

BRSS TACS

Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER STRATEGY

Supervision of Peer Workers

Introduction

Peer support services have expanded to a wide variety of behavioral health environments and within a range of program models. In addition to providing recovery support services designed to engage, activate, and support people with behavioral health conditions and their family members, peer workers are emerging as important members of treatment teams. Organizations that include peer workers and provide peer support services want to know how to best supervise peer workers and integrate them into their workforce. Because peer support services represent a relatively new service within behavioral health services, there may be too few supervisors who understand the peer role well enough to supervise peer workers. This group of resources helps supervisors understand how to supervise peer workers in behavioral health services.



Audience

This group of resources is primarily for practitioners who are supervising peer workers.

Components

This group of resources consists of the following components:

- *Slide Deck with Trainer Notes:* A PowerPoint presentation with trainer notes is the main component of these resources. The 48-slide deck presents an overview of peer worker supervision. Each slide has notes for the trainer delivering the presentation.
- *Supervisor Self-Assessment:* This one-page self-assessment tool enables supervisors to evaluate their own knowledge and skills related to supervising peer workers in behavioral health settings.
- *Supervision Resource List:* This one-page list contains critical resources for future learning about the supervision of peer workers in behavioral health.

Learning Goals

1. Describe the essential functions of supervision
2. Understand the principles and practices of peer support
3. Explore a recovery-oriented approach to the supervision of peer workers
4. Learn two critical supervision skills
5. Access additional resources to improve competency in peer worker supervision

Using the Supervision of Peer Workers

BRSS TACS created these materials to assist practitioners who supervise peer workers. Trainers can use the Supervision of Peer Workers as part of their own curriculum or students can use these tools in their own self-directed study.

Trainer-Led Instruction:

An experienced trainer can present the slide deck using the trainer notes in a 2-hour training (or two 1-hour trainings) for the basic instruction. Trainers can expand the training by including time to practice the skills of “giving feedback” and “giving strengths-based affirmations.” The trainer may also assign the readings included in the resource list and facilitate discussions about the information learned.

Self-Directed Study:

Students can study the PowerPoint presentation and resources independently or in small groups of practitioners without a lead trainer. This self-directed approach enables practitioners to learn the information on their own schedule, at their own pace. Students can use the lessons learned in self-directed study to practice their supervision skills.

Use the **Supervisor of Peer Workers Self-Assessment** tool as a pre- and post-test for both the trainer-led and self-directed study and as an ongoing assessment of supervisors’ progress in learning the knowledge and skills required for the supervision of peer workers.



Want more information?

BRSS TACS has conducted virtual trainings on topics related to the supervision of peer workers. Here are links to recording trainings available online:

- **Recovery LIVE! Strategies for Supervising Peer Support Workers**
(April 2017, 58 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v49QD-UaQK4&list=PLBXgZMI_zqfSRZVtxRBWg7cDja_qy2e-M&index=5
- **Integrating Peers into the Workforce: Supervision and Organizational Culture**
(March 2016, 85 min)
<https://center4si.adobeconnect.com/a966410469/p2k7kf5dxi9/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>

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Supervisor of Peer Workers Self-Assessment

This Supervisor of Peer Workers Self-Assessment is designed to help you reflect on your own supervision practice and identify areas you would like to develop to become a more effective supervisor of peer workers. For areas that are learning needs, speak to your supervisor about strategies for learning the needed competencies.

Rating Scale

1. **Professional Learning Need**—I don't know how to do this
2. **Personal Learning need**—I know how to do this but unable to make it happen
3. **Sporadically Competent**—I occasionally do this fine
4. **Consistently Competent**—This has become a part of my natural way of doing things
5. **Mastery**—I can role model this and can teach it to others

Supervisory knowledge and skills	Learning need		Competent		Mastery
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I understand and can clarify organizational systems, structures and processes					
2. I understand the values and practice of peer support					
3. I understand the roles and responsibilities of peer support workers					
4. I can maintain a balance between the administrative, educational, and supportive functions of supervision					
5. I can establish a relationship characterized by trust and mutuality					
6. I can provide an environment that promotes reflection on peer support practice and ethics					
7. I can help a person set and plan for the achievement of professional goals					
8. I can teach and model skills needed for effective peer practice					
9. I can deliver strengths-based supervision and can use affirmations					
10. I can give feedback that assists the person in recognizing a professional development need					
11. I can advocate for recovery-oriented services within the agency					

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Resources for the Supervision of Peer Workers



The resources on this list provide education on peer support practices, best practices in supervision, and recovery-oriented services.

