

BEST PRACTICE MANUAL

For Supporting Peers/ Experiential Workers in Overdose Response Settings

A Guide for BC Health Authorities &
other service providers



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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

BC	British Columbia (Canada)
BCCDC	British Columbia Centre for Disease Control
CISUR	Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (University of Victoria)
OPS	Overdose Prevention Service - “Welcoming spaces where people who use drugs do not have to be alone, but can be monitored by someone who can respond quickly to the overdose” (BCCDC, 2019).
Peer/ Experiential Worker	<p>A person who has both lived experience with substance use (either past or present), and uses that lived experience to inform their professional work (Greer et al. 2016).</p> <p>It is important to note that although the term ‘peer’ is widely used and recognized, it is often not appreciated by people who use substances. ‘Experiential worker’ is the preferred term for the people consulted in this project. In this manual, we indicate both terms side-by-side (as suggested by peers/ experiential workers). However, organizations implementing these resources are encouraged to check in with their peers/ experiential workers on the preferred terminology.</p>
PWUS	People who use substances
PWLLE	People with lived and living experience (of substance use)
ROSE	P2P intervention model which stands for 'Recognition, Organizational support and Skill Development for Everyone'.
SUAP	Substance Use and Addictions Program (Health Canada)
SOLID Outreach	Society of Living Illicit Drug Users (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada)

About The Peer2Peer Project

Background

A public health emergency was declared in BC in April 2016 due to an unprecedented rise in drug overdoses and deaths (BCCDC 2017). Responses to the emergency included a rapid scale up of programs such as Take-Home Naloxone and introduction of Overdose Prevention Services (OPSs) (BCCDC 2020).

Peers/ experiential workers with lived/ living experience of substance use are important service providers and play a crucial role in supporting individuals that use substances in overdose response settings, including OPSs. Working in these environments can be overwhelming, stressful, and have lasting social, mental, and emotional impacts (Marshall et al. 2017). Unlike healthcare professionals and other first responders, peers/ experiential workers often do not have access to institutional or occupational, emotional and mental health support. Peer/experiential workers' lives are also impacted by other factors such as poverty, homelessness, stigma and discrimination. To alleviate the potential impacts of working in an overdose response setting, it is necessary to implement support systems and interventions for peers/ experiential workers.

The Peer2Peer (P2P) Project aims to develop, implement, and evaluate models and strategies to support peers/ experiential workers working in BC overdose response settings.

Methods

Eight peer/experiential worker-led focus groups (needs assessments) were conducted between November 2018 and March 2019 across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. The transcripts were thematically analyzed by the P2P team members through an iterative and participatory process. Three major areas of support were identified from the needs assessment. These support needs were discussed with peers/ experiential workers on the research team, and practical interventions that would address these needs were decided upon. The interventions were collectively titled ROSE, based on the three themes: R- Recognition of Peer Work, O- Organizational Support, S- Skill Development. The 'E' stands for 'Everyone', signifying that the interventions and learnings will be shared with other organizations across BC and Canada.

Implementation

The practical interventions or strategies within the ROSE model have been implemented at SOLID Outreach in Victoria and RainCity Housing in the Vancouver Coastal and Fraser regions to test their efficacy.

This Best Practice Manual includes templates of resources that were developed by and with peers/ experiential workers as part of the ROSE model. These strategies are for everyone to use and can be implemented by any organization that engages with peers/ experiential workers. All documents can be tailored according to the specific needs of each organization.



Needs Assessment Summary

Key Issues

Need for Recognition

- Peers/ experiential workers do not get the respect they deserve from other professionals.
- Community-level stigma.
- Peers/ experiential workers are not treated as professionals in and outside of the organization.

Workplace Resources

- The word 'peer' is not taken seriously.
- Lack of clarity around the role.
- Inequitable pay.
- Lack of clarity around expectations.
- Need for better check-in system to ensure support.
- Unstable living conditions affect peers/ experiential workers' productivity and mental health.

Skill Development

- Need for extra training on topics such as mental health awareness, First Aid and CPR, crisis management, self-defence, etc.

Interventions Proposed

Recognition

- Organize meet and greet events with other professionals, including police, housing agencies, and paramedics to raise awareness about peers/ experiential workers' roles and facilitate relationship-building.
- Produce a video featuring "A Day in the Life of a Peer" to create awareness about the work of peers/ experiential workers.
- Introduce photo IDs (p. 11-12) and business cards (p. 13-14) to professionalize the role.

