



1 Hour Workshop

Alliance's Annual Conference 2026

Presented by:

Dean Dewar and Tabitha Morris



Healthcare. Harm Reduction. Hope.



Sandy Hill
Community Health Centre

The Power of Purpose:

Skill Development, Peer Pathways, and Meaningful Work



WHAT IS A PEER?



Peer workers are individuals who draw upon their own lived experience of mental illness, recovery, or other issues. They provide support, understanding, and role modeling to others in similar circumstances. Most of all they provide HOPE!

WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT?

Peer work is so important. Peers play a huge role when it comes to building trust with our organization. They are able to see and be on both sides of the coin. From their advocacy work to their ability to share perspectives. Peers can talk to folks in ways professionals can't

Workshop Objectives

1

Examine leading peer development programs operating in downtown Ottawa

2

Collaboratively develop strategies to support people with lived or living experience through programming, policy, and workforce development.

3

Identify practical peer development initiatives that can be implemented within participants' organizations or used to address specific service challenges





Leading Peer Development Programs in Ottawa

Spectrum of Programming



1

Entry level – Low Barrier – Not on payroll

2

Mid Level – Payroll position – Short shifts – More expectations

3

Staff Level roles – More responsibility – Union – 8 Hr Shifts



PEERS OF OICH

MSCU gets resident support with tasks intrade for Gift Cards 2001/2002

OICH uses Peer Workers to accompany OICHI clients to appointments 2014 .

Peers are hired as staff for CTS 2017/18

Peer title changed to include harm reduction worker or HRW

Block leaders

**Residential peer program expanded and "program expands" - OAKS, Merivale - Block Leader Team leads*

Indigenous program peer and Healer

Peers become LPP recovery Coaches - in program and in shelter

Inuit Cultural Worker Pilot

TED pilot Peers for rounds 2013

Uses peers for rounds, and outreach

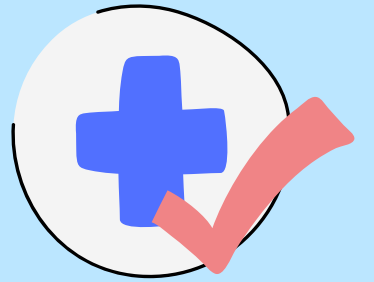
**Residential-peer programming begins at Rita Thompson POP Team*

Peer Case Managers in our CTS 2019

Appointment and Program Peers evolve

**Drop in pilot*

**Cleaning Pilot*





Sandy Hill

Community Health Centre History of Peer Programming

2010 – The support and partnering of DUAL (Drug User Advocacy Leadership)

2018 – Consumption and Treatment Services including lived experience

2019 – Post Consumption Support

2023 – Community Clean-up

Sandy Hill Community Health Centre



Community Clean-up



Drop-In



Advisory Groups



Leadership





Common Threads

**Lived Experience
Leadership**

**Flexible
Entry
Points**

**Ongoing
Tailored
Support**



Identify actionable peer development initiatives that can be integrated into your organizations or utilized to tackle specific service challenges.

Together, let's identify some gaps or service challenges that can be an example for this workshop?



Identifying Needs



What motivates people to want to work or contribute to peer programming?

Vs.

What are there stressors, gaps, or needs within your organization or community?

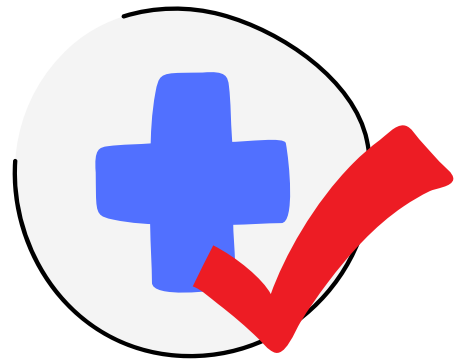
Vs.

What would be the funding needs?





Co-Development



Co-development is the collaborative process of sharing power to design, implement, and evaluate programs together.

Communication



Communication is an important factor for considerations.

How do you tailor your communications to your peers?

Additionally how to you communicate your organizations' expectations to stakeholders.



Onboarding / Training Trends

BASED ON PROGRAMMING AND TARGET POPULATION

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN PLANNING

What barriers do your peers
face when onboarding?

When is the best time of day for
your peers?

