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Peer Housing Support
Program Toolkit

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge, with respect, the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish Peoples of the Traditional Territories of Greater Victoria, Vancouver Island, and beyond, including the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples who now call these lands home. The staff and volunteers of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness are honoured to live, learn, and work within these Traditional and unceded Lands.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us develop this toolkit. Your energy and insight are appreciated!

This toolkit has been developed primarily by the Peer Housing Support Staff, a team of people who have harnessed the wisdom earned during their time experiencing and recovering from homelessness to create and implement this program. Throughout the development and delivery of the program, the Peer Housing Support Advisory Committee, a committee of people with lived expertise of homelessness, has been and continues to be an invaluable support; without whom this toolkit and program would not have been possible.

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society (the Coalition) and Peer Housing Support Team wish to thank the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness for their support and facilitation of program development; the Capital Regional District for funding this program; and the Government of Canada for providing funding through Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

We also wish to thank our Partnering Agencies, Pacifica Housing Advisory, Victoria Cool Aid Society and Our Place Society for their willingness to join us in this groundbreaking endeavour.

This program would not be possible without funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria, the Victoria Foundation, and VanCity.

The Coalition

The Peer Housing Support Program is supported by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society (the Coalition). The Coalition believes that solutions to homelessness are as diverse as the people who experience it, and we all have a role to play in ending it. The Coalition was formed in 2008 with a mission to end homelessness in the capital region. The Coalition consists of service providers, non-profit organizations, all levels of government, businesses, post-secondary institutions, the faith community, People with a Lived Experience of homelessness, and members of the general community. This diverse membership is referred to as Coalition Stakeholders.

Our Vision

A Region Without Homelessness

Our Mission

To ensure appropriate solutions are in place to serve those individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the capital region.

To ensure all people facing homelessness in the capital region have access to safe, affordable, appropriate, long-term housing.

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How to Use this Toolkit

The Peer Housing Support Project is a community-driven initiative, dedicated to providing support with, and a sense of community and belonging for, people transitioning from homelessness to safe and stable housing; whether that be supportive or independent. The Peer Housing Support Project is a partnership between Peers, Peer Supporters, the Coalition, and participating housing organizations.

The goal of this toolkit is to create training that will:

- Introduce potential Stakeholders, Peer Supporters, and program employees to best practices and key skills needed to administer a Peer Housing Support program.
- Provide a foundational training tool that is an overview of the Peer Housing Support Program and gives a basis for further training and skills development.
- Discuss knowledge, skills, and methods within the context of the Peer Housing Support Program.
- Provide sample materials and templates that can be used by participating housing organizations to develop their own materials.
- Direct Stakeholders to additional resources that are available from participating organizations.
- Capture knowledge and provide a shareable resource for other regions or organizations who are interested in developing Peer Housing Support programming.

This toolkit can be used in two ways:

1. As an orientation and training document that encompasses a foundational understanding of the Peer Housing Support Program and the required skills.
2. A modular toolkit that can be used for ongoing training that addresses or refreshes necessary skills in small topics for existing participants and programs as needed.

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Program Overview

The Peer Housing Support Project is a community-driven solution to bring those transitioning from homelessness to safe and stable housing together with experiential Peer Supporters. Peer Supporters provide a range of supports and can assist Peers in navigating available community resources that can promote success in the transition to housing safety and stability.

The need for Peer Support was initially identified by the Social Inclusion Advisory Committee (SIAC), a group comprised of People with Lived Experience of homelessness, of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. The effectiveness of Peer Support in recovery-informed practice is evidence-based as an integral support within health and social services. The program addresses the need for greater strengths-based housing support. It is modeled after Peer-led initiatives in Mental Health and Addictions services and Veterans support and has been adapted to the specific needs of people who are experiencing or transitioning through their recovery with experiences with homelessness.

Strong partnerships between the Peer Housing Support Program and Partnering Agencies are integral to the success of all who participate with this program. Well-defined roles and responsibilities and clear channels of communication will lay the foundation for effectively providing person-centered support that is collaborative and ensures the success of the program. The Peer Support relationship does not stand alone, and it is reinforced by the work of Partner Agency staff, the Community Outreach Manager, and Coalition staff.

The **Partnering Agency** identifies and refers peers to the program, and communicates closely with Coalition management to ensure peer support staff and housing support workers are effectively working with peers in community

Peer Housing Support Stakeholders

Peer Housing Support Advisory Committee is a committee of PWLE who meet monthly and provide expert recommendations through project conception, development and delivery

Peer Housing Support Staff are invaluable to ongoing project development and are key in creating genuine shoulder to shoulder relationships with peers

Roles and Relationships

Peer

An individual who is newly transitioning from experiences of homelessness to safe and stable housing, (or from transitional to long-term housing), through a Partner Agency, and who wishes to receive ongoing support with a Peer Supporter.

Peer Supporter (PS)

An individual who has a Lived Experience of homelessness, and who has garnered the skills, training, and knowledge to effectively provide housing supports with a Peer. A Peer Supporter is an employee of the Peer Housing Support Program.

Community Outreach Manager

The individual who supports the development of the Peer Housing Support Project, provides guidance and support to Peer Supporters, and liaises with partnering agencies.

Partner Agency

An agency that supports individuals who are recovering with experiences of homelessness. The Partnering Agency advocates to secure housing, and connects with the program through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Peer Housing Support Program.

Goals

1. To create a trusting, safe and accepting relationship between the Peer and the Peer Supporter in which Peers can share openly and receive appropriate supports.

2. To improve outcomes for Peers by following a Housing First approach.

3. To support Peers with a person-centered approach that embraces the philosophy of empowerment and individuality with their recovery from homelessness to being safely and stably housed.

Guiding Values

- Hope and recovery
- Self-determination
- Empathetic and equal relationships
- Dignity, respect and social inclusion
- Integrity, authenticity and trust
- Health and wellness
- Cultural awareness and understanding
- Lifelong learning and personal growth

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Four Core Functions Assistance in Daily Management

Peer Supporters use their own experiences with recovery with homelessness to support Peers in creating homes for themselves that reflect their desired outcomes for safety and stability.

Peer Supporters identify key community resources with Peers that can assist with household maintenance and personal needs related to shelter.

Social and Emotional Support

- Through empathetic, active listening and encouragement, Peer Supporters are an integral part of supporting Peers with acknowledging and understanding any social or emotional barriers they may be experiencing that could be preventing them from achieving self-determination, personal empowerment, and growth in their recovery journeys.

Assistance in Daily Management	Social and Emotional Support
Links to Professional Support and Community Resources	Ongoing Support, Extended Over Time

Links to Professional Support and Community Resources

- Peer Supporters can help to bridge the gap with Peers who are experiencing systemic barriers related to achieving and maintaining a holistic sense of security with being housed and seeking out professional supports in the community.
- Peer Supporters can create awareness and encouragement for Peers to seek out appropriate community resources based upon individual circumstance and need.

Ongoing Support, Extended Over time

- Peer Supporters successfully keep Peers engaged by providing proactive, flexible, and continual long-term support.
- While prescribed goal setting outcomes are not a requirement for a Peer to participate in the program, Peer Supporters may be able to apply their lived experiences for supporting Peers with achieving specific life goals related to housing, and other identified needs.
- The Peer Supporter provides emotional and social support to the Peer, including listening, sharing of experiences, problem-solving and coaching.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Peer Supporter will:

- Form positive and meaningful relationships
- Provide active listening and supports that encourage hope, responsibility, increased self-efficacy, personal empowerment and growth, and mutual understanding
- Provide in-home support for Peers when needed, and within reason
- Support Peers to access social and recreational programs
- Accompany Peers to appointments when requested as a silent witness
- Support Peers in accessing and developing appropriate person-centered social networks
- Assist Peers in accessing and navigating community resources
- Support Peers with budgeting and financial planning, if appropriate, and requested
- Provide encouragement for Peers with achieving self-identified goals

Best Practices for Peer Housing Support

Inclusionary Employment Practices

For some Peer Housing Support Staff, this may be their first employment experience since becoming stably housed. For any new or inexperienced employee, there is often a coaching and training arc that takes place over the course of joining, or rejoining, the workforce. Although HR Policies and other Standard Operating Procedures may be shared and in place, it can take some time for new staff to learn the rationale and implementation of varied protocols. Be sure to outline key parameters of expectations and provide coaching to success when unforeseen challenges arise; if the program is new or in pilot stage, this will be a shared learning experience for both supervisor and employee. An open-door policy and regular check ins with staff will provide opportunity for clarification when needed. There is also the benefit of the supervisor refining inclusionary practices based on feedback from staff with lived experience of homelessness.

Peer support is not a new concept; informally this happens in communities every day, and formally, more organizations are adopting the Peer Support model. As this model departs from the traditional client and worker relationship, this will change the structure of some workplaces as Peer Supporters join the table with an equal voice for the first time. Many organizations have policies pertaining to respectful workplaces which mandate equitable behaviours; however, there is no harm in ensuring there is a common and clear understanding of inclusionary and accommodation policies before, and during, the integration of Peer Support into teams. See the Lived Experience Advisory Council's *Seven Principles for Leadership & Inclusion of People with Lived Experience of Homelessness* for further recommendations.

Employment and volunteering within the social service sector is dependent on a completed and cleared Criminal Record Check (CRC). However, given that criminalization of people experiencing homelessness is not uncommon, some flexibility, such as allowing time for adjudication should a CRC return with criminal history indicated is recommended.

