

2023

Peer Support CMHA

DROP-IN SERVICES

Every Tuesday and
Friday from 1-4 pm

*Peer led
SMART Recovery
Group Meetings*

SMART Recovery is a
science-based
program to help people
manage their recovery
from any type of
addictive behaviour

Services & Research Report

Reducing the Harms of Substance Use and
Advancing Recovery through Peer Support:
A Qualitative Study

Meet the CMHA-Hamilton Branch
PEER SUPPORT TEAM!



The Canadian Mental Health Association

A non-profit community mental health agency which provides services to adults with serious mental illness



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VISION

Mentally healthy people in a healthy society

MISSION

Assist and encourage consumers to achieve and maintain their optimum level of functioning in the community within the framework of self-determination

VALUES

We believe that the following values are critical to mental health and a personally satisfying quality of life:

- Dignity & Respect
- Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion
- Social Justice
- Person-Centred Care
- Quality
- Engagement & Collaboration
- Sustainability

PEER SUPPORT SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

This project builds on a previous evaluation titled *Staying Home: Program Assessment of the Multi-sectoral Intensive Supports Pilot Approach to Finding and Securing Housing For Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness*

In 2022, a research team at McMaster University's Community Research Platform set out to investigate Peer Support initiatives developed and delivered by the CMHA Hamilton Branch.

Current Project

We are pleased to present the first community report of Peer Support Services at the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Hamilton Branch. The project is titled *Reducing the Harms of Substance Use and Advancing Recovery through Peer Support: A Qualitative Study*. This report provides an overview of CMHA Peer Support Services and a snapshot of preliminary findings gathered from the perspectives of peer support workers and service recipients.

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Peer Support is...

Supportive Relationship

A supportive and structured relationship between people who share a similar experience



Advocacy and Navigation

Skill building and system navigation support to promote healthy choices, engagement with services, and managing mental health



Recovery-Oriented Care

An opportunity to learn and share stories about recovery with people who have been there



Evidence-Based Approach

Peer support is available in various forms, including one-to-one outreach, group meetings, and drop-in support



ROLE OF A PEER SUPPORT WORKER

Listen, share, and foster supportive relationships

Offer coping skills and strategies, risk management, and community navigation/referrals

Serve as a role model and assist others to identify and achieve life goals

Trained and certified individual with the lived experience of recovery, mental illness and/or addiction

"Peer support means to me that I have somebody that can relate to the struggles that I've been through and I'm currently going through and that I finally don't have to face them alone"
- CMHA Service recipient