TIPS

Keep trainings short and
frequent. (Often with food)

Be abundantly clear what peers
expectations are and what
could cause termination.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO STRESS THE DIFFICULTY AND COMPLEXITY OF DUAL
RELATIONSHIPS.**



Safety

Proper Supplies

PPE

Garbage Handling

Telus Security Application – Panic Button

Training

Basic First Aid – Overdose Response

Leaving when you need to (then communicate)

Daily Training

Relational

It is okay to say no and to remove yourself. (how to interact with community members)

Teaching and Self-Check

am I OK? TEACH – MODEL – Debrief, Debrief, Debrief



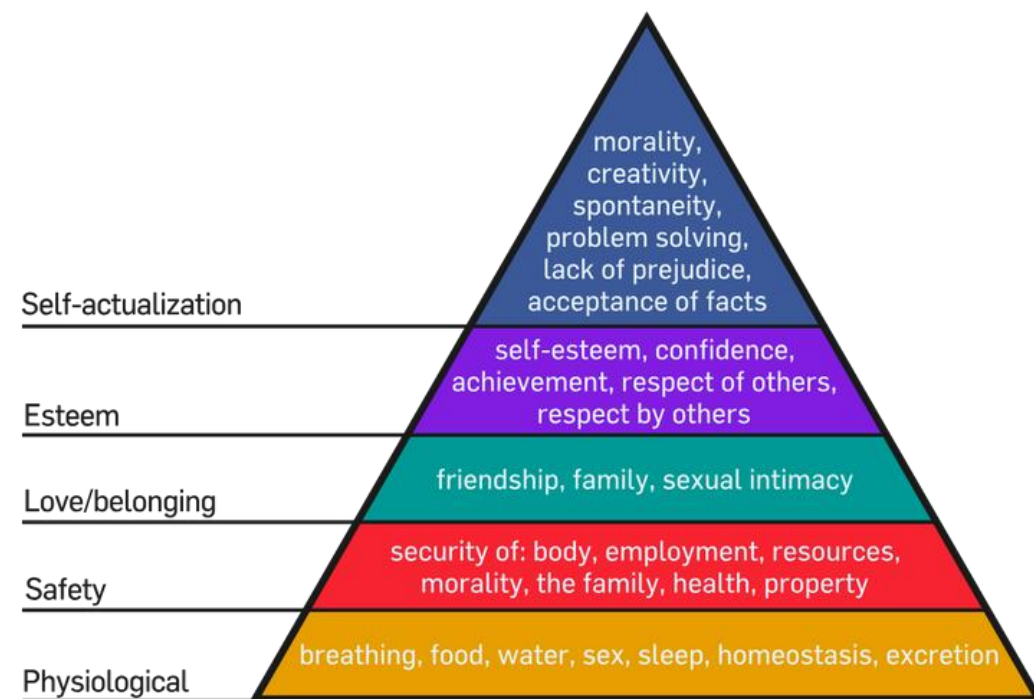
Data Collection

- The importance on Data Collection and how this collection might differ from our clients, where to set expectations etc.
- Different based on programming and target population
- # Another Chance for Co-Development
- Regular training - on the WHY?



Problem Solving / Coaching

Supporting People at work and in their lives.



Confirmation Bias

What it is: Paying more attention to people or ideas that you agree with.

Overcoming it: Talk to a diverse range of people before you make a decision.



Halo Effect

What it is: Your overall impression of someone is influenced by one part of their character.

Overcoming it: Remember that first impressions may not be the most accurate.



Negativity Bias

What it is: You pay more attention to and remember things that are negative.

Overcoming it: Take time to actively reflect on the good things that have happened.



Bandwagon Effect

What it is: You tend to believe things more when other people do.

Overcoming it: Listen to your gut. What would your opinion be if you didn't know anyone else's?



HR / Union / Legal / ODSP / OW

"The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection." — Johann Hari

Employment and Benefits Overview: Clients can work while receiving Ontario Works (OW) or ODSP and may continue to qualify for financial assistance, health benefits, and employment supports. OW recipients can earn up to \$200/month before deductions apply, while ODSP recipients can earn up to \$1,000/month without impacting income support, and both programs offer start-up benefits and employment-related supports.

Housing Impacts: Employment income does not disqualify individuals from Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) or subsidized housing. Clients must report income changes, but rent remains capped at approximately 30% of household income, and employment may increase eligibility for additional housing options such as below-market-rent programs.