Equitable Compensation & Program Funding

Many People with a Lived Experience of homelessness hold a natural propensity and desire to be employed within support services and are subject matter experts from the perspective of having navigated support services themselves; and from experiencing the Peer Support network that exists in the Street Community. As a result of this unique perspective, trust and rapport with Peer Housing Supporters and Peers tends to develop quickly and effectively. It is imperative that Peer Housing Support Staff are compensated at equal rates to other employees of the organization. The Coalition recommends employing Peer Housing Support Staff at the regional Living Wage Rate. If this is not possible, compensation on par with other staff is acceptable.

Additionally, when Peer Housing Support Programs are funded by operational dollars rather than being dependent on cycles of grant funding, it provides a sense of value, certainty, and stability for Peer Housing Support Staff and their Peers. This also cultivates a culture of social enterprise where people who are on their recovery journey may envision for themselves eventually working as Peer Housing Supporters.

Training, Communications, and Resourcing

People will enter the workforce with varied levels of technical, communication, and other administrative skills. When welcoming new staff, be sure to support them to a level of competency with internal communications, such as accessing and maintaining email and electronic calendars, reporting, and other systems they may be required to work with day to day.

Depending on the organization, Peer Support may be delivered at the service provider location, or in the community. If Peer Support Staff are working in the field, they will require a mobile phone, ideally with a data package. This is necessary for safe and effective service delivery and it is also a tool for supporting Peers to make calls and access information.

The Coalition Peer Housing Support Staff primarily build relationships with Peers in the community. They are provided with bus tickets, taxi vouchers, grocery cards, and coffee cards to support activities such as accompanied food shopping to learn how to stock a kitchen and cook at home, support attending varied appointments, and having a visit over a warm cup of coffee.

Community of Practice

The Coalition's Peer Housing Support Team participates in a weekly Community of Practice meeting (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice). This is an opportunity for Peer Supporters to: support one another; develop and refine their teambuilding and group facilitation skills; share best practices; consult with one another to share experiences, successes, and challenges; to provide program updates and community resources; and more. This is critical to the ongoing development and refinement of the program and teambuilding. Program Supervisors can attend and facilitate the meetings.

Community of Learning and Counseling Support

The Coalition has contracted a Certified Clinical Counselor to work with the Peer Housing Support team on a monthly basis for a Community of Learning session. Program supervisors and other staff do not attend these meetings with Peer Support Staff as this is considered a safe training space for Peer Supporters to openly consult on challenging experiences, and to identify topics for discussion that may broach more personal subject matter in relation to the work they do as team members, with their Peers, and within the community at large.

Coalition Peer Housing Support Staff are also provided free access to ongoing counselling services and critical incident debriefing on an anonymous basis.

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Scope of Work for Peer Supporters

For the Peer Housing Support Program, Peer Supporters have identified four core functions of work for providing support with Peers.

Four Core Functions of Peer Support Work

Assistance in Daily Management	Social and Emotional Support
Links to Professional Support and Community Resources	Ongoing Support, Extended Over Time

Types of support and methods for delivery are always approached from a place of equality and mutuality between Peer Supporter and Peer, and in relation to their shared experiences with homelessness. While their experiences may differ in nature and duration, there is always the opportunity to establish a mutual connection and relationship that is based upon common understanding, respect, sharing, learning, and growth.

Individual Peer Supporters will differ in their personal style and approach, as well as in what types of supports they can assist in offering, but the nature of the supportive role is to place the identification and level of need for supports into the hands of the Peer. With the establishment of trust and rapport through social and emotional connection within shared experience, increased opportunities for networking with complementary community connections and extended support services can also be identified and established over time, for both Peer and Peer Supporter alike.

> *There is always the opportunity to establish a mutual connection and relationship that is based upon common understanding, respect, sharing, learning, and growth.*

There has been no time limit set to the length of support provided by Peer Supporters for Peers they have been matched with. The nature of the program is to establish and provide ongoing support for Peers, with the Peer Supporter of their choice, for as long as they wish to receive that support within the program.

While the qualifications for providing Peer Support within the program are founded upon lived experiences of homelessness, there are some skills and characteristics of providing support that have been identified for ensuring best practice for effective support with Peers.

Best Practices for Effective Peer Support

Connect
- Maintaining frequent contact (long term and ongoing support.)
- Developing and maintaining connections with community agencies, supports, programs, and services.

Share
- Sharing experiences and assisting in completing activities of the Peer's choice.

Respect
- Being sensitive to the individual, social, and cultural needs of Peers.
- Being considerate of individual rights, privacy, confidentiality, and personal boundaries.

Mentor
- Assisting in developing problem-solving, decision-making, and coping skills.
- Encouraging Peers to engage in primary and professional supports when desired.
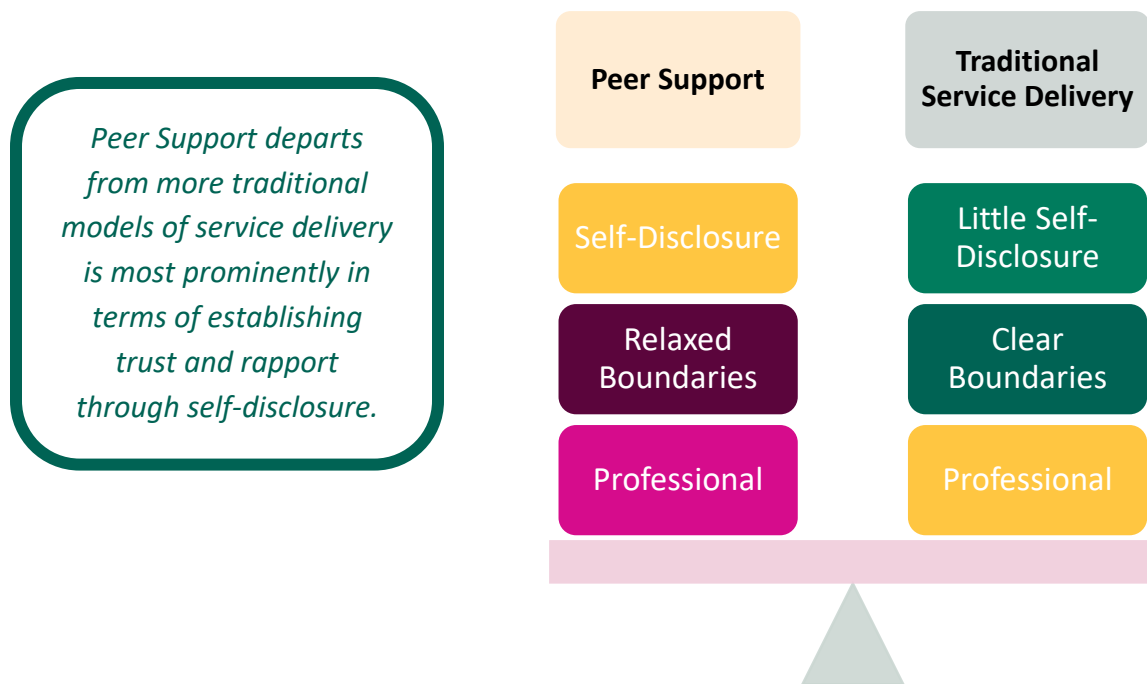
The Peer Support Relationship

Setting Boundaries

In all interpersonal relationships, setting boundaries is a common thread to establishing guidelines for: communication, personal space, personal information, and managing time. The limits to these boundaries can change or evolve depending on the type of relationship, the familiarity, and the situation. In Peer Support, setting clear boundaries is a necessary aspect of establishing a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship for working together. However, while Peer Supporters need to maintain a degree of professionalism in their interactions with Peers, the boundary setting within the Peer Support philosophy of service delivery will be different than more traditional client/worker interactions.

Peer Support departs from more traditional models of service delivery because it requires Peer Supporters and Peers to establish trust and rapport through self-disclosure. Traditionally, it is recommended that solid and firm boundaries have been set in support service relationships regarding levels of self-disclosure between workers and their clients. In Peer Support, more relaxed boundaries around self-disclosure can be the most effective method toward establishing trust and connection based on shared experience, mutual knowledge, and common skill sets.

> *Peer Support departs from more traditional models of service delivery is most prominently in terms of establishing trust and rapport through self-disclosure.*

Peer Support	Traditional Service Delivery
Self-Disclosure	Little Self-Disclosure
Relaxed Boundaries	Clear Boundaries
Professional	Professional

Although the boundaries may be more relaxed in the Peer Support relationship, both the Peer and the Peer Supporter should be comfortable setting limits on their time, personal information, and personal space, etc. It is good practice to discuss boundaries and set communication and confidentiality guidelines (also see Pathways of Communication and Confidentiality) as early as the first meeting between the Peer, Peer Supporter, and Housing Support worker.

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Matching Peers and Peer Supporters

Because Peer Supporters come to their role from a place of lived experience with homelessness, there may be times when a Peer Supporter is matched with a Peer they may know or have had some level of previous interaction within the Street Community. This is especially likely in regions and communities with smaller populations, or where Peer Supporters are providing support within the communities in which they have experienced homelessness.

During the Peer Housing Support pilot, it was determined that best practice would be to make every effort to match Peer Supporters with Peers whom they have had no previous personal relationship. However, there can be exceptions to this rule. In instances where a Peer and Peer Supporter may have been acquainted through their experiences at some point, but have no strong personal history, all parties connected to the Peer and Peer Supporter would discuss whether it would be a safe, and mutually beneficial match.