Meaningful Roles for Peer Providers in Integrated Healthcare: A Guide

This 167-page toolkit, written by the California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies in collaboration with other provider and service agencies, includes a chapter on the supervision of peer workers. Other topics include the basics of peer support practice, leadership development, and financing peer support. Download the PDF at http://www.casra.org/docs/peer_provider_toolkit.pdf.

Peer Support Toolkit

Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services' toolkit supports behavioral health treatment agencies with integrating peer providers into their service settings. Structured as an interactive PDF in four easy-to-read sections, the toolkit incorporates many promising practices and resources relevant to leadership, supervisors, and peer staff. For more information and to download the free toolkit, visit <https://dbhids.org/peer-support-toolkit>.

For a quick tutorial in how to use the *Peer Support Toolkit*, follow this link to a YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/LinLpwRvcMs>.

Program Development Guide: Ongoing Monitoring, Supervision, and Support

Peers for Progress promotes peer support as a key part of health, health care, and prevention around the world. The mission of Peers for Progress is to accelerate the availability of best practices in peer support. To learn more, go to <http://peersforprogress.org/resource-guide/ongoing-monitoring-supervision-and-support>.

Supervisor Guide: Peer Support Whole Health and Wellness

This guide for supervisors outlines the role and responsibilities of peer workers who support the whole health and wellness of people living with mental illness and co-occurring health problems. The guide details the supportive actions of the supervisor, and is available as a downloadable PDF at https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/Supervisor_Guide_to_Peer_Support_Whole_Health_and_Wellness_-c-2013.pdf.

Core Competencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral Health Services

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration directed BRSS TACS to identify and describe the core competencies needed to provide peer support services to individuals with or in recovery from mental illness or substance use disorder. This document describes the 61 competencies used by peer recovery support workers in behavioral health services. These competencies, which promote best practices in peer support, can guide the creation of job descriptions, train peer workers, and help set certification standards. Download the PDF at https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/brss_tacs/core-competencies.pdf.

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Supervision of Peer Workers



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy

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Learning Goals

- 1 Describe the essential functions of supervisors
- 2 Understand the principles and practices of peer support services
- 3 Explore the application of recovery-oriented approaches to the supervision of peer workers
- 4 Learn two critical supervision skills
- 5 Access additional resources to improve your competence in supervising peer workers

Supervision

Supervision: Definition

SUPERVISION is a professional and collaborative activity between a supervisor and a worker in which the supervisor provides guidance and support to the worker to promote competent and ethical delivery of services and supports through the continuing development of the worker's application of accepted professional peer work knowledge, skills, and values.

Supervision

- The most important thing about supervision is that it happens
- Supervision should be a priority for early-career peer workers
- All workers need access to supervision
- Supervision is an investment
- Supervision benefits employees, employers and service recipients



Why Focus on the Supervision of Peer Workers?

- Peer workers fill relatively new and unique roles in the behavioral health care system and supervisors may not understand peer support well enough to provide high quality supervision and the organization may not be aligned with recovery-oriented values
- Leaders in peer-run/ recovery community organizations may not have experience with supervision and may not have organizational structures that support the activity of supervision
- Providing supervision promotes good ethical practices
- Supervisors play a key role in the successful integration of peer workers in the work place

Challenges to Supervising Peer Workers-for Non-Peer Supervisors

- Supervisors may lack experience and working knowledge of peer practice
- Supervisor may have a clinical approach to service provision
- Many supervision approaches do not incorporate recovery values
- Lack of knowledge among non-peer staff about peer roles and practice
- Organizations may not be aligned with recovery-oriented values, practices, and culture
- Challenges in integrating peer workers and recovery values in a treatment setting



Challenges to Supervising Peer Workers-for Peer Supervisors

- May lack training and experience with supervision
- Lack of knowledge among non-peer staff about peer roles and practice
- Organizations not aligned with recovery-oriented values, practices, and culture
- Peer-run/ Recovery Community Organizations may not have a culture of accountability



Benefits of Supervision for Peer Workers

- Provides opportunities to reflect on peer support practice
- Delivers better outcomes through learning that comes from exploring and discussing work issues
- Enhances problem solving skills
- Improves clarity and objectivity in decision making
- Supervision empowers, motivates and increases worker satisfaction



Benefits of Supervision for the Organization

- Supervision is a tool that can be used to achieve the agency's mission and objectives
- Supervision improves performance and helps to manage resources
- The supervisor serves as the mediator and liaison between the agency and the worker
- Supervision increase morale and improves retention



Functions of the Supervisor

Supervision is comprised of 3 basic functions:

Administrative

Educative

Supportive

Administrative Supervision

Administrative

Administrative supervision tasks focus on the effective implementation of the agency's policies and procedures and the management of the peer worker's work performance.