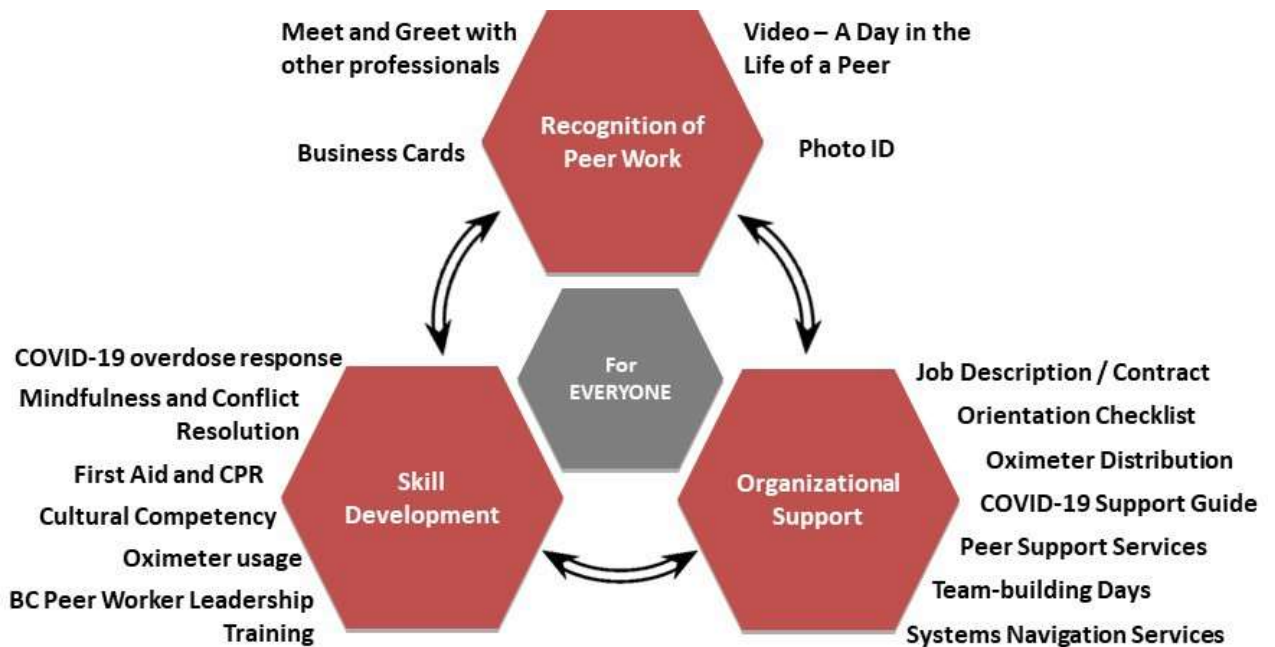
Organizational Support

- Create job descriptions with a formal job title (p. 16-17).
- Indicate recommended pay (BCCDC peer payment standards).
- Create a contract highlighting expectations at work and scheduling guidelines (p. 24-28).
- Introduce team-building days.
- Introduce a formal debriefing program where peers/ experiential workers have someone to call when they need support (p. 22-23).
- Introduce a formal role within the organization that provides referrals and support for housing (p. 19-20).

Skill Development

- Support peers/ experiential workers to attain the necessary skills eg. First Aid.
- Introduce training on topics prioritized by peers/ experiential workers (creation of online training modules and resources).

THE ROSE INITIATIVE



The ROSE initiative is a collection of practical interventions designed to support peers/experiential workers in the delivery of services in overdose response settings. The three parts of the initiative go hand-in-hand and work together. The “E” is to emphasize that the initiative and resources developed are for Everyone. The team is committed to making all materials publicly available. All project-related documents can be found online [here](#). You can also follow the P2P [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

Recognition

Photo ID & Business Cards

Photo ID and business cards are popular tangible symbols of professionalism, authority and validity within a role. The fact that peers/ experiential workers often do not have them is indicative of the overall lack of respect for their roles.

Photo IDs can be a visual reminder of peers/ experiential workers' importance within the organization, and prevents the risk of them being unnecessarily questioned by those unsure of their role.

Business cards are a concrete, distributable entity that can enable peers/ experiential workers to assert their skills and professionalism to others. The ability to distribute fragments of one's professional identity to others may be critical in the widespread legitimization of peer/experiential work.