> *Because each Peer and Peer Supporter will be coming to this work with unique and individual needs and personal circumstances, the nature, dynamic, and development of the supportive relationship will differ from individual to individual.*

Initial Meeting

Once intake forms have been reviewed by Peer Supporters to determine a match, it is the Peer Supporter's responsibility to connect with the Housing Support Worker of the partnering agency to arrange for the best time and place to make an initial meeting with the Peer and the Housing Support Worker. During this initial meeting, introductions are made, and discussions are focused around:

- types of supports required
- times and places to connect for support
- and the unique and specific needs of the Peer

This may also be an appropriate time for the Peer Supporter to disclose their own personal experiences with homelessness and their recovery journey. It may be relevant to creating and establishing a rapport of common understanding, respect, and trust.

During this initial meeting, if the Peer and Peer Supporter decide they wish to receive support and move forward with the relationship, the Peer and Peer Supporter will arrange a second meeting. They typically meet once per week. Because each Peer and Peer Supporter will be coming to this work with unique and individual needs and personal circumstances, the nature, dynamic, and development of the supportive relationship will differ from individual to individual. Where one Peer may only need to meet with their Peer Supporter once per week for a coffee meeting to ensure housing stability, another Peer may require more intensive visits of a two to three-hour time period where multiple activities are engaged in and explored.

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Fostering the Peer Support Relationship

Regardless of what type of support an individual receives with their Peer Supporter, the most important aspect to understanding boundary setting within the Peer Support relationship is to ensure open communication around each individual's personal needs. These needs can include health concerns, environmental challenges and triggers, duration of visits, times of visits, personal space, language, personal beliefs, and subject matter discussed.

Peer and Peer Supporters Personal Needs

Health concerns

Subject matters discussed

Environmental challenges & triggers

Personal beliefs

Time & duration of visits

Language
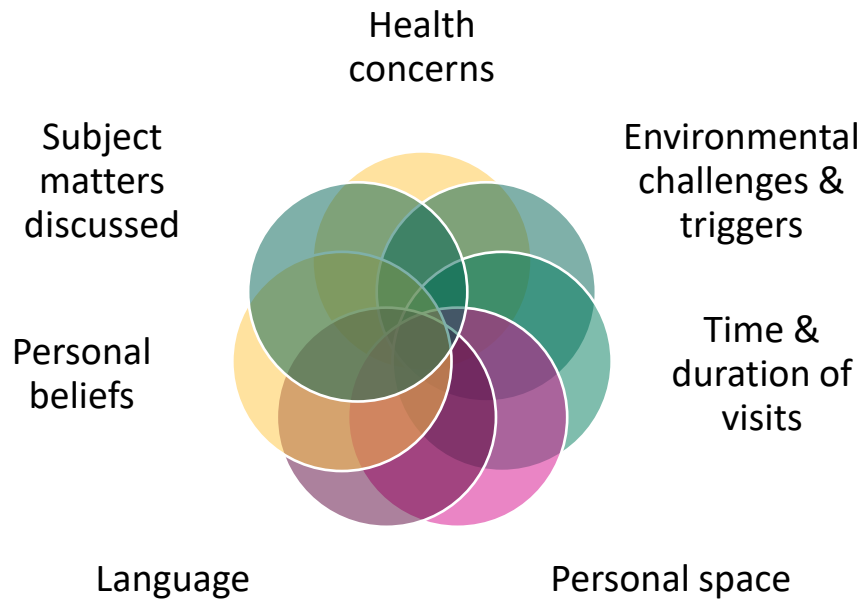
Personal space

It is a good practice for the Peer and Peer Supporter to discuss personal needs and boundaries during their initial, and first few visits together. It can also be useful and respectful to revisit boundaries around these areas as trust develops and the relationship evolves. To further reinforce respect, trust, and confidentiality within the Peer Support relationship and the program, the *Peer and Peer Supporter Agreement* (see sample form) has been a very successful tool for establishing boundaries in these areas.

Peer Supporters are provided a mobile phone. These phones provide a sense of security and safety while working in a very independent role in the community that can at times be somewhat isolating. It also allows them to remain in contact with their Peers, other members of the team, support staff, and community resources.

Using Flexible Schedules

Because Coalition Peer Supporters work on an hourly contract, they set their own schedules with their Peers, which requires them to independently navigate setting personal boundaries for communication. Peers and Peer Supporters can communicate outside of traditional business hours, and this has proven to be an excellent method of service delivery, especially on weekends and holidays, when most support service agencies are unavailable, and when people who are using these services may need them the most.

However, the nature of contract work and setting one's own hours for Peer support means that Peer Supporters need additional support and training on setting boundaries with time management and answering phone calls and text messages.

Find the Right Balance

Enough
Personal
Time

Meeting
Peer Support
Needs
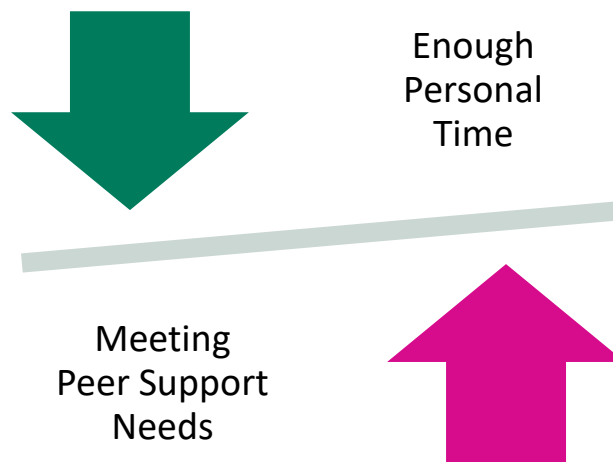
At times, Peer Supporters may struggle with knowing when it is okay to turn a phone off, or let a call go to voicemail. Because of this, and with support from one another, staff, and a Certified Clinical Counsellor, Peer Supporters have become extremely adept at building their own personal set of boundaries regarding time management, communication, and personal space with one another, and their Peers.

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Protecting the Peer and Peer Supporter

Most importantly, if at any given time a Peer or Peer Supporter are feeling their personal boundaries within the relationship have been violated in any way that could create harm for themselves or for the program, it is critical that they immediately bring concerns to support staff for intervention. In any interpersonal relationship, there are going to be times when personal boundaries are crossed, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It is the Peer Supporter's role as part of a Peer's support team to recognize and intervene when either they themselves, someone else, or environmental factors have disrupted a Peer's personal boundaries in a potentially harmful way.

Likewise, if at any time a Peer Supporter does not feel safe in their work, it is imperative that they confide immediately to support staff at the first available opportunity (also see Safety). Boundaries are individual and fluid as a relationship is introduced, established, and formed. It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of their own boundaries and the boundaries of others, and to intentionally create and maintain an environment of safety, trust, respect, and open communication to ensure the success of the Peer Support relationship.

> *Boundaries are individual, and fluid as a relationship is introduced, established, and formed. It is important that both the Peer and Peer Supporter find the balance that works well for their relationship.*
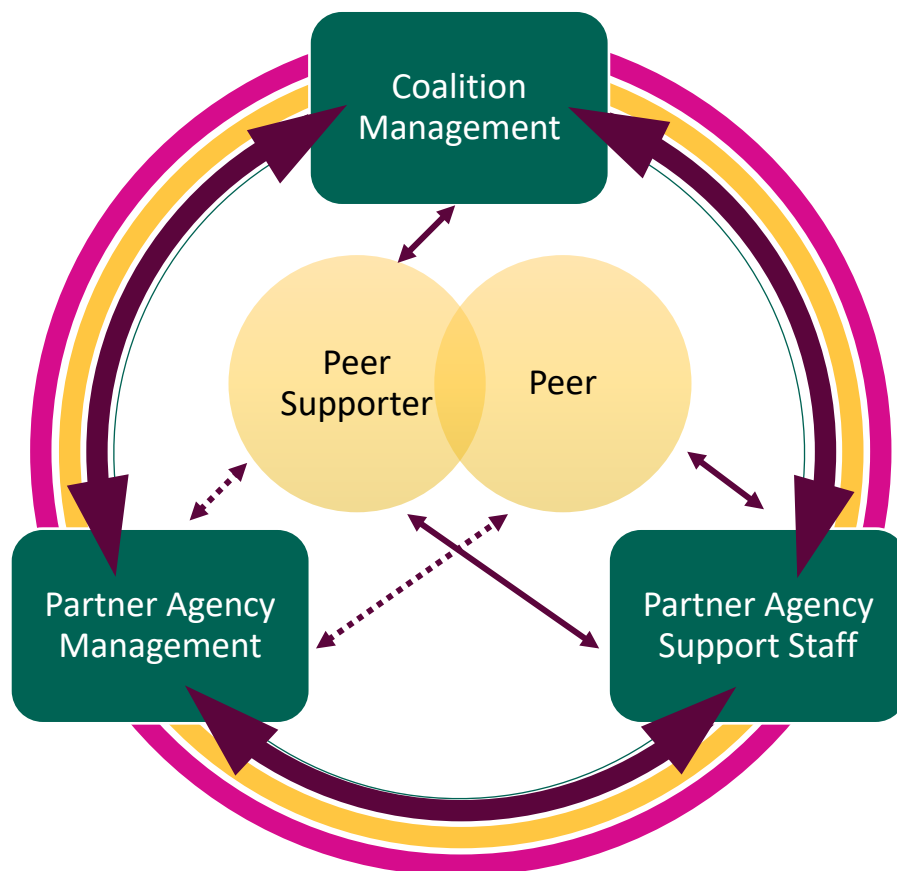
Pathways of Communication

Clear communication is essential for the safety and stability of all relationships associated with the program, and for the effective delivery of services. This includes:

- Peers
- Peer Supporters
- Program Coordinators
- Program Management
- Members of Partnering Agencies

Building trust and rapport within the Peer and Peer Supporter relationship is key to establishing a solid foundation of support.