- Quality of work
- Work load
- Liaison to operations-payroll, human resources
- Using program resources, including time, effectively
- Conformance or fidelity to the program model
- Record keeping

Educative Supervision

A graphic consisting of a central white rectangle with the word "Educative" in black text. This rectangle is surrounded by four red rectangles, one on each side, which are further enclosed by a larger grey rectangle.

Educative

Educative supervision tasks focus on the professional development of the worker through training, modeling and structuring learning experiences.

- Provide time and space to reflect on peer practice
- Focus on knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Provide individualized training and support
- Provide venue for supporting the peer worker's professional development

Supportive Supervision

A graphic consisting of a dark blue rectangle on the right, a white rectangle in the center containing the word "Supportive", and a grey rectangle on the left.

Supportive

Supportive supervision tasks focus on the person's morale and job satisfaction.

- Give feedback on work
- Discuss personal reactions to the work
- Validate and provide encouragement
- Promote self-care practices
- Advocate for peer support roles

Fundamentals for Supervisors of Peer Workers

Supervisors Understand Peer Roles and Practices

- Supervisors understand the variety of peer roles
- Supervisors have a deep understanding of the core competencies of peer workers
- Supervisors understand the specific peer support job of the person they supervise
- Supervisors can learn more about the fundamentals of peer support and peer roles by:
 - Participating in trainings designed for peer support workers
 - Reading articles about peer-delivered recovery support services
 - Learning the core competencies of peer workers

Supervisors Have a Recovery Orientation and Model Recovery-oriented Practices

- Supervisors endorse and enact recovery-oriented practices and values
- Supervisors believe in the capacity of peer workers to grow and develop professionally
- Supervisors frame difficulties as learning opportunities and structure learning opportunities to help the worker grow
- Supervisors support the development of individualized professional goals
- Supervisors support the integration of peer workers and recovery values



Examples of Recovery-oriented Values

- Hope-inspiring the growth potential in all
- Person-centered-based on the individual's aspirations
- Strength-based-focused on the unique gifts of each worker
- Personal responsibility-holding people accountable for their commitments
- Interdependence-a balance between team work, autonomy, and mutual support
- Supervisors model these values in their work
- Agencies operationalize these values in their policies, procedures, and practices

Supervisors Support the Development of the Unique Knowledge and Skills Needed for Peer Support Practice

- Supervisors teach workers the knowledge and skills they need to perform work tasks
- Supervisors evaluate work performance through direct observation, co-working, assessments, and reflection, all in collaboration with the peer worker
- Supervisors structure learning opportunities to help workers grow
- Supervisors advocate for worker's participation in on-going training



Supervisors Recognize the Connections between Behavioral Health Conditions and Trauma, Health Disparities, and Social Inequity

- Supervisors take a holistic view of a person, that they are more than their diagnosis or addiction
- Supervisors recognize that recovery involves more than symptom reduction or abstinence
- Supervisors recognize the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage
- Supervisors support workers to address issues of poverty, trauma and discrimination

Supervisors Use Strengths-based Supervision

Strengths-based supervision is a collaborative process between the worker and supervisor enabling them to deliver quality services and supports that draws on the person's strengths and assets

- Seek to discover and amplify the workers' strengths and competencies
- Intentionally identify and amplify the workers' success
- Encourage learning and share responsibility for setting learning goals

Strength-based Supervision

- Focusing on strengths does not mean ignoring problems, but rather means that the supervision frames problems as learning opportunities
- Feedback and self-assessment are tools in strengths-based supervision



Supervisors Provide a Space to Address Ethical and Boundary Issues

- Most peer workers have been trained about ethics and follow a Code of Ethics that has been adopted by the state in which they work
- Supervisors review agency code of conduct with the people they supervise
- Peer workers are expected to follow both their Code of Ethics and the agency's code of conduct
- The nature of peer support means that boundary issues can be very nuanced and may require opportunities to reflect with a more experienced colleague