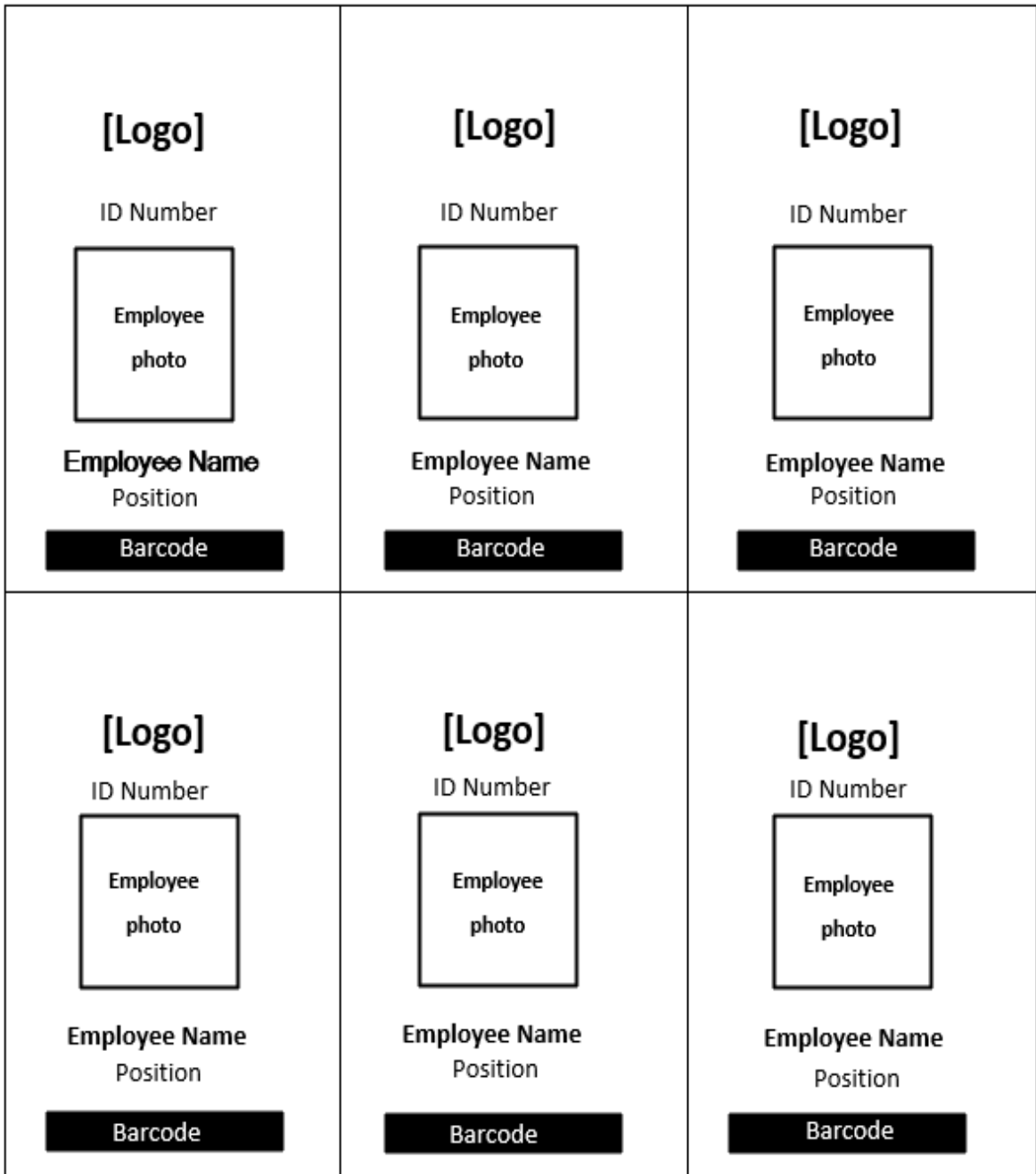
Organizations who do not have access to large scale ID card printing are encouraged to get portable, simple to use ID card printers, such as [Evolis Badgy200 Card Printer](#). [Card refills](#) are available through several stores.

Business cards can be printed on office printers and can printed on [cardstock paper](#), available through several stores.

Disclaimer: *The P2P Project has no link with these vendors; we're just sharing the products we used.*

R

Photo ID Template



Standard ID Card dimensions: 3.375" X 2.125"

Business Card Template

[Logo]	[Logo]
[Website]	[Website]
[Logo]	[Logo]
[Website]	[Website]
[Logo]	[Logo]
[Website]	[Website]
[Logo]	[Logo]
[Website]	[Website]

Business Card Template

<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>	<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>
<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>	<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>
<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>	<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>
<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>	<p>[Logo]</p> <hr/> <p>[Name] <i>[Job Title]</i> Email: _____ Phone Number: _____ [Organization Address] [Website]</p>

Organizational Support

Job Descriptions And Contracts For Peers/ Experiential Workers

Creation of formal job descriptions was one of the key supports suggested by peers/ experiential workers to facilitate role clarity. The job description must include a formal job title that represents their role(s). An example that was suggested includes 'Community Outreach Worker'. The job description must also indicate an equitable wage rate, based on BCCDC's peer payment standards. The job description should also highlight the skills required for the role, placing as much importance on lived/ living experience as is usually placed on formal education. While we understand that peers/ experiential workers take on multiple roles within organizations, the peers/ experiential workers on the Peer2Peer team have developed a job description for the outreach role, which is a common role at most organizations. This job description has been implemented at SOLID Outreach and RainCity Housing, and included in this manual as a template for other organizations to implement.

Peers/ experiential workers suggested developing an employment contract to clarify the terms and expectations of their positions. Many peers/ experiential workers articulated anxiety surrounding the ambiguous terms of their employment. Such uncertainty enables employers to place large work demands on their employees. A job contract should lay out job expectations, scheduling guidelines, and various protocols, such as those for vacation and sick time.