The Peer and Peer Supporter relationship is at the center of these pathways, around which all other contributing and associated members can be found, providing a circle of support to ensure the stability of the supportive relationship. Having a clear understanding of confidentiality and privacy is a critical part of maintaining open and trustworthy pathways of communication (see also Setting Boundaries and Confidentiality.)

Pathways of Communication in the Peer Housing Support Program

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Additional Supportive Relationships

The structure of the Peer and Peer Supporter relationship is supported by the regular connection and contact between Peer and Housing Advocate, and between Peer Supporter and Peer Support Supervisor. These additional supportive relationships have proven to be extremely effective for both Peer and Peer Supporter to gain additional support and connection when experiencing issues related to conflict resolution (also see Conflict Resolution). The Peer Supporters' Community of Practice meetings, and monthly Community of Learning meetings have been very beneficial in the areas of sharing, learning, growth, and evolution in best practices regarding conflict resolution, setting boundaries, maintaining safety discussions and other challenges and learning that Peer Supporters discover. When Peer Supporters may be struggling with methods for best practice regarding current or potential conflict with a Peer, they are able to support one another with Peer Support, and they also gain further insight within the confidential meetings they share with a Certified Clinical Counselor once per month.

Confidentiality

Mutual confidentiality and respect are foundational building blocks for the success and maintenance of a healthy Peer and Peer Supporter relationship. Peer Supporters are engaging with Peers in a very empathetic and open way where feelings and experiences of vulnerability are a reality on both sides of the relationship. This needs to be balanced with an assurance of privacy and confidentiality in potentially high-risk and crisis circumstance. Peers need to understand that although they are entering a supportive relationship with someone with lived experience, that both people need to hold any shared information, thoughts, feelings, and life experiences in respect and trust. In turn, it is recommended that Peer Supporters be trained on healthy levels of self-disclosure, while also remembering that self-disclosure of experiences in this relationship dynamic can be highly successful in the areas of establishing trust and rapport with Peers.

Establish Clear Expectations

Although building trust and rapport within the Peer and Peer Supporter relationship is key to establishing a solid foundation of support, it is necessary to set expectations for confidentiality. Establishing explicit guidelines around mutual confidentiality is key to building trust. Confidentiality is something that is discussed in detail within the first few meetings between Peer Supporter and Peer, and it can be regularly re-established and reassured as the relationship develops over time. This will ensure common understanding and respect for one another's private and personal information.

> *Establishing explicit guidelines around mutual confidentiality is key to building trust.*

Peer and Peer Supporter Agreement Form

Using the *Peer and Peer Supporter Agreement Form* (see sample form) is a helpful tool to introduce confidentiality in the first couple of meetings with a Peer. This form provides some direction for the relationship and can be a good way to frame initial discussions around expectations and confidentiality.

The *Peer and Peer Supporter Agreement* establishes:
- Roles and responsibilities that focus on creating a relationship that provides Peer-centered support
- A mutual agreement of a respectful and confidential supportive relationship that maintains personal boundaries

Peer Supporters confidentially keep the *Peer and Peer Supporter Agreement Form* with their files. This form can used as a living document that can be revisited at pivotal turning points in the supportive relationship, or when needs and desires by the Peer for types of support have changed.

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Sharing with Peer Supporter Community

Peer Supporters are encouraged to maintain a confidential relationship with their supervisor. They are free to discuss challenges, concerns, or questions that may arise at any given time with their work in a supportive environment. Peer Supporters are also free to engage in mutual and confidential discussion and disclosure of challenges, concerns, or questions at any given time in the environment of the weekly Peer Supporter Community of Practice meetings, and the professionally guided and confidential monthly Community of Learning meetings.

Sharing Personal Information

There may be times when it could be imperative to seek outside assistance from members of the surrounding program support network for supporting Peers effectively. In these cases, it is best practice for Peer Supporters to consult with Peers before passing on personal information, and vice versa. The *Release of Information/Protection of Privacy Forms* have proven to be effective for indicating what a Peer Supporter has permission to share with others outside of the supportive relationship (such as a threat of harm to self or others as required by law).

Release of Information/Protection of Privacy Form

The groundwork for establishing these tangible levels of confidentiality, expectations regarding a respectful and supportive relationship, and a foundation of trust, have been established in the PHS Program.

The *Release of Information/Protection of Privacy Form* (see sample form) outlines:
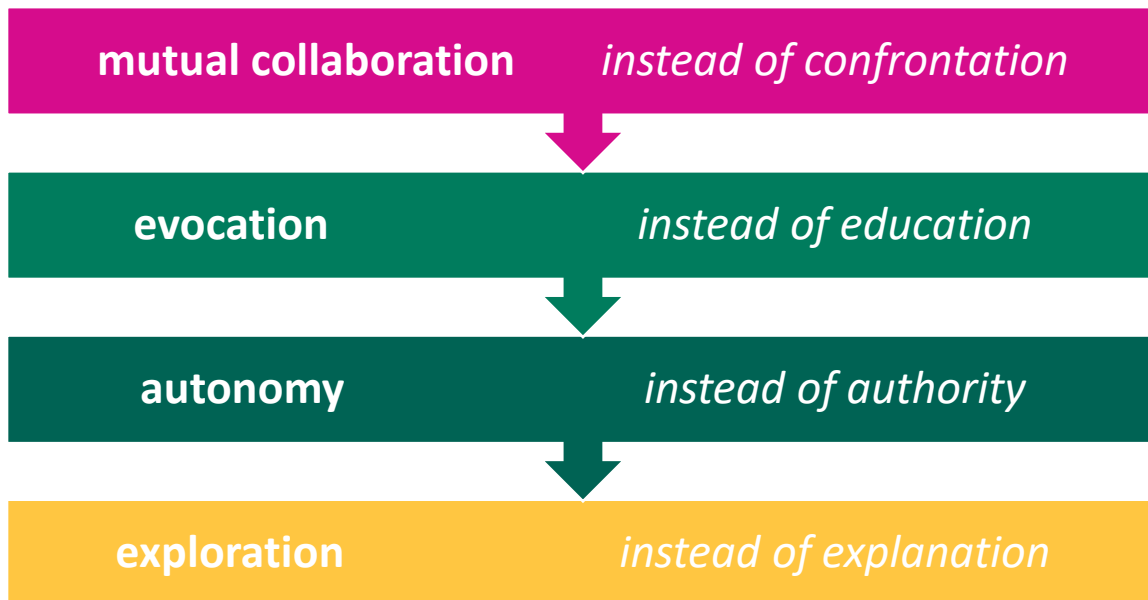- Personal information gathered and why
- Evaluation processes
- Personal information shared during meetings
- Information that must be shared if disclosed by Peers in accordance with local laws

Peer Supporters share the Release of Information/Protection of Privacy Form with their direct supervisor.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing is a discussion tool that allows a participant to explore what they want to change in their lives and potential challenges, both internal and external, that may prevent them from making a desired change. Motivational interviewing is about asking questions that allow Peers to seek their own personal motivation for change, and to understand and engage with changes at their own pace, when they are ready. Allowing motivation for change to come from within increases the likelihood that a Peer is ready, committed, and prepared for any change they are wishing to create.

The key elements of motivational interviewing include:

mutual collaboration	*instead of confrontation*
evocation	*instead of education*
autonomy	*instead of authority*
exploration	*instead of explanation*

Empowering Peers to Changes

Training Peer Supporters in motivational interviewing can help them to recognize that Peers who want to make change in their lives approach Peer Support at different levels of readiness for change. Using motivational interviewing skills can help a Peer Supporter to increase a Peer's self-awareness of potential barriers related to a life change. Peer Supporters can use this technique to coach their Peer to:

- reflect on potential barriers and risks in relation to housing and support
- find resources that will help overcome these challenges
- and personalize the support for their own journey

Motivational interviewing instills hope, personal empowerment, and positivity around the potential for desired change. This method empowers Peers to individually and independently recognize the potential for positive change in their own personal lives, at their own pace, and to understand how they desire to make that change happen. Peer Supporters should ensure that a Peer understands that the personal changes they make are a direct result of their own personal growth and empowerment, and they should be celebrated at all times for any efforts to learn and grow, no matter how big or small, and no matter whether it is a positive or negative experience from which that learning derives.

A Peer-Centered Approach

Creators of the Peer Housing Support Program have chosen not to focus on formalized goal setting. Instead, the focus is on providing the right resources and extra supports to Peers when they are ready to make specific changes. This creates an environment of personal potential for Peers who are wishing to make changes in their lives. This practice places the Peer in the center of that decision-making and ensures that a Peer is responsible for when and how those changes are made. Often, it has been discovered that goal setting happens organically, and by Peers themselves, when they are ready.

To make this method effective, it is critical that program participation does not rely on any obligatory behavior changes (see Harm Reduction). It is the responsibility of Peer Supporters to provide the same focused level of support for Peers at all levels of their recovery journeys through homelessness to stably housed. Some Peers may be wishing to make steady and rapid changes, where some may be more contemplative, content to receive support where they are at. As best practice for housing stability, Peer Support should be provided for Peers no matter where they find themselves on how ready they are for change.

