

Transition Discharge Model



Supporting People Leaving Formal Care Environments.

What is Next Steps?

Next Steps is a peer-led transitional support model designed for people who are leaving a structured living environment and transitioning back into the community.

WHO WE ARE...Peer Support South East Ontario is a community-based organization grounded in the power of lived and living experience. We provide peer support for people navigating mental health and or substance use challenges, and life transitions, recognizing that everyone’s journey is unique and deeply personal.

We are guided by values of compassion, dignity, mutuality, and choice. Our peer support is voluntary, non-judgmental, trauma-informed, and rooted in harm reduction principles. We believe that support is strongest when it is built on shared experience, authentic connection, and hope. Rather than offering advice or “fixing,” we walk alongside individuals as equals—listening, encouraging, and supporting self-defined goals.

At our core, we are about connection and belonging. We work to create safe, inclusive spaces that respect diversity, honor personal autonomy, and center each person’s voice. Through peer relationships and community collaboration, we support resilience, empowerment, and wellbeing across South East Ontario

Transitions out of structured living environments can be some of the most vulnerable moments in a person’s life. Supports often drop off suddenly, expectations increase quickly, and people may feel pressure to “have it all together” when they are still stabilizing.



Next Steps exists to bridge that gap.

Transition Discharge Model

It provides **continuity, connection, and safety** through voluntary peer support that starts *prior to* discharge and continues *after* a person returns to the community.

Why Next Steps Is Needed

People leaving hospital or detention often face many overlapping challenges at once, including:

- Loss of structure, routine, and consistent support
- Emotional overwhelm, anxiety, or uncertainty
- Increased risk of crisis, hospitalization, relapse, or re-incarceration
- Disruptions in mental health, substance use, housing, or social supports
- Difficulty trusting systems or asking for help

Even when referrals are given, many people struggle to follow through without relational support.

Next Steps recognizes that transition itself is a risk — and connection is the protective factor.

What Makes Next Steps a Peer Support Model

Next Steps is grounded in **peer support**, meaning it is delivered by people with lived and living experience who understand transition, instability, and recovery from the inside.

Peer support within Next Steps:

- Is **voluntary**, not mandated
- Is **non-judgmental and non-authoritative**
- Is based on **mutual respect and shared experience**
- Honors each person's pace, choices, and definition of wellness
- Focuses on **walking alongside**, not directing or fixing

Peer supporters do not assess, diagnose, supervise, or enforce conditions.

They build **trust, safety, and connection** — the foundation for engagement with other supports

How the Next Steps Model Works

The Next Steps model follows the same core approach whether a person is leaving **hospital care** or **a detention facility**

1. Before Leaving (Pre-Transition Support)

Whenever possible, Next Steps begins **before discharge or release**.

Transition Discharge Model

Peer supporters may:

- Meet with the person where they are at, in formal care environments
- Build a trusting, respectful relationship
- Listen to concerns, fears, and hopes about the transition
- Talk through what discharge or release might realistically look like
- Provide guidance and support
- Obtain informed consent for continued peer support

Early connection reduces fear, strengthens readiness, and helps people feel seen as individuals.

2. At Transition (Discharge or Release)

The day someone leaves hospital or custody can feel intense and destabilizing.

During this stage, Next Steps may involve:

- Emotional grounding and reassurance
- Helping make sense of next steps without pressure
- Supporting warm handoffs to community services (not just written referrals)
- Helping navigate stressors and worries, support with solution focused options

Peer support complements — but does not replace — clinical care, case management, or justice services.

3. After Leaving (Post-Transition Continuity)

After returning to the community, Next Steps continues based on what the person wants and needs.

Support may include:

- Regular check-ins and conversations
- Support adjusting to daily life and reduced structure
- Encouragement during moments of stress or uncertainty
- Help reconnecting with community, peer, or drop-in supports
- Virtual support when in-person connection is not possible

Support is flexible and continues **for as long as it is helpful**, not based on rigid timelines.

Where Next Steps Connects People (PSSEO Supports)

Next Steps links people to **Peer Support South East Ontario's four streams of service:**

Transition Discharge Model

- **Transitional Discharge Model** – in formal care environments supporting 1-1 intentional support- group sessions
- **Community Peer Support** – in-person support focused on everyday life and connection
- **Drop-In Centres** – safe, welcoming spaces across South East Ontario with meals, laundry, internet, and peer support
- **Virtual Peer Support** – phone, text, email, and online connection

There are **no waitlists**, and participation is always voluntary.

What Next Steps Is — and Is Not

Next Steps Is

- Relationship-based peer support
- Flexible and person-led
- Grounded in lived experience
- Focused on safety, dignity, and continuity
- Applicable to hospital discharge *and* justice transitions
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Next Steps Is Not

- Case management
- Clinical or medical treatment
- Monitoring, enforcement, or compliance
- A one-time or short-term intervention

Next Steps is about having someone beside you during change — especially when systems step back and expectations step up.

Support South East Ontario works with people, not for people.

Next Steps reflects that value by honoring choice, lived experience, and human connection during some of the hardest moments of transition.