In addition to protecting the worker, an employment contract lays out rules and regulations that workers are to follow to protect the safety of those they support, and to ensures smooth functioning of the organization. The employment contract is critical in decolonizing the way that PWUS are treated by employers, consequently professionalizing and solidifying the role. The peers/ experiential workers on Peer2Peer team have developed an employment contract which has been implemented at SOLID Outreach and RainCity Housing, and included in this manual as a template for other organizations to implement.



Community Outreach Worker

Job Description

Hours:

Starting Wage:

Recommended start wage of \$15 - \$25 hourly based on experience and workplace requirements. (See [guide](#) for paying peers/ experiential workers).

Location(s) and Hours of Operation:

Job Summary

The Community Outreach Worker promotes the safety and comfort of service users by providing non-judgmental, experience-based oversight, support and counselling. Community Outreach Workers will also be involved in overdose response, including the administration of oxygen and naloxone in the event of an overdose. They provide referrals, harm reduction information and supplies for service users, including naloxone training, and contribute to the operations of the facility by assisting with maintaining a safe, clean and welcoming program space. Additionally, they provide flexible and tailored support based on each service user's needs, including advocating for their wellbeing.

* The job title should be determined with the individual with lived experience that is being hired.



Duties and Responsibilities:

- Interact with service users and build relationships with them through non- judgmental, respectful and welcoming communication.
- Distribute safer substance use and safer sex supplies.
- Provide harm reduction education, including safer substance use, safer sex, STIs, and Naloxone administration.
- Offer support to service users through active listening skills and non-judgmental attitude.
- Provide flexible and tailored support for each service user, including advocating for their wellbeing.
- Provide referrals for other services as required.
- Share up-to-date information about local substance use trends and practices, as they emerge, with co-workers and clients.
- Keep records about distribution, collection, training, and referrals, and write about their experiences with the goal of promoting the safety, comfort and well-being of service users and their communities.
- Provide in office support as required, including monitoring for safety in the washrooms, maintaining a safe environment, and preparing supplies for distribution.
- Attend team meetings and provide expertise based on lived experience.
- Other ad hoc tasks as per the needs of the organization.

Recommended Skills:

- Past or present direct lived experience with substance use and related health and social conditions such as poverty, sex work, homelessness and/or other physical or mental health issues.
- Current knowledge of the local street scene and cultural norms related to street life and substance use.
- Good inter-personal skills, including comfort approaching and initiating conversation with others and ability to build good rapport.
- Excellent communications skills including active listening and ability to engage in difficult and sensitive conversations in an empathetic and respectful manner.
- Understanding of the importance of confidentiality and boundaries.
- Demonstrated commitment to working in a team environment.
- Demonstrated understanding and commitment to harm reduction principles and practices.
- Dependability and ability to show up for shifts agreed upon with supervisor.
- Interest in learning and eagerness to educate clients with a non-judgmental attitude.
- Good working knowledge of local health and social services.
- Ability to follow direction, provide/receive feedback, and engage in proactive problem solving.

Note: This job description was developed by peers/ experiential workers that currently work in similar roles, in consultation with their managers. Organizations are welcome to tailor the job description as per their needs.



Community Outreach Worker

Employment Contract

Name of peer/ experiential worker:

Date of Employment:

Duration of Employment Contract:

Starting Wage: Recommended start wage of \$15 - \$25 hourly based on experience and workplace requirements. (See [guide](#) for paying peers/ experiential workers)

*The job title should be determined with the individual with lived experience that is being hired.

Adherence to expectations and follow up:

The following expectations have been developed through consultations with peers/ experiential workers working in overdose response settings, management staff at organizations involved in overdose response, as well as the Harm Reduction Services at the BC Centre for Disease Control. The expectations are laid out based on the Policies and Procedures of the organization [insert name of organization], as well as the [Guide for Organizations Employing People Who Use Substances](#) developed by International Harm Reduction Development Program at Open Society Foundations in 2010.

The organization is committed to supporting peers/ experiential workers negotiate and adhere to expectations with a strengths-based and harm-reductive approach, and it is expected and encouraged that peers/ experiential workers will be in regular contact with the management to ensure they are well-supported and able to meet expectations, especially in situations of ethical complexity and ambiguity.

[Note: This contract was developed by individuals with lived/living experience currently working in these roles. Organizations may tailor this contract as per their needs.]