> *The personal changes Peers make are a direct result of their own personal growth and empowerment.*

Learning Motivational Interviewing

There are many resources online and in print related to the skillset of motivational interviewing techniques. It is highly encouraged that additional training or resources are consulted to assist Peer Supporters with learning these concepts, because they nay be new to those who are entering into Peer Support. They are an excellent skillset for those who wish to enhance their knowledge in the field and develop a deeper personal awareness and potential for growth in recovery with their own experiences of homelessness.

Local Services

Being aware of and understanding local community resources and supports is a large facet of the supportive relationship within Peer Support. Because Peer Supporters are coming from a place of lived experience with homelessness, they often possess an inherent and unique knowledge and skillset as a baseline of reference for sharing with Peers.

System Navigation

System navigation is a skill that Peer Supporters have naturally acquired over time through life experience. This includes not only knowing what resources and supports exists, but also which may be most appropriate and how to efficiently navigate entry and access to these services. Using this skill, Peer Supporters can share these experiences and skills effectively with Peers to ensure increased stability and housing success through the recovery journey.

Create a Local Resource Guide

While lived experience provides a strong background for understanding various types of resources and supports that are available in the community, it is still necessary to provide a formal reference list or community resource guide for Peer Supporters as part of their training package. There will likely be times when the Peer needs to seek out and establish outside resources and community supports that neither the Peer Supporter nor Peer are aware of.

A local resource guide can be a document that is built over time. Peer Supporters are encouraged during their visits with Peers in the community to gather any information regarding additional agencies, services, or programs that may be new to them, or that others on their team and their Peers may benefit from learning about. It is a good practice to continue to expand and review content in the guide to make sure that it is current, relevant, and up to date. The Coalition publishes an annual *Street Survival Guide* which has become a useful resource both for people experiencing homelessness and people who are looking to provide support. This guide, like the Peer Support Program, was developed by People with Lived Experience for People with Lived Experience.

Suggested Topics for a Local Guidebook

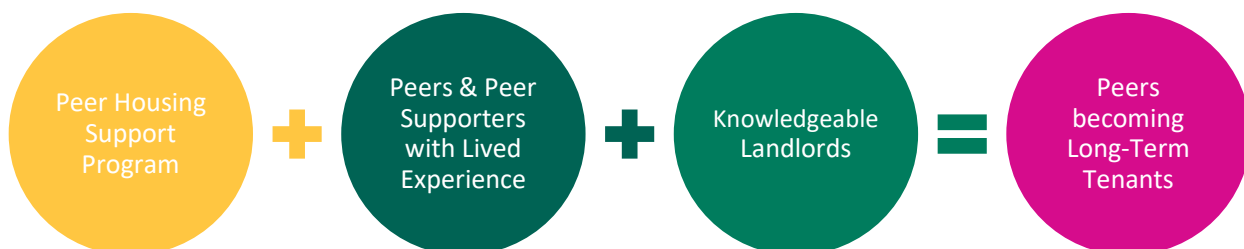| Tips for system navigations	Services	Contacts	Food resources	Recreation resources

Tenant-Landlord Relations

The Coalition has adopted a "Housing First" philosophy to addressing homelessness, underpinned by complementary prevention strategies. The Peer Housing Support Program is a critical part of this philosophy in holistically supporting and empowering those who wish to move from homelessness to find and retain safe, stable, and meaningful housing. The Peer Supporter can be a coach who supports the Peer through the process of finding, moving, and creating a home. The Peer Supporter's lived experience in navigating the system, and becoming safely and stably housed themselves, provides critical firsthand knowledge that supports the Peer through this process. Together, they can anticipate logistical, emotional, personal, or legal challenges that may arise, and work to avoid or resolve them through the lens of the Peer Housing Support program. Central to a successful Peer Housing Support program is developing and supporting good relationships between Peer tenants and their landlords.

Ready to Rent BC Association works with both tenants and landlords to lay the groundwork for a positive long-term relationship. For example, they offer a RentSmart course that Peers and Peer Supporters can take to prepare them for successful tenancy. The course teaches them to assess their needs, understand tenant/landlord legal rights and responsibilities, money management, communications skills, and basic maintenance.

Ready to Rent also offers a RentSmart Landlord course about the benefits of renting to tenants who have obtained a RentSmart Certificate. The certificate demonstrates that participants are committed to learning how to be responsible tenant who understands their rights and responsibilities. The course looks at rentals, not only from the perspective of the tenant, but also from the perspective of the landlord to build common understanding between all parties. The goal of incorporating training such as this into the Peer Housing Support Program is to build long term, positive relationships between Peers and their landlords.

Peer Housing Support Program **+** Peers & Peer Supporters with Lived Experience **+** Knowledgeable Landlords **=** Peers becoming Long-Term Tenants

Safety

When Peer Supporters are providing in-home visits and mobile services in the community, safety planning is a priority. Peer Supporters providing in, and out-of-home visits must always consider their own safety and well-being as well as that of their Peers. This applies to:

| In-home assessment | Problem-solving | Crisis intervention techniques |
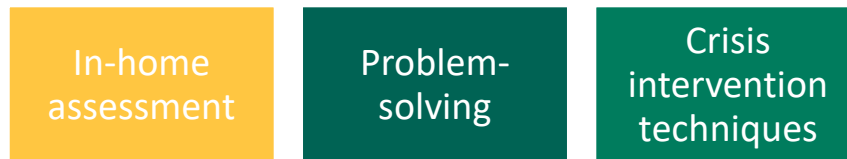
Setting clear boundaries in relationship codes of conduct regarding visit settings and observation of regular visit schedules is important (also see The Peer Support Relationship). Maintaining contact with Peers between visits is also a way to increase levels of mutual safety through communication between Peer and Peer Supporter.

Safety Training

It is recommended that Peer Supporters are trained on processes and procedures related to planning visits with Peers. Preparing Peer Supporters with training will empower their knowledge about potential risks and mitigate worries they may have about certain situations. Training will create an awareness of potential risks that may occur in the environment, through the behaviours of self and others, and general surroundings. .

Being Aware of Potential Risks

Behaviours of self and others

Environment

General surroundings

Potential Risks
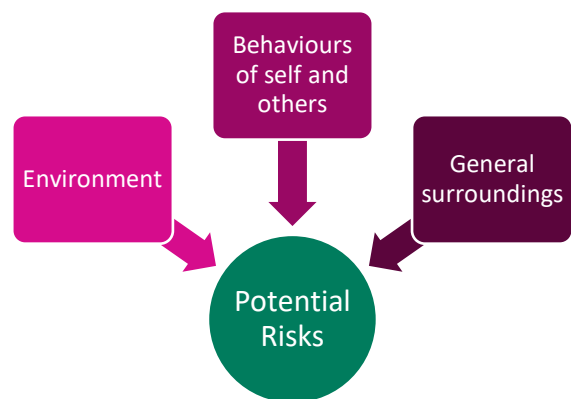
Mobile Phones

Peer Support via text message or by phone can diminish feelings of isolation for Peers and increase feelings of personal safety and trust between visits.

For the Peer Housing Support Team, the Coalition has assigned each Peer Supporter with a work mobile phone. This phone provides Peer Supporters with a more secure and confidential method to communicate with Peers for making appointments. These phones provide the opportunity for Peer and Peer Supporter to maintain remote contact between visits when emergency or crisis circumstances arise, or when one or either person is unable to participate in a face to face visit. Peer Support via text message or by phone can diminish feelings of isolation for Peers and increase feelings of personal safety and trust between visits.

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Safety First

Safety measures can vary depending upon agency protocol, but regardless of safety rules and regulations, it is critical that Peer Supporters and Peers understand that they are never obligated to place themselves into situations or circumstances where they feel unsafe or where there is a risk of personal harm.

No member of the Peer Housing Support Team is obligated by any sort of rule or regulation to place themselves in situations where they are feeling at risk, whether that is physically, emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually. Best practice is to maintain a solid sense of self-awareness regarding holistic safety, not only for Peer Supporters, but also in environments or situations where there is a concern for the holistic safety of their Peers. It is a Peer Supporter's responsibility to be aware of their own personal feelings of safety and be aware and empathic towards the safety of their Peers by considering potential physical, emotional, psychological, and environmental challenges and triggers whenever they are working together.

Safety is Holistic

Physical

Spiritual

Safety includes...

Emotional

Psychological

Safety for both Peers and Peer Supporters can further be established and maintained by allowing for regular contact and the introduction of an 'open door' communication policy between a Peer, Housing Advocate, Peer Supporter, and Peer Support supervisor. In supportive relationships, the potential for spontaneous and acute crisis or ethically challenging circumstances can be high, so creating feelings of safety within the Peer and Peer Supporter relationship is improved when both a Peer and Peer Supporter understand that they can communicate freely with members of mutual agency staff regarding any challenges they may experience within the Peer Support relationship.

> *Peers and Peer Supporters are not obligated to place themselves into situations or circumstances where they feel unsafe or where there is a risk of personal harm.*

Conflict Resolution

In any type of interpersonal relationship, the potential for conflict is a distinct possibility. With the dynamic of the Peer and Peer Supporter relationship, training around conflict is most beneficial if approached through the lens of conflict resolution. There is a common myth that exists in our society that conflict is a negative experience, and that it should be avoided or feared. In a supportive relationship, conflict can be beneficial to clear the air; to elaborate on personal differences, perspectives and worldviews; and to strengthen communication and direction. However, for conflict to be beneficial, it must be conducted in a respectful way by all parties involved.