Peer Values



Self-determination



Person Centred



Trauma-Informed



Non-judgmental



Empowerment



Empathy

Hope for Recovery



Respect



Health and Wellness

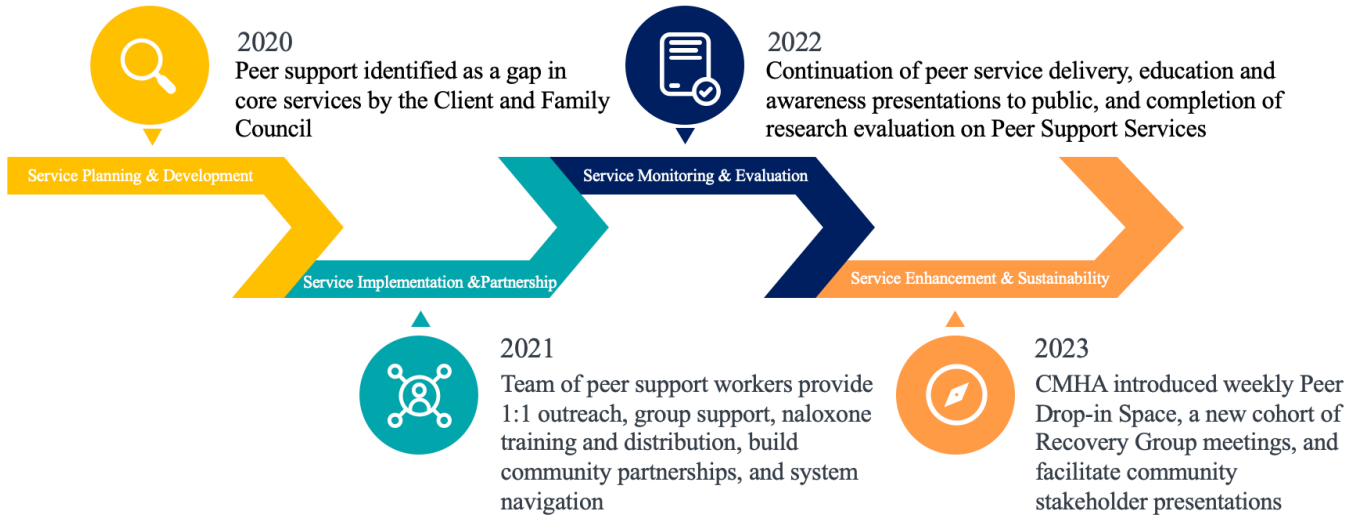


Peer support is a "system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful"
- Mental Health Commission of Canada



CMHA Hamilton Peer Support

Our History From The Beginning



CMHA HAMILTON

PEER SUPPORT TEAM



Training and Certification

Building Partnerships

Community Engagement

Team Development

- **Mental Health Rights Coalition**
Completion of Peer Support Training and Certification, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, Trauma-Informed Care, Mindfulness, Indigenous, LGBTQ, and marginalized communities, ASIST Suicide Training Prevention, Naloxone training and kit distribution
- **Peer Support Canada, City of Hamilton, Homeless Serving Sector, St. Joe's Hamilton**
Seconded by Mental Health Rights Coalition
- **Peer Support Community Awareness Presentations**
Educate and promote a culture of moderation, and facilitate awareness presentations to local community partners, people with mental illness/substance use and their family members, clinicians, educators and stakeholders
- **Professional and Personal Development**
Peer Mentor Training, facilitate peer support training, participate in community of practice and organizational meetings, and self-care

WHAT PEER SUPPORT MEANS TO US!

Advocacy | Transparency | Lived Experiences | Hope | Trust | Love | Empathy | Confidence | Sharing | Support | Emotions | Connection | Friendship | Compassion

"There's so many people that want some sort of help, but they have no idea who can help them or where they are ... Somebody helped me at one time, and I wanted to be able to pay it back" - Peer Support Worker

Peer Support Services



One-to-one peer support

- Peer support workers meet clients at a convenient location to provide emotional, social, psychological, and practical support



Street Team

- Peer support workers and a registered nurse visit shelters and encampments across the city to provide harm reduction support, education, and facilitate housing assistance



Intensive Supports Project

- Peer support workers engage with people experiencing homelessness, support their transition into housing and connect with clinical and non-clinical health supports



McMaster Department of Family Medicine Second Heart

- Access to peer support workers to assist clients admitted for infectious endocarditis from injection drug use in transitioning from hospital to home



Office of the Solicitor General

- Peer support workers help individuals on probation and parole reintegrate into the community



Mood Menders

- Monthly meetings taking place at Williams Café at Pier 8 located at 47 Discovery Drive. A peer support worker coordinates and facilitates activities and supports

NEW PEER DROP-IN SPACE

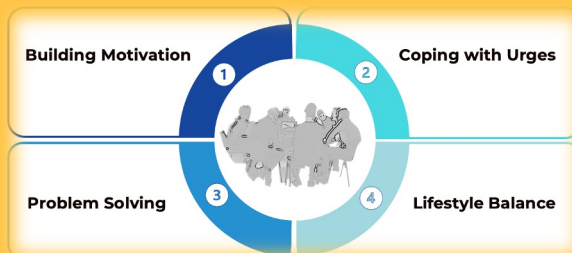
A peer space is available at CMHA Hamilton site where individuals experiencing mental illness/addictions can visit peer support workers and receive social support, system navigation, recreational and educational activities



Hours of Operation:
Tuesday & Friday | 1:00 - 4:00 pm

SMART RECOVERY MEETINGS

SMART Recovery is a science-based 4-point program designed to help people manage their recovery from any type of addictive behaviour



- 8 Weekly Group Meetings offered to working-age males and transitional age youth
- Two Peer Support Workers
- Co-facilitated semi-structured sessions range between 1-2 hours
- Learn new skills and recovery strategies
- Free and Voluntary

“Peer support really helped me get my life back on track. Every aspect of my well-being improved”- *Service Recipient*



Peer Support Research Study

A collaborative partnership project with
McMaster University's Community Research Platform



Aim:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to evaluate CMHA Peer Support Services designed to reduce the harms of substance use and advance recovery

Research Questions:

For Peer Support Workers:

- What are your perspectives on the current peer-based program at CMHA-Hamilton?
- What do you see as their impact for peers?

