peer Support extremely helpful and resourceful".

Comments on the Feedback Survey about what people like about ITTP include many references to the general benefits of the peer aspect of the groups including:

I liked hearing about other people's situations. It's nice to talk to people going through similar things.

The group discussions were very helpful, sharing experiences and hearing others experiences made me feel that I'm not alone in this.

I liked the social aspects of the groups, meeting people who can relate is nice.

I loved meeting members that I could relate to and it REALLY helped me as well as I made some lifelong friends and people I know I can talk to who will understand.

Most other 'students' became great peers.

As time went on I began to realize that a lot of my thoughts and feelings were not uncommon. I could express these thoughts and feelings without judgement and take comfort in knowing 'what is said here, stays here'.

Being able to share my experiences and not being judged.

All of these comments reinforce the power of the peer component within ITTP. I value the work of PSSEO and feel that our partnership has provided a unique opportunity for our group participants. Not only are they introduced to PSSEO while they attend ITTP, but they also have the opportunity to connect with a mental health support in the community who can continue to provide support upon completion of ITTP.

- **Melanie Darling Program Coordinator ITTP Burr 4 Mental Health Program**

Peer Workers:

- This is one of your biggest strengths. All your workers are open, compassionate, empathetic and easy to engage with. They are motivated, easy going and enthusiastic.
- The fact that all peers have lived experience helps our clients connect. It helps them feel understood and not alone. It also allows them to see that recovery is possible.

Peer Support Group:

- As staff does not sit in these groups it is hard to give much feedback, but I have gotten very positive feedback from our participant, and they enjoy the interactions.



Testimonials

💬 The one negative thing I have heard from ITTP group members is that at times the groups can be repetitive.

Peer Support Matching:

- 💬 I believe that this is an amazing service. I have only heard good things from the ITTP clients we have matched.
- 💬 As for the process, it is nice to be able to connect our patients in a timely manner, with a service that has little to no wait times.
- 💬 In terms of matching it is more beneficial to do so after 12:15, when the first morning group ends as to not pull clients out of group. You (Donna) are doing a great job at accommodating the time limitations, which is greatly appreciated.

Peer Support in General:

- 💬 As an organization, you do an amazing job at accommodating everyone.
- 💬 The implementation of the ITTP Coffee Group is a nice way for past and present members to connect outside of the therapeutic setting. Thank you for doing so.

-Jessica Lankmann Behavioural Science Technologist ITTP - Burr 4 Kingston General Hospital

PSSEO Staff Testimonials

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of participating in different mental health peer groups as a Peer Facilitator. Within this role, I often find myself in awe of the determination, spirit and commitment to working towards wellness despite personal struggles and mental health setbacks. As participants connect to our Centre and community support services, I am constantly able to witness recovery in action. I get reminded of the courageous day-to-day work of creating and maintaining wellness, setting achievable goals, being kind to oneself and holding onto hope when things seem to be falling apart. I both see, and personally benefit from, the undeniable value of support and insight from others, providing me with the hope, inspiration and self-awareness needed to move forward. I am truly grateful that my role at Peer Support South East Ontario allows me the opportunity to learn these valuable skills from others.

- Jeff Shaw