> *Respectful conflict can be beneficial to clear the air; to elaborate on personal differences, perspectives, and worldviews; and it can be used to strengthen communication and direction.*

Conflict Resolution and Setting Boundaries

Conflict resolution closely relates to setting personal boundaries and maintaining open communication pathways (see also The Peer Support Relationship and Pathways of Communication). It relies on mindfulness of self, others, and of one's physical environment. These are all important subjects to consider when incorporating conflict resolution training into a Peer Housing Support program. Using group exercises and discussion themes can be helpful for exploring these topics.

The structure of the Peer and Peer Supporter relationship is further supported by the regular connection and contact between Peer and Housing Advocate worker, and between Peer Supporter and Peer Support Supervisor. These additional supportive relationships have proven to be extremely effective for both Peer and Peer Supporter to gain additional support and connection when experiencing issues related to conflict resolution. The Peer Supporters' Community of Practice meetings, and monthly Community of Learning meetings have been very beneficial in the areas of sharing, learning, growth, and evolution in best practices and training for conflict resolution discussions. When Peer Supporters may be struggling with methods for best practice regarding current or potential conflict with a Peer, they are able to support one another with Peer Support, and to gain further insight within the confidential meetings they share with a Certified Clinical Counselor once per month.

Reminders on respectful boundaries and communication styles have been included in the *Peer and Peer Supporter Agreement Form* (see sample form) in which both Peer and Peer Supporter agree to work and sign off on:

> *work(ing) together with behaviours and spoken words which will create an environment of respect, compassion, understanding, shared responsibility, personal boundaries, and confidentiality.*

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Conflict Resolution Training

The Peer Housing Support Team was fortunate to participate in a free community training workshop entitled, "Managing Hostile Interactions", provided by Homelessness Services Association of B.C. This conflict resolution workshop was conducted through a recovery lens, with a strong focus on skill-building exercises, self-reflection, and group discussion. Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training is also an effective and informative way to strengthen knowledge and personal skills around conflict resolution in the workplace and while working with vulnerable individuals.

If you are initiating a program start-up with limited funding, it is highly recommended to seek out free local resources in your area for formal training and workshops. Additionally, there are many free online webinars that Peer Supporters can participate in to further support their knowledge and skillsets in the area of conflict resolution training.

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction is a philosophy, social movement, and best practice that encompasses a continuum of interventions that includes education, advocacy, minimizing risk of harm, and person-centered support.

Harm Reduction Interventions
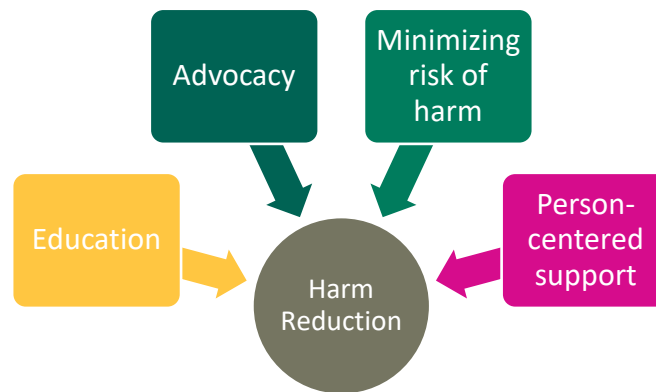
The goal of harm reduction is to:

- reduce the risk of harm for individuals
- empower individuals to safely engage in high risk behaviours
- increase awareness, knowledge, understanding, and safety for communities at large

Applying this approach effectively when providing support with individuals may require a shift in worldview and traditional practice, especially as it relates to the medical models of housing and supports for those who use substances.

Harm Reduction within Peer Support

Best practice within the Peer Housing Support Program is to provide support with a harm reduction approach. This is a person-centered methodology that is devoid of judgement. Peers access to, and support within, the program is not dependent upon their lifestyle choices and practices. However, Peer Supporters need to consider their own safety and stability, as well as the safety of their Peers in their daily work. This can range from everything within supporting a Peer to access a safe consumption site, to providing information on community resources that can benefit a Peer's overall health, safety, and well-being. Harm reduction, as a philosophy, can be applied to many different types of circumstances within the life of a Peer, including, but not exclusive to, substance use.

Overdose Intervention

In response to the rising need for awareness and skills training with the current and ongoing opioid crisis and drug poisoning that has affected local communities at every level, Peer Supporters who work with the Peer Housing Support Program have received formal and professional training with overdose intervention techniques.

Intervention Training

Training was provided to the team by Aids Vancouver Island, and was conducted as an interactive group session where Peer Supporters were trained educationally, and with hands-on skills to understand and recognize what to do when faced with supporting any individual in the community who may be experiencing an overdose.

Peer Supporters were supplied with their own Naloxone kits, and received education and resources on overdose interventions, harm reduction supplies, and were also provided with protocols and best practices for engaging and approaching those in the community who may be at risk, and/or experiencing an overdose.

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Culturally Specific Support

Indigenous Experiences with Homelessness and Housing

Indigenous Peoples are overrepresented within the Canadian Street Community population. In some communities in Canada, up to 90% of the homeless demographic of community members identify as Indigenous, and on a national level, Indigenous Peoples are 8 times more likely to experience homelessness in their lifetimes than those who identify with other cultural ancestries (Menzies, 2010; Belanger, Awosoga & Weasel Head, 2013).

Indigenous Peoples who are experiencing homelessness are not simply attempting to survive without the safety of a roof, four walls, and a door, and experiences of Indigenous homelessness mean something much more holistic in nature than a lack of adequate physical housing. The effects of colonization underlie the experiences of homelessness for all Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous homelessness has been created by the systematic and ongoing process of genocide that has been forced upon the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples of Canada from the time of first contact with settlers to the present day. According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, there are twelve specific dimensions to experiences of Indigenous homelessness, as articulated by Indigenous Peoples across Canada (Thistle, 2017).

12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness

Historic Displacement	Contemporary Geographic Separation	Spiritual Disconnection	Mental Disruption and Imbalance
Cultural Disintegration and Loss	Overcrowding	Relocation and Mobility	Going Home
Nowhere To Go	Escaping or Evading Harm	Emergency Crisis	Climatic Refugee

Indigenous Community Consultations

To effect active change within the movement of Reconciliation, the Coalition has prioritized Indigenous engagement, consultation, and employment throughout the development and implementation of the Peer Housing Support program to facilitate the provision of appropriate cultural supports for Indigenous Peers who wish to receive them. The guiding values for the Peer Housing Support program were created through direct engagement and consultation with Indigenous Street Community members. The intentional employment of Indigenous Peer Supporters on the team has not only a strong sense of diversity and inclusion, but the very nature of support that has been achieved between Indigenous Peer Supporters and Indigenous Peers has increased relationships that have increased a sense of belonging, safety, and stability for all within the realm of the experiences of Indigenous homelessness.

The best practice for creating a regional and culturally specific Peer Housing Support program is to respectfully, meaningfully, and actively engage and participate with members of the local Indigenous Street Community before the development, planning, and implementation of the program. This program has been created to contribute to Reconciliation and healing through Peer Support for all Indigenous Peoples, regardless of cultural affiliation. The specific needs and types of supports received will vary based on region and culture and in accordance with the Traditional Territory in which the program is being started. Within urban centers especially, there will be a diverse demographic of Indigenous Peoples with varied lived experiences of homelessness; many of whom may have been greatly displaced from their Traditional Lands and Cultures. This program honours all Indigenous Peoples regardless of cultural affiliation or identification.

Indigenous Peer Support staff, under the guidance and direction of the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, consulted with Indigenous Street Community Members in Victoria during the development phase of the Peer Housing Support Program to determine the ways in which the Indigenous Community would like to see the program implemented. Indigenous Street Community members were asked a series of questions regarding the development of the Peer Housing Support program in relation to how they would choose to receive support:

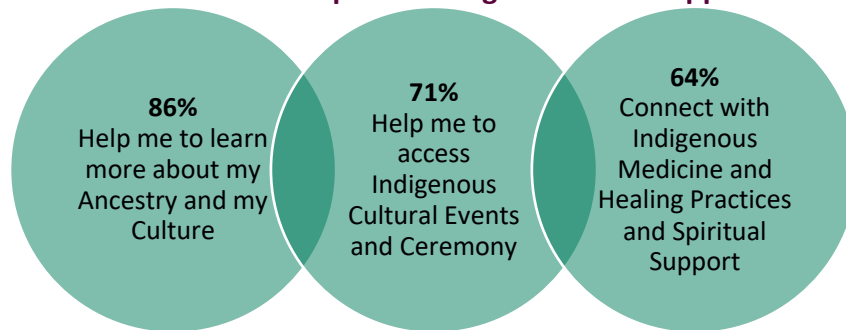- Need for an Indigenous Peer Supporter
- Specific supports that Indigenous Community Members were wishing to access
- Barriers that Indigenous Community Members face when trying to access safe and stable housing
- Suggested methods that an Indigenous Peer Supporter could use to provide support for Indigenous Community Members who were facing barriers and challenges with accessing safe and stable housing.

This feedback from the local Indigenous Street Community was compiled in *The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness: Peer Housing Support Project: Aboriginal Street Community Survey Report* (2017). Some key finding included the following information.

Is it important to receive support from an Indigenous Peer Supporter?