Off Boarding

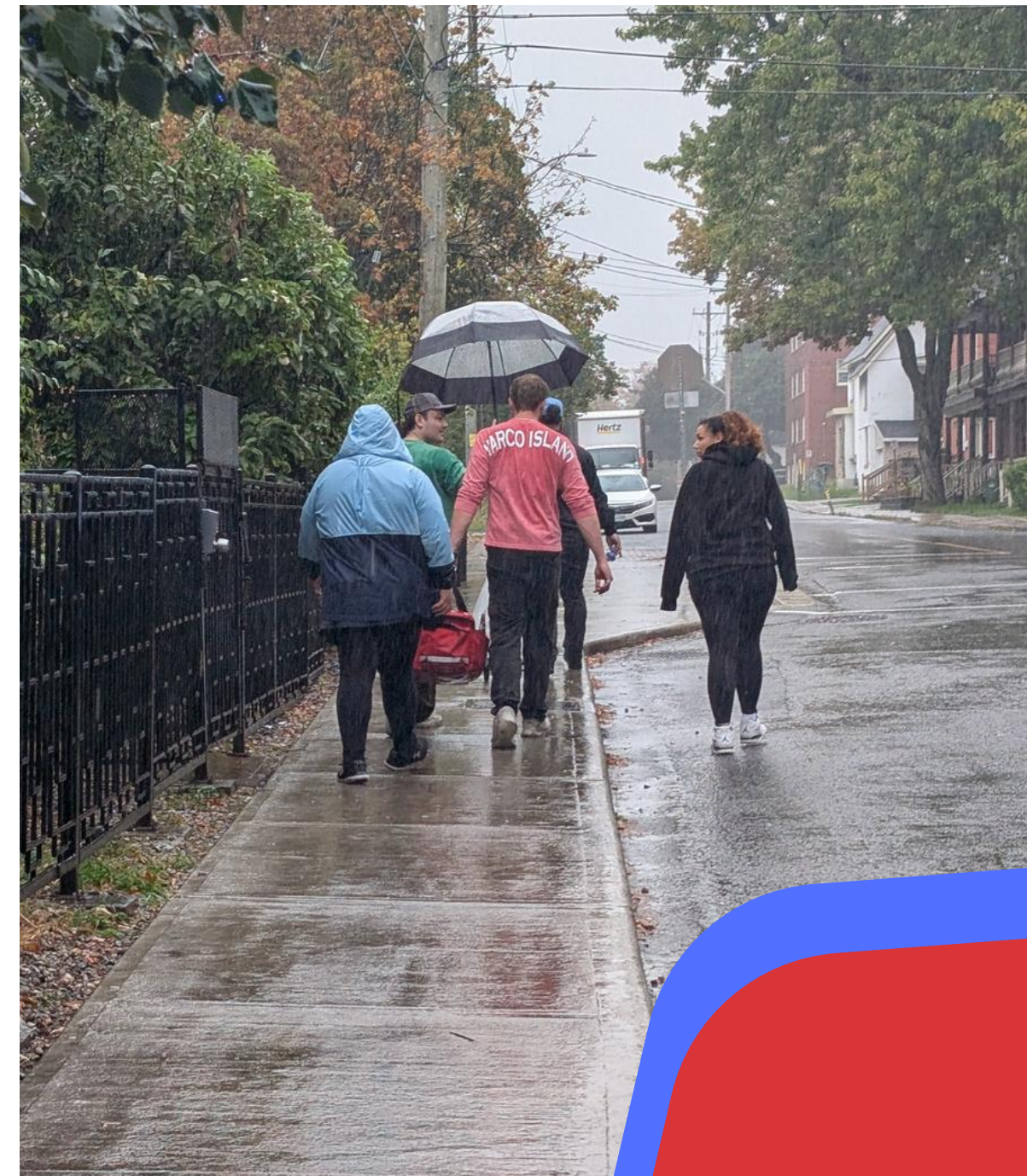
What happens when someone leaves the peer role?

Items to Consider

If someone is no longer a peer, do they still have access to programming?

What does job abandonment?

How can you support this person?





Collaboratively develop strategies to support people with lived or living experience through programming, policy, and workforce development.



1 Hour Workshop

Alliance's Annual Conference 2026



Healthcare. Harm Reduction. Hope.



Sandy Hill
Community Health Centre

Thank you for participating in The Power of Purpose:

**Skill Development, Peer
Pathways, and Meaningful Work**

Presented by:

Dean Dewar and Tabitha Morris



Dean Dewar

ddewar@sandyhillchc.on.ca

Tabitha Morris

tamorris@oich.ca