- 1.1** [Organization] will have policies in place to address violence and discrimination, with intent and consideration for the person experiencing the harms of violence and discrimination.
- 1.2** Management will focus on behavior and “fitness for duty” rather than suspicion of illegal substance use.
- 1.3** Management will **not** conduct substance testing to determine substance use by peers/ experiential workers.
- 1.4** Management and staff will not comment or share judgments, positively or negatively, on a(n) peer/ experiential worker’s apparent increased or decreased substance use.
- 1.5** Management will not require peers/ experiential workers or clients to disclose confidential information about other clients or colleagues.
- 1.6** Management will be cognizant and tolerant of physical reactions that a(n)peer/experiential worker who uses substances has no control over, and that do not, by themselves, compromise the job. Examples:
- Profuse sweating
 - Pinned or enlarged pupils
 - Itchy skin and/or what might look like exacerbated scratching
 - Feeling tired or sleepy during methadone acclimation periods (so long as this does not affect their ability to work)
- 1.7** Management has a responsibility ensure the safety of clients and staff, and may intervene in the event that anyone is:
- Are exhibiting signs of agitation or irritability which may put themselves or others at risk.
 - Are exhibiting signs of disorientation which may put themselves or others at risk.
 - Are exhibiting uncontrolled/erratic movements or other signs of impaired motor control which may put themselves or others at risk.

- 2.1** Regardless of substance use, while representing the organization peers/ experiential workers are expected to perform their professional duties in a reliable, competent, and respectful manner.
- 2.2** [Organization] does not require abstinence in order for peers/ experiential workers to perform professional duties. This means peers/ experiential workers may use or be under the influence while on site, however, they must use substances in a way that has been agreed upon with the [Organization].
- 2.3** [Organization] expects peers/ experiential workers to determine their own fitness for work, and to discuss with leadership if they feel unable to perform professional duties.
- 2.4** [Organization] may intervene in the event peers/ experiential workers are:
- Exhibiting behaviors related to fatigue which may impair their ability to assess and maintain environmental safety for clients and co-workers (e.g. “nodding”, napping, etc.).
 - Exhibiting signs of agitation or irritability which may impair the safety of clients and co-workers.
 - Exhibiting signs of disorientation.
 - Exhibiting impaired ability to communicate (i.e., heavily slurred/incomprehensible speech, delayed or absent response).
 - Exhibiting uncontrolled/erratic movements or other signs of impaired motor control which may put themselves or others at risk.

3.0

Confidentiality

- 3.1 Peers/ experiential workers will expect the confidentiality of service users. This includes but is not limited to disclosing the identity of clients, their HIV and/or HCV status, or whether they use or sell substances.

4.0

Scheduling

- 4.1 Community Outreach Workers will be scheduled in pairs.
- 4.2 Each peer/ experiential worker may work no more than 30 hours/ week (this includes 5 shifts of 6 hours each). Any work >30/hours would be marked as “overtime” and requires 1.5 times the usual hourly compensation (unless the additional hours are as a result of a shift switch, resulting in balancing of hours over the course of 4 weeks).
- 4.3 Shifts must be assigned in a manner that allows for a 30-minute hand-over period between peers/ experiential workers.

5.0

Attendance

- 5.1 Peers/ experiential workers must notify [Organization] if they are unable to attend any allocated shift. Although there is some flexibility surrounding missed shifts, failure to communicate about reasons for absence will result in removal from scheduled shifts.
- 5.2 Peers/ experiential workers who are sick or need personal time off will discuss with management, and may NOT switch their shift with their colleagues unless agreed upon between management and the peer/experiential worker.
- 5.3 Three missed shifts without explanation will result in removal from the schedule. A meeting between the peer/experiential worker and management may be warranted to be re-allocated shifts.

6.0

Breaks at Work

- 6.1 Peers/ experiential workers are entitled to two 10-minute breaks over the course of their six-hour shift (one every 2 hours). Additionally, a 30-minute lunch/ dinner break may also be taken.
- 6.2 Peers/ experiential workers may use their own substances during breaks and are encouraged to inform site staff when they are using to ensure everyone’s safety.

7.1 Violent or Discriminatory Behavior

There is a zero-tolerance policy towards any behaviour that could be considered harmful to service users. Anyone seen engaging in such behaviour will have their contract immediately terminated. These behaviours include:

- Use of violent and discriminatory language, including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, poor bashing, body shaming, substance use shaming, or any other language which a service user or co-worker has identified as making them feel unsafe.
- Sexualized language and un-solicited comments about service users' physical appearance.
- Verbal threats, intimidation and baiting/escalation.
- Non-consensual touching of any kind.

7.2 Purchasing/Selling Substances and Dealer Referrals

- Peers/ experiential workers may not purchase or sell illicit substances within the immediate vicinity of the organization.
- Office equipment, including phone, fax, and email may not be used to purchase or sell illicit substances.
- Peers/ experiential workers must separate their personal illicit substance use from their professional life.
 - While it is the professional duty of peers/ experiential workers to inform service users about the quality and purity of street substances, and warn them if there are dangers of overdose or adulterants, peers/ experiential workers should not make referrals to other substance users/ dealers.
 - While peers/ experiential workers may use substances on shift (during their breaks), they may not purchase from, sell to, or share substances with service users.
- Peers/ experiential workers may not receive free substances or sex as tokens of appreciation from service users.