57%
Yes

Specific types of supports Indigenous Street Community members wished to access with the help of an Indigenous Peer Supporter

86%
Help me to learn more about my Ancestry and my Culture

71%
Help me to access Indigenous Cultural Events and Ceremony

64%
Connect with Indigenous Medicine and Healing Practices and Spiritual Support

Barriers Indigenous Street Community members faced when attempting to access safe and stable housing

79%
Lack of affordable housing

57%
Isolation

50%
Unsafe or unhealthy living conditions
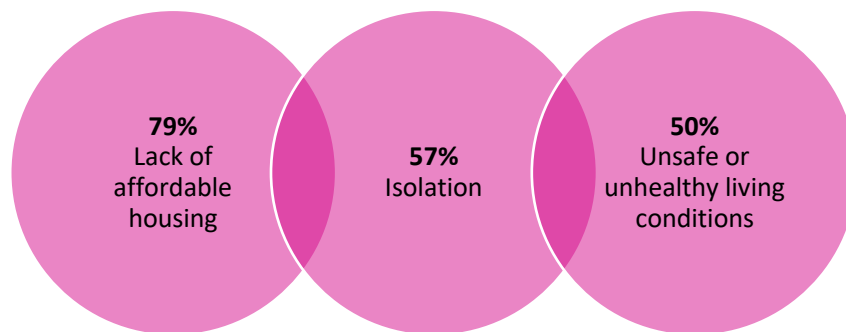
How could an Indigenous Peer Supporter could be of help when Indigenous Street Community members are faced with barriers and challenges?

79%
Help with bus tickets, coffee, or lunch

71%
Help me stay active with recreational events, being outdoors, and connected to nature

64%
Help me learn about resources, programs, and community centers specific to my cultural needs

64%
Talk and share stories and experiences

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Culturally Specific Engagement

Because feedback from each community and region in terms of specific cultural needs will vary from place to place, it is imperative that local Indigenous Elders, Indigenous Community organizations, and most importantly, Indigenous Street Community members are respectfully and meaningfully engaged and consulted with prior to program development. These consultations require that program creators take time to form meaningful relationships with local Indigenous Elders, Indigenous Community organizations, and most importantly, Indigenous Street Community members to ensure that local Indigenous Peoples are meaningfully engaged and consulted, in accordance with correct protocols for each community, culture, and place.

Investing time to meaningfully engage Indigenous Peoples prior to the development, planning, and implementation stages of all aspects of the Peer Housing Support program will create a more successful and respectful program. The program will be more culturally specific, engage the communities it most needs to reach, and meet the holistic needs of the community. This is not only considered to be best practice for ensuring appropriate cultural supports for the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, it is a basic requirement for action to ensure that we are moving toward creating a nation-wide culture of Reconciliation through our relationships, our words, and our actions.

Section References

Belanger, Y., Awosoga O., Weasel Head G (2013). *Homelessness, Urban Aboriginal People, and the Need for a National Enumeration* [Journal article].
https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/aps/index.php/aps/article/view/19006

Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (2017). *The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness: Peer Housing Support Project: Aboriginal Street Community Survey Report*.
https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/housing-pdf/housing-planning-and-programs/2018-pit-count---community-report---final---july-19.pdf?sfvrsn=a92ee2ca_2

Menzies, Peter (2010). *Aboriginal Homelessness* [Video presentation]. https://vimeo.com/15973596

Thistle, J. (2017). *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada.*
https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness

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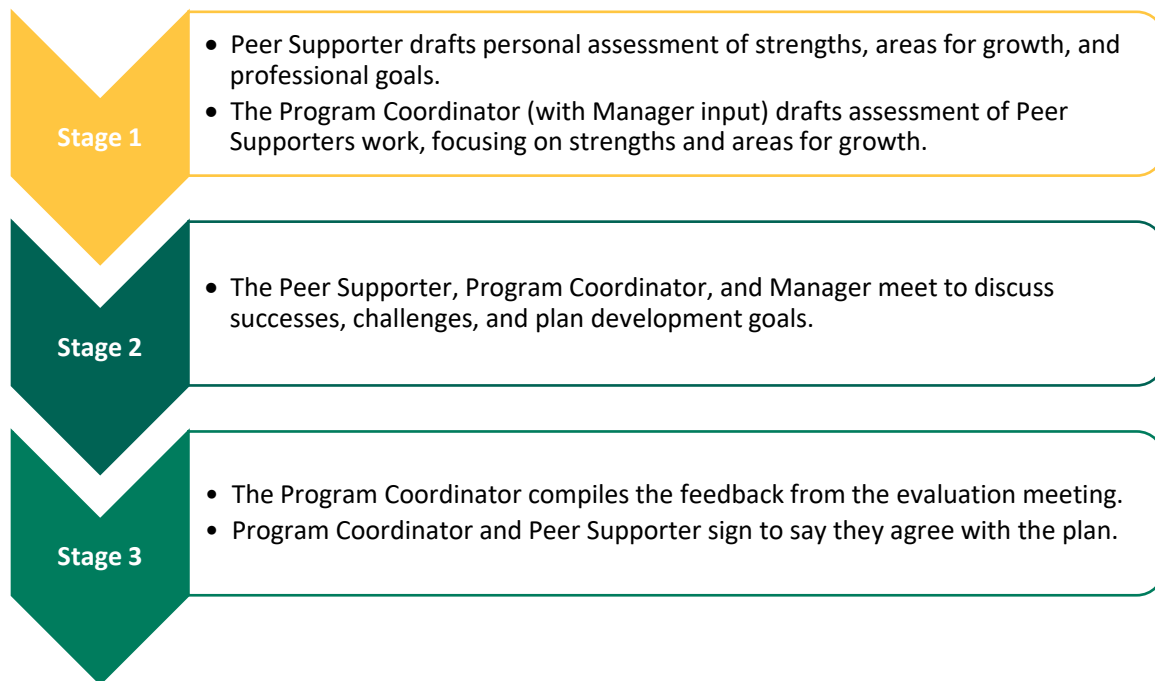homelessness
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Performance Review

Formal and Informal Reviews

Performance review is both an on-going informal and a formal process. Informal review includes conversations, meetings, and ongoing feedback between the Peer Supporter and the Program Coordinator. A formal review is usually every 6 months, or halfway through a contract if it is for less than 6 months. During the formal evaluation, all parties can reflect on a Peer Supporter's successes in tandem with personally identified areas for growth. This review includes setting professional goals with Peer Supporters so they can continue to improve and develop their skills.

3 Stages of the Formal Review Process

Stage 1
- Peer Supporter drafts personal assessment of strengths, areas for growth, and professional goals.
- The Program Coordinator (with Manager input) drafts assessment of Peer Supporters work, focusing on strengths and areas for growth.

Stage 2
- The Peer Supporter, Program Coordinator, and Manager meet to discuss successes, challenges, and plan development goals.

Stage 3
- The Program Coordinator compiles the feedback from the evaluation meeting.
- Program Coordinator and Peer Supporter sign to say they agree with the plan.

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Inclusionary Employment Practices Review for Organization

The 10 questions below were presented by the Canadian Lived Experience Advisory Council at the 2018 Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference as part of an Inclusion Toolkit. Employers are recommended to ask Staff with Lived Experience these questions to gauge their employment practices. These questions can be used during the informal or formal review process.

1. Is there open communication?	2. Are you being valued as a person?	3. Are your skills being utilized?	4. Do you have an open-door policy with your supervisor/manager?
5. Do you debrief daily with your manager?	6. Is your voice being heard to its full potential?	7. Do you feel equal to others at the Board level and within the organization?	8. Are you being compensated equally?
9. Are there other areas you would like to be involved in?	10. Are your needs being met?	11. Is there anything missing?	

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Additional Resources

Lived Experience Advisory Council

Nothing about us without us:
Seven principles for leadership & inclusion of people with lived experience of homelessness
https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/LEAC-7principles-final.pdf

Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness

Greater Victoria Street Survival Guide
https://victoriahomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019_SSG.10.2.pdf

Ready to Rent BC Association

RentSmart Course
https://www.readytorentbc.org/rentsmart-tenants/

RentSmart Landlords Course
https://www.readytorentbc.org/rentsmart-landlords/

Peer Support Resources
https://www.readytorentbc.org/peer-support/

Peer Support Case Study
https://www.readytorentbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Peer-Support-Case-Study-Final-1.pdf

Residential Tenancy Act FAQ
https://www.readytorentbc.org/residential_tenancy_act/

Related Articles and Blogs

Aboriginal Homelessness [Video presentation]. https://vimeo.com/15973596

Burnout Prevention and Treatment: Techniques for Dealing with Overwhelming Stress
https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/burnout-prevention-and-recovery.htm/

Community of Practice
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice

Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada.
https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness

Homelessness, Urban Aboriginal People, and the Need for a National Enumeration.
https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/aps/index.php/aps/article/view/19006

Landlord Engagement Toolkit
https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/LANDLORD%20TOOLKIT_ENG_web.pdf

Working with Indigenous children, families, and communities: Lessons from practice

https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/working-indigenous-children-families-and-communities

Understand the Nuts and Bolts of Boundaries

https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/set-boundaries#boundary-basics-and-benefits

Recommended Training

First Aid Level 1 (Required)

All Peer Housing Support Staff should have First Aid Level C. If this is a barrier to employment, the agency should consider supporting candidates to acquire the certification that is required. Forming connections with local employment centers can be extremely beneficial for creating networking opportunities between the agency and the program to better support individuals to accessing desired employment and training opportunities.