For Service Recipients:

- What are your experiences accessing and engaging in peer-based programming?

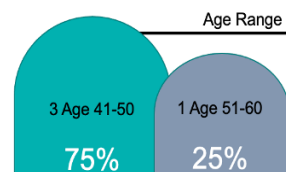
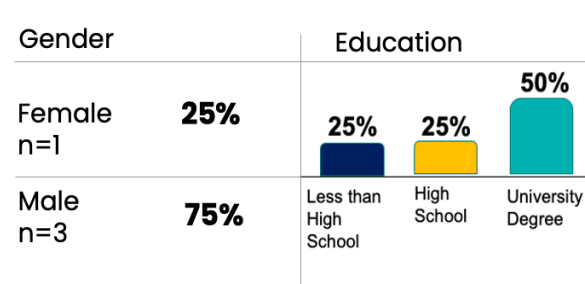
Study Design:

A research team co-developed the study design, collected data from April to September 2022 using semi-structured interviews, and analyzed results guided by reflexive thematic analysis

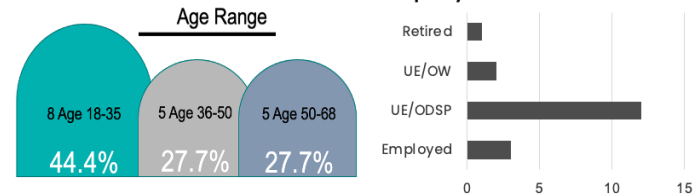
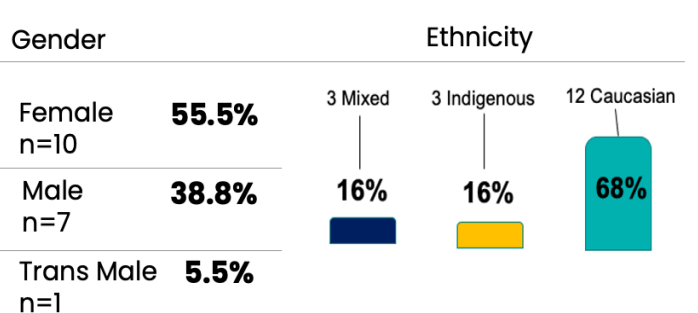
STUDY RESULTS