7.3 Borrowing/Lending Money and other Transactions:

- Peers/ experiential workers may not lend to or borrow money or other trade-able goods from service users.

8.0

Anti- discrimination and Fairness in the Workplace

- 8.1 Peers/ experiential workers are expected to uphold the anti-discrimination and anti-violence policies of [Organization] and adhere to a harm reduction philosophy.
- 8.2 Peers/ experiential workers are required to serve everyone in an equitable manner, meeting context-specific needs based on services provided by [Organization].

9.0

Substance Use and Triggering Issues

- 9.1 [Organization] strives to foster respectful working relationships between peers/ experiential workers who use substances and those who do not. [Organization] will make maximum effort to support all peers/ experiential workers, regardless of whether they use substances, to cope with any triggering issues.

10.0

Dual Relationships/Professional Boundaries

- 10.1 Dual relationships are to be expected in peer/experiential-based work, meaning sometimes personal relationships overlap into professional settings, especially when working as a service provider in community. To mitigate the potential for harm caused to peers/ experiential workers and service users because of these dual relationships and the inherent imbalance of power created by a service provider/service user relationship, we ask that:
 - Peers/ experiential workers can, and are encouraged to transfer duties to a co-worker in the event friends or family are accessing a service especially in situations where confidentiality issues or conflict of interest may arise.
 - Peers/ experiential workers adhere to the expectations outlined in this document while on shift, regardless of pre-existing or dual relationships.

11.0

Substance Treatment Programs and Withdrawal

- 11.1 The organization commits itself to allocate time off from work for peers/ experiential workers who enroll in experimental or established substance-related programs (maintenance, tapering, or abstinence).
- 11.2 The organization will take a supportive position toward peers/ experiential workers enrolled in these programs (i.e. understanding issues with punctuality or absences from work).



CONTRACT

By signing below, the [Organization] and Community Outreach Worker agrees that they have read, understood, and are accountable to the standards outlined in this contract.

Peer/ Experiential worker:

[Organization]:

Signature

Signature

Name

Name

Date

Date

[Organization]:

Note: This contract was developed by peers/ experiential workers that currently work in similar roles, in consultation with their managers. Organizations are welcome to tailor the contract as per their needs.

Organizational Support

Orientation Guidelines

Peers/ experiential workers identified a need for a formal job orientation when they are first hired. Oftentimes, peers/ experiential workers are not given the same quality of orientation as their colleagues without lived experience. As such, an orientation checklist is critical in equipping workers to address any scenario that they come across while on the job. Furthermore, there should be orientation policies in place that address specific needs of people who use substances. It is this accommodation and explicit embracing of a diversity of sensitivities from the outset, that facilitates improved job experience and overall wellbeing for the worker.

It is recommended that the action items indicated on the orientation checklist are completed within the first three shifts or first two weeks of the start date of the peer/experiential worker, whichever comes first. Completion of the checklist indicates that the individual has been appropriately trained and equipped for the requirements of their job.



NEW PEER/EXPERIENTIAL WORKER ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

Topic	Initials (trainer)	Initials (worker)	Comments
1. Supervisor name:			
Contact Info:			
Position-specific duties and responsibilities			
a) Review contract, including fitness for duty requirements, penalty procedures, break policies, and codes of ethics & confidentiality.			
b) Position Description			
c) Parameters of probation period, if applicable			
d) Timesheet/clocking in & out systems			
e) Shift scheduling procedures			
f) Salary and Payment procedures			
g) Vacation and sick time			
h) Benefits and medical leave			
i) Review opening and locking-up procedures			
j) Indicate break room and storage for personal belongings			
k) Review periodic training to be completed			
l) Review schedule and structure of staff meetings			
m) Review location-specific guidelines			
n) Review technology procedures (eg., computer databases, iPads, cellphones... etc.)			
o) Introduce worker to relevant coworkers			
General rights and responsibilities			
a) General duties of employers, workers and supervisors			
b) Worker right to refuse unsafe work and procedure for doing so			
c) Worker responsibility to report hazards and procedures for doing so			
Workplace health and safety guidelines			
a) Review smoking policies & safer smoking basics			
b) Review safer cleaning techniques for OPS and SIS			
c) Review safe sharps management procedures			