Naloxone Training (Required)

Naloxone Training is offered by Aids Vancouver Island and other agencies.

http://avi.org/

Understanding the Village (Recommended)

This workshop is an important part of educating ourselves on Indigenous experiences with ongoing colonization and for adopting best practices toward actively engaging in understanding and promoting the Reconciliation philosophy and movement. The Blanket Exercise, or similar training on Reconciliation is recommended for Peer Housing Support Staff, not as a requirement for becoming an employee, but to attend at a point when opportunity arises. This is a great activity for a Peer Support Worker to attend with a Peer.

http://villageworkshopseries.com/

Managing Hostile Interactions (Recommended)

This was a free training event that was conducted by the Homelessness Services Association of B.C.
Service providers often work with upset, angry, and confused clients. HSABC's Managing Hostile Interactions workshop helps participants gain the skills necessary to work with difficult clients. Participants learn proven strategies to decrease stressful situations and increase the possibilities of working more effectively with challenging clients. Participants learn through skill-building exercises, self-reflection, and group discussion. As a participant you will: define hostility and examine its forms and dynamics, identify factors that increase potential of hostility occurring, develop skills for managing reactions to hostility, explore techniques to effectively confront and set limits on hostile behaviours, examine methods for defusing hostility, enhance personal safety in potentially violent situations, and develop strategies for effective team responding.

http://hsa-bc.ca/training-and-events/full-day-training-descriptions-instructors-their-bios/

Mental Health First Aid (Recommended)

Workplace first aid includes mental health. In a recent major Canadian study, 82% of responding organizations ranked mental health conditions in their top three causes of short-term disability (72% for long-term). 30% of all short and long-term disability claims are due to mental health problems and illnesses. The average responding organization reported spending more than $10.5 million annually on absence claims. In 2011, lost productivity due to absenteeism and presenteeism (present but less than fully productive at work) due to mental health problems and illnesses was approximately $6 Billion. Outcomes of Mental Health First Aid include:

- Significantly greater recognition of the most common mental health illnesses and problems
- Decreased social distance from people with mental health illnesses or problems
- Increased confidence in providing help to others
- Demonstrated increase in helpful actions

https://www.mhfa.ca/en/workplace-programs

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Sample Forms and Templates

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Partnership Agreement:
Peer Housing Support Program

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Between:

Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society [Coalition]
1125 Pandora Avenue
Victoria, BC V8T 1J3

And:

_____ [Partner]

The need for increased peer support within the homelessness system of care in Greater Victoria was initially identified by the Social Inclusion Advisory Committee (SIAC) of the Coalition to End Homelessness in 2015 and is corroborated by current practices within health services and research. This program addresses the need in Greater Victoria for increased strengths-based housing support. Peer housing support is modelled after peer-led initiatives in mental health services but is specific to meeting the needs of people who are experiencing homelessness.

The Peer Housing Support Program is a partnership between Peer Housing Support Workers, Peers, the Coalition to End Homelessness and participating housing organizations. The Partner Agencies are invaluable in identifying suitable peers for the program. The Community Outreach Manager will liaise with these partnering organizations to determine potential Peers, at which time the matching process can begin.

The Coalition agrees to:

Administer the Peer Housing Support Program, including:

- Hiring, training, and supporting Peer Supporters (individuals who have experienced homelessness, are now stably housed, and have the training and desire to support others in moving from homelessness to housed)
- Providing specific instructions on the documentation, authorization and criteria required for Peer matching to Partner Agencies and Peer Supporters
- Providing Peer Supporters with the support (a Community of Practice, ongoing training and professional development opportunities) and resources (training documents, coffee cards, bus tickets, etc.) to support Peers;
- Providing reporting templates, work sheets (e.g. Goal Setting and Tracking) and other documentation for the successful delivery of support to Peers;
- Providing program information materials (e.g. posters or rack cards) to Partner Agencies to support recruitment of program Peers;
- Maintaining secure, confidential records of the support delivered through the program

ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES contained in the signed Release of Information form and for:
- o   Ongoing training of the Peer Support team;
- o   Reporting to funders;
- Completing year-end reporting to funders and partner agencies.

The Partner agrees to:

- Identify in advance* Peers (clients of the Partner Agency) who:
  - o   are moving from unsheltered, emergency sheltered or in transitional housing to long-term housing;
  - o   express an interest in being supported through the Peer Support Program;
- Connect Peer Supporters with Housing Support Workers for the initial meeting with the Peer and for ongoing communication as needed and as agreed to by the Peer in their signed Release of Information form;
- Share any safety concerns related to the Peer directly with their Peer Supporter;
- Review application documentation from Peers to ensure completeness;
- Communicate any concerns about Peer Supporter behaviour or safety immediately to the Community Outreach Manager;
- Communicate any concerns about the efficacy of the program to the Community Development Manager;
- Upon request, submit qualitative program evaluation for the continuous improvement of the program and for reports to funder.

*Ideally, the Peer Support relationship will commence in advance of move-in day so that the Peer Supporter can help in that crucial transition.

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2018

Greater Victoria Coalition to	
For: **End Homelessness Society**	For: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Title: _____	Title: _____
Signature: _____	Signature: _____

This agreement is in effect from the date of signing and is subject to renewal at that time.

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Peer Housing Support Project
Release of Information/Protection of Privacy

As a Peer of the Peer Housing Support Project, with supports offered through partnership between your housing provider and the Project, you have the following rights regarding what information we will collect about you, who we will share it with, and how we will protect it.

1. The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society will maintain the following pieces of information in secure files (either paper or electronic), and for the following reasons:

Information	Usage
Your name	To know who we are working with
Your contact information (including your phone number, email address, and home address)	To contact you and arrange appointments
When and where appointments are scheduled with your Peer Supporter	To ensure the safety of you and the Peer Supporter
The number of appointments you have with your Peer Supporter	To evaluate the Project and to report to funders (We will NOT report on who we are working with only **on** the number of meetings)

2. Two times each year the Peer Housing Support Project will provide you the opportunity to respond to an anonymous survey about your satisfaction in participating in the Project.

    The feedback from the survey will help the Coalition determine the success of the Project and will be reported to funders to make sure the program can continue. If you choose not to complete this survey it will not impact your ability to receive services.

3. The personal information you provide to your Peer Supporter in your meetings will be kept confidential to the greatest extent allowed by law. Personal information includes:
    a. Any disclosure of medical conditions and/or history.
    b. What and who you talk about in your meetings.
    c. Any other information shared between you and the Peer Supporter.

    Your Peer Supporter may, with your permission, share information you disclose to staff at your Housing Provider if you agree that it would be helpful. Peer Supporters may also ask for help from the other Peer Supporters and their manager in knowing how to best support you; when they ask for this help, they will do so without disclosing your personal information or identifying you.

4. Sometimes a Peer Supporter will have to share information you give them with staff from your Housing Provider, with Emergency Services, or with staff at the Coalition. This information will only be shared if

    a. There is a danger to you, the Peer Supporter, or others;
    b. Children are endangered by anything the Peer Supporter learns through conversation or observation;
    c. The Peer Supporter is compelled by a court order to share information.

Peer: I, _____, have received notice of my rights to confidentiality.
(Print name)

_____   Date: _____
(Signature)

Peer Supporter: I, _____, have explained this notice to the Peer.
(Print name)

_____   Date: _____
(Signature)

All personal information is collected by the GVCEH under s. 26 (c) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, section 6 (2) of the *Personal Information Protection Act.* or section 4 of *The Privacy Act of Canada.*

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Peer Housing Support Project
Peer Matching Form

Peer

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

How do you prefer to be contacted? ☐ Phone ☐ Email

Housing Support Worker

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

How do you prefer to be contacted? ☐ Phone ☐ Email

Peer support is a special partnership between two people based on shared experience, trust, respect, and a mutual commitment to the mentoring process. Peer support is meant to provide a rich and rewarding experience for both partners. Please answer however many of the following questions you are comfortable answering. The information that you provide in this form will help match you with a Peer Supporter.

1. Do you Identify as Indigenous (this includes First Nations, Inuit, or Metis)?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Prefer not to say

   If yes, would you prefer a Peer Supporter who also identifies as Indigenous?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

2. Do you prefer a male or female Peer Supporter? (Please note we cannot always match based on this preference, but will do our best to accommodate requests):
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

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3. It is up to you and your Peer Supporter to agree when you'd like to meet. Generally, what days of the week or times of day can you meet with a Peer Supporter?

☐ Monday   ☐ Morning (9 am – noon)
☐ Tuesday   ☐ Afternoon (noon – 5 pm)
☐ Wednesday   ☐ Evening (5 pm – 9 pm)
☐ Thursday
☐ Friday
☐ Saturday
☐ Sunday

4. Do you have any concerns about working with a Peer Supporter?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Do you have any health concerns or conditions that your Peer Supporter should know about (e.g. disability, addiction, chronic or mental illness) ?

_____
_____
_____

6. Generally, Peer Support will happen in your home. In what neighbourhood or municipality are you most likely to meet with your Peer Supporter?

_____
_____
_____

7. Is there anything else you'd like your Peer Supporter to know before you meet?

_____
_____
_____

Peer and Peer Supporter Agreement

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PEER: _____

PEER SUPPORTER: _____

Activities we may choose to work on and participate in together towards maintaining safe housing will be: (ex.: housekeeping, coffee meetings, recreational activities, grocery and household supplies shopping, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Services and programs that are currently helpful as supports are:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Services and programs that may be helpful to enhance supports are:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Days, Hours, and Times we will be meeting each week will be:

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

The places that are convenient for both of us to meet are:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We both agree to work together with behaviours and spoken words which will create an environment of respect, compassion, understanding, shared responsibility, personal boundaries, and confidentiality.

Signed by:

        Peer: _____

        Date: _____

Peer Supporter:_____

        Date: _____