Supervisors Advocate for the Integration of Peer Workers in the Work Place

- Supervisors educate others in the work force about the peer support roles and practices
- Supervisors create opportunities for peer support workers to interact with other team members
- Supervisors work with leadership to create more optimal working conditions for peer workers



Supervision Formats

Supervision Formats

Individual supervision

Group supervision

Co-supervision

Individual Supervision

Advantages

- Exclusive attention to the worker
- Often experienced as safer by the worker
- More confidential

Disadvantages

- Dependence can develop
- Exposure to only one perspective in supervision
- Lost opportunity to learn from colleagues

Group Supervision

Advantages

- More efficient than individual supervision
- Supervisees share information and may learn from each other
- Can be a powerful way to reduce isolation and may foster group cohesiveness

Disadvantages

- Working in a group can be experienced as unsafe by some workers
- It may difficult to meet the specific needs of individual participants and there is a risk discussions remain generalized and do not meet anyone's needs in a satisfactory way

Co-supervision

- Co-supervision is the provision of supervision by more than one supervisor
- This model may be used when the organization does not have supervisors who are peer support workers
- Peer workers may benefit from a second supervisor if their primary supervisor doesn't have the expertise to help them develop in their peer practice
- Often, one supervisor provides more administrative supervision and the other provides more education. Ideally, both provide support

Co-supervision

Advantages

- Workers benefit from the guidance of more than one person
- Workers can develop their competencies with a skills peer support worker

Disadvantages

- Some agencies don't have the resources to offer co-supervision
- There may be challenges in communication or disagreements between the co-supervisors
- Co-supervisors may not share the same expectations

Supervision Formats

- Many organizations offer multiple formats of supervision to address different professional development needs
- Different workers get different learning needs addressed by different formats
- Organizations that lack supervisors who themselves are peer support workers sometimes make co-supervision by an experienced peer support worker available

Selected Competencies for Supervisors of Peer Workers

Competency

Competencies are the combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, and attitudes that contribute to enhanced performance and ultimately result in organizational success.



Beliefs/ Attitudes

Knowledge

Skills

Core Beliefs/ Attitudes for Supervisors of Peer Workers

- Hope-belief in the possibility of recovery
- Person-driven-process is directed by the person's own goals
- Respect-for multiple pathways of recovery and for all
- Growth-oriented-a focus on personal and professional development



**Beliefs/
Attitudes**

Knowledge for Supervisors of Peer Workers

- Supervisors need knowledge of the principles and practices of peer support in order to provide effective supervision and improve utilization of the peer role
- Supervisors need to clearly know details of workers' jobs
- Supervisors need to know how to navigate the administration of the agency
- Supervisors need to learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act and reasonable accommodations to enable workers with disabilities achieve success



Knowledge

Selected Skills for Supervisors of Peer Workers

- There are dozens of skills that supervisors need to be successful in their roles.
- Many lists of skills and competencies for supervisors have been published
- This training will focus in on two critical skills for supervisors
 - 1 Giving strengths-based affirmations
 - 2 Giving feedback



Giving Strengths-based Affirmations

- Strength-based affirmations shine a light on all the good things that team members are doing
- Strength-based affirmations contribute increase motivation for professional development
- Strength-based affirmations are different from general praise in that they are specific to a work task or worker attribute

Giving Strengths-based Affirmations

Definition

Giving strengths-based affirmations mean expressing a genuine and positive acknowledgement of a specific work task or worker attribute

Benefits

- Helps workers discover their strengths
- Builds confidence
- Demonstrates supervisors' support of the peer worker

Steps

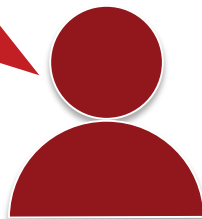
1. Recognize worker's strength
2. Select opportunity to share affirmation
3. State the affirmation

Condition

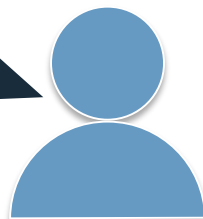
Give strengths-based affirmation when you want to increase a worker's recognition of their strengths

Strengths-based Affirmations: Examples

"You showed a lot of courage when you reminded the team that Nathan has a right to make an informed choice about which recovery home he wants to go to."