d) Review needle-stick injury risk reduction, response and follow-up			
e) Overdose prevention response manual			
f) Review HIV transmission basics			
g) Review HCV/HepC transmission basics			
h) Safer injecting basics			
Known hazards and how to deal with them			
a) Review latest information from the BC Centre for Disease Control about fentanyl exposure and managing risk			
Measures to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace and procedures for dealing with violent situations			
a) Review basics of cultural safety			
b) Review respectful workplace policy			
c) Introduce verbal de-escalation techniques			
d) Review criteria for banning individuals from the premises			
e) Review policies for interacting with emergency responders (firemen, police, paramedics)			
f) Review protocol for documentation of emergencies			
g) Review policies for police entry			
h) Review procedures for receiving a complaint from the community			
i) Review system for accessing support after-hours, when no manager is on site			
Personal protective equipment – what to use, when to use it, where to find it			
a) Indicate location of: Gloves, eyewear, masks			
First Aid			
a) Indicate location of first aid kits			
b) Specify primary response contacts			
Emergency procedures			
a) Indicate locations of emergency exits and meeting points			
b) Indicate locations of fire extinguishers and fire alarms			
c) Review how to use fire extinguishers			
d) Review emergency protocol			
e) Review power outage policy			
f) Review earthquake policy			
g) Review policy for the reception of a violent threat			
Contacts for the occupational health and safety committee			
Name:			
Phone Number:			

Support (organizations to revise this list as applicable)			
a) Review development goals that the worker has that the supervisor could help them achieve			
b) Establish worker accessibility needs and any associated supports needed			
c) Establish known boundaries and triggers with supervisor			
d) Discuss supports available within the organization			
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> Systems Navigation Services (referrals to resources) <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling services <input type="checkbox"/> Teambuilding Days			
Resources (organizations to revise this list as applicable)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo ID			
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Card			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pulse Oximeter			
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone for use during shift			
Available training (organizations to revise this list as applicable)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Responding to overdoses during dual public health emergencies (video and handout)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pulse Oximeter training video and handout)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Awareness (online Module 1 Peer Worker Leadership)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective Communication (online Module 2 Peer Worker Leadership)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer-to-Peer Counselling Skills (online Module 3 Peer Worker Leadership)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution (online Module 4 Peer Worker Leadership)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Etiquette (online Module 5 Peer Worker Leadership)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Self Care (handout)			
<input type="checkbox"/> BC Campus - Peer Connect Trainings			
Complete 3 paid shadow shifts			

I, _____, have completed each action item on this orientation checklist with the assistance of my supervisor.

Signature of new worker

Signature of supervisor

Date:

Date:

Organizational Support

Assistance With Living Conditions

Poor living conditions are one of the key stressors identified by peers/ experiential workers. Many indicated that their current housing situation was not acceptable and they felt unsafe in their homes. For many peers/ experiential workers, the conditions of their homes seem to add stress rather than offer a respite to alleviate it.

Some peers/ experiential workers even indicated that encounter a lot of problems in acquiring housing due to its unaffordability as well as the stigma against substance use which contributes to the unwillingness of landlords to rent to them.

Peers/ experiential workers also identified the inability to access resources or refer other PWUS to resources adds to their stress and dissatisfaction. They identified the need for a worker that refers them to support systems, and advocate for them upon contact with service providers. This was accomplished through the creation of the Systems Navigator role in the P2P pilot organizations (job description below). The Systems Navigator can assist in decolonizing access to external resources by acting as the stepping stone that is absent in most administrative systems.

O

Systems Navigator

Job Description



Hours:

Starting Wage: Recommended start wage of \$15 - \$25 hourly based on experience and workplace requirements. (See [guide](#) for paying peers/ experiential workers)

Location(s) and Hours of Operation:

Job Summary:

The Systems Navigator, reporting to _____, provides supports to [Organization] members/ workers and connects them to various external resources, including providing housing referrals, legal support, etc. The Systems Navigator acts as a liaison between [Organization] members and other service providers, and ensures that [Organization] members have all the necessary supports for adequate physical and mental health.

* The job title should be determined with the individual with lived experience that is being hired.

Duties and Responsibilities:

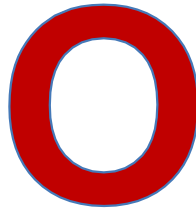
- Provide [Organization] members with support in navigating systems necessary for the best possible physical and mental health, including but not limited to, healthcare, housing, income support, and legal.
- Build relationships with other social and healthcare service providers and provide referrals to these services as needed by [Organization] members.
- Provide advocacy and peer/experiential worker support to [Organization] members in a culturally safe manner.
- Support [Organization] members in filing out applications for housing, income assistance and other applications (ID, Life Pass, Detox, etc.).
- Provide flexible and tailored supports for [Organization] members, including accompanying them to appointments in various settings such as hospitals/ clinics, housing agencies, courts, and funerals.
- Represent [Organization] at relevant stakeholder meetings, community meetings, and other events as requested/ needed.
- Provide training for [Organization] members and support them in developing their own capacities and self-advocacy skills.
- Track trends in substance use, community responses and harm reduction as encountered through interactions with different organizational partners, and inform and educate [Organization] about these.
- Maintain [Organization] members' confidentiality by ensuring that correspondence and information is locked securely in [Organization]'s filing cabinet.
- Participate in and provide input on the evaluation of the role to identify benefits, challenges, and potential improvements.