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Peer Support Workers n=4



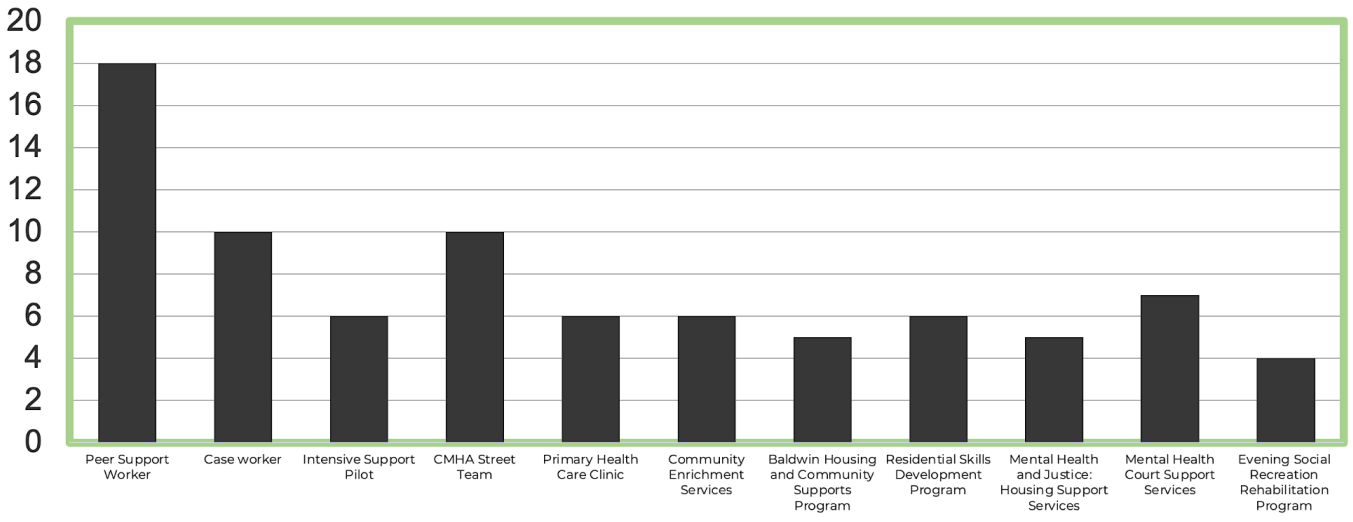
Service Recipients n=18



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

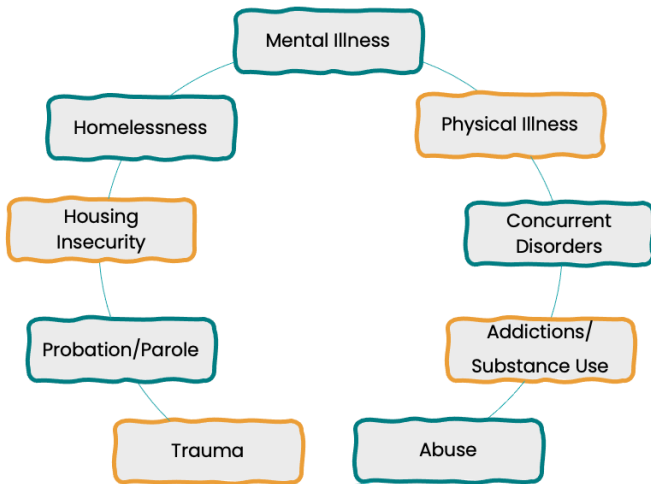
We would like to acknowledge and thank all of those who participated in the evaluation of Peer Support Services, our research funders MITACS and the Canadian Mental Health Association Hamilton Branch, and the contributions from McMaster University Community Research Platform

