

National Practice Guidelines for Supervisors of Peer Support Specialists

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS VOLUNTARY (NOT FORCED, COERCED, OR MANDATED)
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **SUPPORT CHOICE**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Encourage peer support specialists in promoting individuals' choices including becoming more knowledgeable about trauma-informed approaches that reduce or eliminate force and coercion to create a safer environment for all.
- Explore peer support specialists' choices about how they might or might not choose to work with certain individuals, especially if there are issues related to dual relationships or trauma.
- Provide guidance to peer support specialists when they are advocating for choice or speaking up when coercion occurs, especially when it is subtle or systemic.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORTERS ARE HOPEFUL
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **SHARE HOPE**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Demonstrate confidence in peer specialists' ability to share a hopeful message.
- Provide a way to further develop skills for disclosing personal experience with the goals of inspiring hope, developing trust and rapport, and fostering strengths.
- Model self-care, appropriate boundaries, and an authentic belief in recovery through language, attitude, and actions.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORTERS OPEN MINDED
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **WITHHOLD JUDGMENT ABOUT OTHERS**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- View differences as an opportunity for learning. Refrain from seeing differences as pathology (symptoms); consider what happened rather than what's wrong.
- Learn with and from peer support specialists about different pathways to recovery and alternate perspectives about individuals.
- Respect peer support specialists' individual recovery journeys and knowledge of recovery approaches.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORTERS ARE EMPATHETIC
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **LISTEN WITH EMOTIONAL SENSITIVITY**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Practice effective listening that is non-judgmental and empathic while balancing the need to hold peer support specialists accountable for their job duties.
- Provide adequate time and space, with coaching and feedback, for peer specialists to become proficient in this critical skill.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORTERS ARE RESPECTFUL
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **BE CURIOUS AND EMBRACE DIVERSITY**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- See peer support as different from traditional service, one that does not start with the assumption that there is a problem. Instead, peer support is a way of relating to many different world views.
- Gain awareness of one's own world view including personal stigmas, stereotypes and bias that can interfere with the ability to treat all employees, including peer support specialists, with respect and fairness.
- Take training themselves and support offering all agency employees, including supervisees, training on cultural humility, which is a process of openness and self-awareness that incorporates self-reflection and self-critique while willingly interacting with individuals from diverse cultures, ethnicities and gender orientations.
- Invite ongoing feedback on personal and staff practice of cultural humility.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORTERS FACILITATE CHANGE
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **EDUCATE AND ADVOCATE**

The supervisor's role is to:

- Define and model advocacy for peer support specialists, including advocating for organizational changes.
- Coach peer support specialists on how to respect the rights of individuals while helping individuals challenge and overcome injustice.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORTERS FACILITATE CHANGE *(CONTINUED)*
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **EDUCATE AND ADVOCATE**

- Assist colleagues to understand the peer specialist role and the perspective and experience of peer support specialists.
- Provide time and support for peer support specialists to connect and participate in the greater peer movement and the peer workforce profession.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORTERS ARE HONEST AND DIRECT
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **ADDRESS DIFFICULT SITUATIONS WITH CARING AND COMPASSION**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Establish clear boundaries, set reasonable and mutually agreed-on expectations.
- Promote responsibility and accountability.
- Build trust and develop the integrity of the supervisory relationship with peer support specialists through honest and respectful communication about strengths and areas that need improvement.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS MUTUAL AND RECIPROCAL
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **ENCOURAGE PEERS TO GIVE AND RECEIVE**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Ask peer support specialists how they best receive feedback and direction.
- Encourage co-learning (collaborative learning) and welcome peer support specialists' input in decision-making wherever possible.
- Welcome feedback from peer support specialists during supervision sessions to develop supervisory relationships based on mutuality.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS EQUALLY SHARED POWER
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **EMBODY EQUALITY**

The supervisor's role is to:

- Educate peer support specialists on the concept of power and the potential for inadvertently reinforcing power differentials in the peer support relationship.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS EQUALLY SHARED POWER (*CONTINUED*)
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **EMBODY EQUALITY**

- Reinforce the non-clinical nature of the peer support role with peer support specialists and other organizational colleagues to avoid 'peer drift' or co-optation, and role ambiguity.
- Consider how power in relationships, including the relationship between the supervisor and peer support specialist affects those with histories of trauma to create a safe work environment.
- Support peer support specialist values and scope of non-clinical practice, especially in situations in which the peer support specialist is called upon to endorse or enforce a particular form of treatment or clinical practice.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS STRENGTHS-FOCUSED
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **SEE WHAT'S STRONG, NOT WHAT'S WRONG**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Model a focus on strengths rather than deficits with all employees.
- Encourage peer support specialists to develop meaningful personal, career, and leadership development goals and suggest they use a similar process with those they support.
- Encourage peer support specialists to use a strength-based approach to evaluate their own progress and performance; invite them to provide a similar strength-based approach when working with others.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS TRANSPARENT
PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND USE PLAIN LANGUAGE**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Use the job description to orient peer support specialists to job duties and requirements, including the type of documentation a peer support specialist is expected to keep, and to guide understanding of the performance review process.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS TRANSPARENT (*CONTINUED*)

PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND USE PLAIN LANGUAGE**

- Explain the supervisor's role, including connecting peer support specialists to other colleagues with additional expertise, as needed.
- Describe the benefits and expectations of the supervisory relationship, including frequency and duration of supervision meetings.
- Use plain, person-first language in all interactions with peer support specialists.
- Reinforce the non-clinical nature of the peer support role with peer support specialists and colleagues, including documentation which is consistent with the peer support role.

CORE VALUE: PEER SUPPORT IS PERSON-DRIVEN

PRACTICE GUIDELINE: **FOCUS ON THE PERSON, NOT THE PROBLEMS**

The Supervisor's role is to:

- Provide an environment where peer support specialists are empowered to move beyond comfort zones and learn from their mistakes.
- Reframe unexpected outcomes as opportunities for personal growth, recovery, and resilience.
- Assist peer support specialists in identifying areas for personal growth and creating professional development plans.
- Recognize when the issues a peer support specialist brings up in supervision are beyond the supervisor's role; and suggest constructive ways to obtain help for these issues.