

Transitioning to Peer Support:



The Next Step

As people move forward in their recovery, there may come a time when intensive clinical services or case management are no longer the best fit—but support is still very much needed.

*Peer supporters
work with people,
not for people.*

The Next Step offers a supported transition from clinical care into Peer Support, ensuring that connection, understanding, and encouragement continue without interruption.

Rather than a discharge to community, this step is a **planned and collaborative transition**. People are introduced to Peer Support while still connected to their primary service, allowing relationships to form and trust to grow. Peer Support Workers bring lived experience, offering empathy, understanding, and hope from a place of shared experience.

Through **The Next Step**, support shifts from formal service delivery to community-based connection. Individuals are supported to build confidence, strengthen coping skills, and deepen their sense of belonging as they continue their journey. This approach emphasizes personal choice, dignity, and empowerment—meeting people where they are and walking alongside them as they move forward.

The Next Step with Peer Support South East Ontario reflects the belief that recovery is not linear, and that ongoing support plays a vital role in wellness, stability, and community connection. It is not an ending, but a meaningful step forward—where support continues.

How the Transition Begins

The transition typically begins through **collaborative planning** between the individual, their clinical or case management provider, and **Peer Support South East Ontario**. When a person is approaching readiness to move on from formal services, conversations begin early to explore what continued support could look like.

Rather than waiting for services to end, **Peer Support is introduced ahead of time**. With consent, referrals are made while the individual is still connected to their primary service, allowing time for questions, reassurance, and relationship-building. This early connection helps reduce anxiety and prevents gaps in support.

A Supported, Collaborative Process

During **The Next Step**, Peer Support Workers may connect with the individual prior to discharge:

- Introduce Peer Support and explain what it offers
- Build rapport through shared lived experience
- Explore goals, interests, and areas where support would be helpful
- Identify natural supports, community connections, and next steps

This overlap period allows the transition to feel **intentional and supportive**, rather than abrupt or disconnected. Clinical teams and Peer Support Workers work collaboratively, when appropriate, to ensure a smooth handoff grounded in the individual's needs and preferences.

What Support Looks Like Moving Forward

As the transition continues, support shifts from formal service delivery to **peer-based, relationship-focused support**. Individuals are supported at their own pace, with an emphasis on choice, dignity, and empowerment. Peer Support may include one-to-one connection, groups, community activities, or informal check-ins—always shaped by what feels most meaningful to the individual.

The Next Step recognizes that recovery is ongoing and non-linear. It honours the work already done in clinical services while offering a new phase of support rooted in lived experience, hope, and community connection.

The Next Step with Peer Support South East Ontario is not an ending—it is a forward step. A bridge from services into sustained support, where people are not discharged from care, but welcomed into a continued circle of support.

The Next Step

Step 1: Identify Readiness

The individual is nearing discharge may benefit from continued, non-clinical support.

Step 2: Start the Conversation

The provider discusses **The Next Step** with the individual, exploring what Peer Support is and how it can help support ongoing wellness and connection.

Step 3: Confirm Interest & Consent

If the individual is interested, consent is obtained to share information and initiate a referral to **Peer Support South East Ontario**.

Step 4: Make the Referral

The referral is submitted while clinical services are still active, allowing for planning and coordination.

Step 5: Peer Support Introduction

A Peer Support Worker connects with the individual to explain the service, answer questions, and begin building rapport through shared lived experience.

Step 6: Overlap & Transition

Where possible, there is a brief overlap period where both services are involved, ensuring a smooth, supported transition rather than an abrupt ending.

Step 7: Ongoing Peer Support

Clinical services conclude, and the individual continues with Peer Support, focusing on connection, empowerment, community engagement, and sustained recovery.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

The Next Step – Transition to Peer Support

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) outlines the collaborative relationship between:

[Partner Agency Name] and
Peer Support South East Ontario (PSSEO) Together referred to as “the Parties.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this MOU is to establish a shared understanding and framework for collaboration under **The Next Step**, a supported transition process that connects individuals moving from clinical services and/or case management to community-based Peer Support.

This MOU affirms the Parties’ commitment to continuity of care, collaboration, and person-centred transitions that respect dignity, choice, and lived experience

2. Guiding Principles

The Parties agree to operate under the following principles:

- Recovery-oriented and person-centred practice
- Choice, consent, and self-determination
- Respect for lived and living experience
- Collaboration and shared responsibility
- Continuity of support (no abrupt service endings)
- Cultural humility, equity, and inclusion

3. Scope of Collaboration

This MOU applies to individuals who:

- Are nearing discharge or completion of clinical services and/or case management
- May benefit from continued, non-clinical, relationship-based support
- Provide informed consent to participate in Peer Support

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Partner Agency Responsibilities

- Identify individuals who may benefit from **The Next Step**
- Initiate conversations about Peer Support early in the transition process
- Obtain informed consent prior to referral
- Submit referrals while services are still active where possible
- Collaborate during the overlap/transition period as appropriate

Peer Support South East Ontario Responsibilities

- Receive and respond to referrals in a timely manner
- Introduce Peer Support services
- Offer peer-based, relationship-focused support grounded in lived experience
- Maintain confidentiality and professional boundaries
- Communicate, with consent, during transition periods as needed

5. Information Sharing & Confidentiality

Information sharing will occur only with **informed consent** and in accordance with applicable privacy legislation. Each Party agrees to protect personal information and use shared information solely for the purpose of supporting the individual's transition.

6. Referral Process

Referrals will follow **The Next Step** process:

1. Identify readiness
2. Start the conversation
3. Confirm interest and consent
4. Make the referral
5. Peer Support introduction
6. Overlap and transition
7. Ongoing Peer Support in the community

(See Referral Pathway above)

7. Review and Term

This MOU will take effect on **[start date]** and remain in place until **[end date]** unless reviewed or amended by mutual agreement.

8. Signatures

Partner Agency Representative

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Peer Support South East Ontario Representative

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