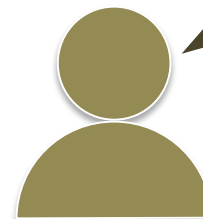
"The recovery plan you developed with Ian showed that you really understand how to do person-centered planning"



"I like the way you welcome people and help them feel comfortable here."



"I want to let the team know that Steven organized this in-service training. He's a master at creating a training and lining up speakers."



Giving Feedback

- This skill is similar to affirming strengths in that it provides workers with the information they may need to develop their practice
- Feedback is always framed as a learning opportunity
- Feedback strengthens a person's ability to reflect on their own performance

Characteristics of Good Feedback

- Specific-refers to a particular activity
- Objective-based on unbiased observation
- Timely-when the worker will most benefit from the feedback
- Individualized-tailored to the learning needs of the worker
- Genuine-comes from a place of kindness
- Actionable-suggests activities designed to improve performance

Giving Feedback

Definition

Giving feedback means communicating your objective appraisal of the worker's performance of a specific work task or worker attribute

Benefits

- Helps workers discover areas they need to develop
- Contributes to a culture of growth and development
- Demonstrates supervisor's interest in helping the peer worker to grow in the role

Steps

1. Ask worker to give themselves feedback on a specific task or attribute
2. Share your objective appraisal of the worker's performance, starting with strengths and moving to areas that need improvement
3. Check in with the worker about their reactions to the feedback
4. Collaborate with the worker to develop activities for learning

Condition

Give feedback when the worker is ready to hear it and always in private

Giving Feedback Example

Nancy, a supervisor and Edgar, a peer recovery coach who works in a hospital emergency room are meeting for supervision. Earlier in the day, Nancy observed Edgar interacting with a person who had had a recent opioid overdose and overhead Edgar say, “Well I hope your next overdose doesn’t kill you” and walk away.

Edgar, tell me about your interaction with Mr. Rose this morning.

Nancy

Edgar

Oh man, that was frustrating! I couldn't get anywhere with that guy. He wasn't having any of what I could offer. I thought that maybe he would go to treatment this time. I thought we had a good connection too.

You were surprised that he was wasn't interested in what you were offering today.

Nancy

Edgar

Yeah, I guess I got let-down, you know?

Giving Feedback Example *(continued)*

If it's okay with you I'd like to share my perspective but first I'd like to hear from you about what you think you did well and what you'd like to do better next time.

Nancy

Edgar

Well I don't know what I did well. It wasn't my best work.

Well, start with one thing that you did well.

Nancy

Edgar

Well, I did well just starting a conversation with him. I was able to introduce myself and talk to him about what had happened to him last night.

So initiating contact has become a strength for you. What do you think you need to improve?

Nancy

Edgar

I'm not sure. I don't know what I could have done differently. I wasn't expecting him to reject my offer and I just reacted.

Giving Feedback Example *(continued)*

What would you have liked to have done instead of having the reaction you had?

Nancy

Edgar

I don't know. I should have not reacted like I did. I just walked away.

You wish you had not broken the connection you had with him.

Nancy

Edgar

Yes. I was kind of mad at him.

I'd like to give you some feedback on what I think you could do differently next time.

Nancy

Edgar

Yes. That could be helpful.

Giving Feedback Example *(continued)*

I observed that you rushed in and offered a treatment bed without first asking him what he thinks he needs. Getting the person to start thinking about possible solutions can be empowering and the person feels less pressured.

Nancy

Edgar

That sounds right.

We can review and practice some pieces of motivational interviewing, especially rolling with resistance. These skills take a lot of practice and you're making progress and we can work together to help you move forward.

Nancy

Edgar

Sometimes I feel that I won't ever get it.

You feel discouraged because it can be so hard to use these skills when you need to. But I've seen you work hard to get better at other skills and I believe that you'll develop these skills too.

Nancy

Selected Supervisor Skills Summary

- Giving strength-based affirmations and giving feedback are two critical skills of supervision
- These skills both work to help people increase their ability to assess their own performance of work skills
- These skills also work to help people to get and achieve professional goals

Supervisor of Peer Workers Summary

- Peer workers fill new and unique roles in the behavioral health work force
- Supervision of peer workers is not dramatically different from supervising other roles, but there are specific competencies these supervisors need
- Supervisors of peer workers need to develop their knowledge of peer roles and practices, embrace a recovery orientation, and advocate for the integration of peer workers