CMHA SERVICES AND PROGRAMS



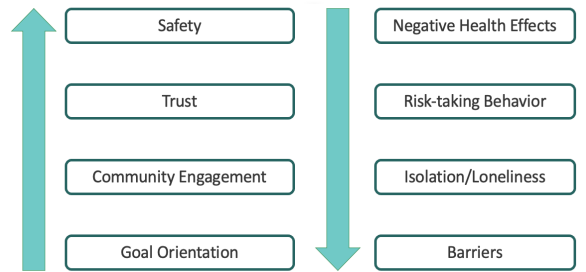
PEER SUPPORT WORKERS

LIVED EXPERIENCES ENCOMPASS



SERVICE RECIPIENTS

PEER SUPPORTS IMPACT ON WELL-BEING



BOTH GROUPS IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING

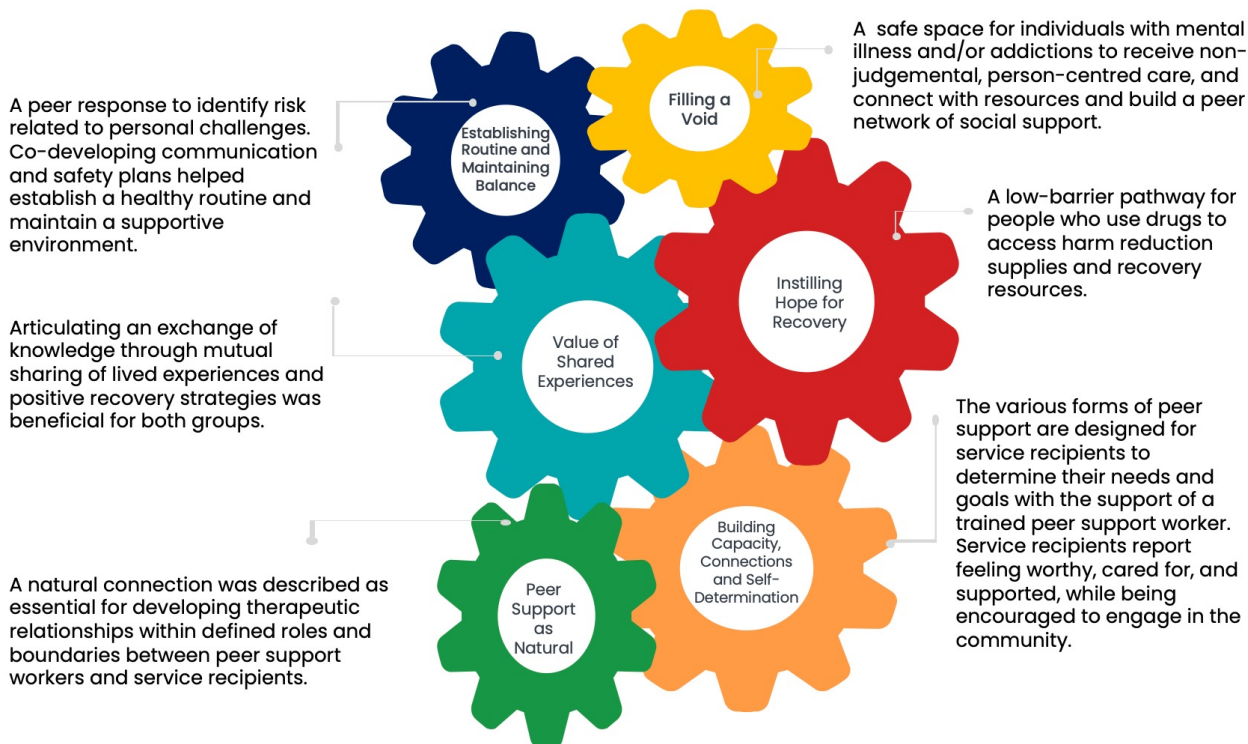
KEY AREAS OF SUPPORT



"I enjoy helping people. I've been where they are and it's like truly being able to meet them where they're at and everybody's life is different. And except from being there in their shoes, I can understand that and accept that"
 - Peer Support Worker



KEY ELEMENTS OF PEER SUPPORT



INTENSIVE SUPPORTS PILOT

- The ISP project formed during the pandemic to respond to the increase in individuals with a high level of need living in tent communities known as encampments
- CMHA peer support workers worked within an interdisciplinary team of clinical and non-clinical service providers. This pilot led to a unique model of care and multisectoral collaboration with CMHA Hamilton, St. Joseph's Hospital, City of Hamilton, and The Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership
- Peer support workers continue to support clients involved in the ISP project by providing one-to-one outreach and facilitating meetings/drop-in space

Housing First	Trauma-Informed	Continuation of Care	Person-Centred
<p>"Peer support really helped me get my life back on track. Every aspect of my wellbeing improved. Without CHMA stepping in and all that. I wouldn't have no place to live...like they helped me, they stepped in and found me this place. I'm happy about it. I've been here for almost two years now and I'm happy to be here"</p> <p>- Service Recipient</p>	<p>"I've been a drug addict all my life and I'm still using drugs, but not as much as I was, and I been housed and my rents paid on time and if it wasn't for the peer support workers, I probably wouldn't be able to do that. Like they keep me off the street, help with my housing, keep clothes on my back and have food in my fridge and stuff like that. And they check up on me at least once a week. They make sure I'm doing okay"</p> <p>- Service Recipient</p>	<p>"There's been quite a few times where my peer support worker helped me pick myself back up and keep going... I just know I wouldn't be where I am today without [Peer]. I would still be on the streets way worse than [Peer] found me and who knows"</p> <p>- Service Recipient</p>	<p>"[Peer] is really supportive of like me doing better for myself. You know what I mean? Like when I first met [Peer], I was definitely not doing good. I was living on the street, using, and you know, [Peer]'s just been really supportive of that, you know? So I'm doing significantly better than what I was and a lot of it is thanks to [Peer], you know, [Peer] pushing me to stay focused"</p> <p>- Service Recipient</p>

Participant Quotes

Service Recipient

Peer Support Worker

Routine and Balance

"I am pretty stable now since I've been living here. I think I see my workers a lot less because I just do my own thing now. I see 'em when I need to vent and stuff sometimes. I go, like when I need to now. I'm just doing my own thing. Like I go less, and need less stuff because I just kind of have a life now, before I didn't really have much of a life."

"I had a peer who was calling me two-three times a week when I first started engaging with him...And over months of us talking and going out and meeting out in the public, he became more social.... And now we only need to talk a couple times a month."

Fill a Void

"I didn't really have anyone that I was comfortable talking with. So having my peer support worker, there was such a relief. Like I could let out a lot of pain and anger that I had inside and I could be honest with [Peer] and actually like talk about kind of more sensitive topics."

A lot of people that I've come across lack of a lot of family supports and if they have the family supports in place, they lack the community supports. So it's either one or the other. So it really feels like filling a void. The relationship really fills the void of the lack of one of those two."

Value of Shared Experiences

"Like it sounds like [Peer] has been through the system in many ways too and is able to help me kind of almost skip steps so that I don't have to go through every single hoop that [Peer] did. You know, and if things don't work out or whatever, then there's always, plan B or [Peer] lets me know there is always another plan, something like that."

"You do have to be very cautious when sharing your own experiences because, you don't, first of all, you don't wanna overshare, and sometimes sharing without being asked, can be a no-no in this field, as well as you have to kind of know where the person's at in their own recovery. So you're not giving them triggering information. I think those are two big keys when sharing."

Instilling Hope for Recovery

"If you have like an addictions problems, which I do have they're great support for, and they don't judge you like they don't judge what you do. They don't judge you as a person, but they help you by giving you different outlooks in life. Like when you try it like this, or instead trying to quit, want cut back cold Turkey, you try it like this and yeah. Make really good suggestions on different things in life."

"Just being there for them. And guiding them and not guiding them, if anything comes up and they need something, just being able to, say Hey, I don't know of a place, but let's look for a place together and get some information and, you know, meet me here, you know where they're at an understanding like maybe their goal is not to be completely abstinent, and letting them know that I am okay with that."

Capacity, Connections, and Self-Determination

"[Peer] is really supportive of like me doing better for myself. You know what I mean? Like when I first met [Peer], I was definitely not doing good. I was living on the street, using, and [Peer]'s just been really supportive of that process, you know? So I'm doing significantly better than what I was and a lot of it is thanks to [Peer], you know, [Peer] pushing me to stay focused."

"When I first met [peer], he was not able to build himself up or the knowhow...That's all to now like showing up to these appointments and stuff...Like it's like getting him to the point of being self-dependent again, versus waiting for the help to go to him. Before he would just wait for somebody else to notice it and do something about it where now it's like he is acting on it."

Peer Support as Natural

"There's something about [Peer], when we meet that really makes me feel valued as a person. And that hasn't happened for quite a long time for me. Having somebody to relate to makes me feel worthy as a person and worthwhile, and not like I'm worthless. I feel like I'm actually somebody that's worth spending time with and worth taking the time out of their day to be with."

"One appeared with an addiction issue, found out that was my background as well. They've asked me what steps I took to get clean. And I've shared with them, the places I've gone to and the people I've spoke with. And they've asked me for all that information to be able to seek the same resources. I've passed along things that have helped me in the past to try and help other individuals that are going through what I did years ago."





CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AS A PEER SUPPORT WORKER

- Clarification of job title to external stakeholders
- Stigma
- Peer support is voluntary
- Grief/bereavement
- Burnout
- Service requirements/restrictions
- Technical difficulties
- Capturing peer's perspective of a safe environment
- COVID-19 related barriers



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AS A SERVICE RECIPIENT

- Integrating peer support into care plans
- Recognition of role with service providers
- After hours and weekend support
- Communication and technology
- COVID-19 related barriers
- Transfer/request new peer support worker
- Visitation and transportation barriers



AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Greater recognition of peer support role
- Increase after hours/weekend support
- Drop-in Space
- Create process for peer support worker transfer/relocation
- Community partnerships and engagement
- Train peer support workers
- Develop peer community hub

OVERALL KEY MESSAGE:

CMHA Peer Support Services had preliminary successful results

Peer support work informs:

- People who use substances about existing harm reduction programs and services and how to take advantage of them.
- Pathways of healing and recovery based on lived expertise.
- Directory of resources and aid in government and service processes.
- Community partners about how best to connect people who use substances with agents of recovery.

This program matters because:

- It serves an important and underserved target population in Hamilton.
- It accounts for how peer support workers with lived experience have influenced people who use substances.
- It provides a low-barrier service that integrates harm reduction strategies and targeted addiction supports.
- Peer support is an evidence-based response that offers flexible, recovery-oriented service level modalities.



"Peer support means that I have somebody to talk to in times of crisis and when things are getting stressful or I just don't know what direction to kind of go" - **Service Recipient**



PEER SUPPORT

“is support from a person that has either struggled or gone through similar experiences that you have”

“...is someone to support you”

“.. it's a place to go and a collective area to bounce off your thoughts and get new information or thoughts that I haven't thought of. Like new ideas from someone who has similar experiences”

“...is about being able to relate to those that you are supporting”

“...helps me look at situations differently than I would normally look at them”

“...is somebody that's been through what you've been through and just trying to support you because they've been through that before”

“SHARING LIVED EXPERIENCES”

“...gives me a different perspective on the situation”



Mitacs

This project was funded by a MITACS Accelerate Research Internship, McMaster Community Research Platform, and the Canadian Mental Health Association Hamilton Branch

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