Recommended Skills:

- Direct lived/ living experience with substance use and related health and social conditions such as poverty, criminalization, sex work, homelessness and other physical or mental health issues.
- Current knowledge and familiarity with local social services and supports, as well as with local communities of people who use substances.
- Ability to develop trusting relationships with [Organization] members and work from a relational place, i.e. to build trust through relationships.
- Ability to bridge gaps between [Organization] members seeking supports such as housing, and those in more professionalized settings (i.e. nurses, housing workers, detox staff, etc).
- Knowledge and use of effective communication skills, both in dealing with [Organization] members as well as other service providers.
- Willingness to learn effective ways to communicate and move through conflict in challenging situations.
- Possess a strong foundation rooted in harm reduction, cultural safety and individual autonomy.
- Ability to provide leadership, give direction, tasks and appropriate constructive feedback to workers.
- Ability to uphold appropriate boundaries for/with [Organization] members seeking support, as well as for personal wellbeing and sustainability.
- A good understanding and ability to maintain appropriate work/life boundaries for themselves and when supporting [Organization] members.
- Self-motivated and able to work independently and as well as within a team.
- Good computer skills, including ability to operate email and basic documents, as well as perform online searches to conduct research and provide support for individuals.

Note: This job description was developed by peers/ experiential workers that currently work in similar roles. Organizations are welcome to tailor the job description, or split the role into multiple roles, as per their needs.

Organizational Support



Peer-to-Peer Debriefing

Working in overdose response settings can be stressful and traumatizing, with lasting social, emotional and mental health effects for individuals. These impacts are intensified for peers/ experiential workers, who not only work in stressful environments in which they are vicariously affected by the trauma of the individuals they serve, but also live the same reality as individuals with lived/ living experience of substance use. Further, the individuals they support are not mere clients for them; they are often close friends and family members. This leads to considerable grief and an emotional toll for peers/ experiential workers.

One of the key needs identified by peers/ experiential workers is peer-to-peer debriefing, which can take multiple forms. The P2P pilot sites opted to have a formalized Peer Support role. The Peer Support Worker is meant to provide a listening ear and counselling for peers/experiential workers, increasing the accessibility of support. This, in turn, improves health and wellbeing of peers/ experiential workers. In addition to providing first-hand support, Peer Support Workers can act as a liaison between other staff in the organization and the peer/ experiential worker.

Peer Support Worker

Job Description

Hours:

Starting Wage: Recommended start wage of \$15 - \$25 hourly based on experience and workplace requirements. (See [guide](#) for paying peers/ experiential workers)

Location(s) and Hours of Operation:

Job Summary:

The Peer Support Worker provides direct peer-to-peer support for those doing overdose prevention work. This role focuses on employment and lifestyle support; offering check-ins about workload, vicarious or re-traumatization, burnout, stress management, self-care and drug-use planning or maintenance options.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Assist staff in recognizing, preventing and navigating vicarious trauma and burnout.
- Provide workload assessment, i.e., encouraging self-assessments about capacity and advocating for changes to workload or workplace tasks to meet changing needs.
- Utilize Care Plans to successfully support those doing overdose prevention work.
- Maintain up to date Care Plans and case notes, for the purpose of coordinated, seamless care, including end of life care, and to assist in the maintenance of related statistical records.
- Provide withdrawal and maintenance support. i.e., promoting maintenance level uses of illicit substances through check-ins and discussing access to options such as medicinal use of cannabis.
- Provide prescription navigation (encouraging self-assessment of current prescriptions and awareness of options, including transitions from Methadone to Kadian or Dilaudid, support advocating with doctor for changes to amount or type of prescription, and support designing and sticking to maintenance or use change plans).

Duties And Responsibilities cont.

- Collaborate with the Systems Navigator to follow-up on housing and other referrals as outlined in care plans.
- Encourage self-assessment of off-work habits and activities, including support exploring and accessing various forms of self-care and alternative therapeutic options such as massage therapy, doing various leisure activities after work, etc.
- Overdose follow-up with [Organization] employees.
- If witness trauma in the workplace, complete the necessary documentation (incident reports) to communicate incidents and encourage structural/systems change.
- Collaborate and coordinate with Systems Navigator, to support [Organization] employees to access services needed.
- Help to coordinate and implement workshops that assist staff in skill development, navigating vicarious trauma and burnout.

Recommended Skills

- Direct lived experience with drug use and related health and social conditions such as poverty, criminalization, sex work, homelessness and other physical or mental health issues.
- Demonstrated capacity to be self-aware, with ability to set boundaries at work, in relationships with peers/ experiential workers being supported, and in areas of life that may affect ones' capacity to work successfully.
- Ability to develop trusting relationships with [Organization] employees/members.
- Uphold appropriate boundaries for/with members seeking support.
- Capacity to collaborate and communicate effectively the [Organization] members/employees' needs and goals to the Systems Navigator.
- Knowledge and use of effective communication skills both in dealing with individual people and other service providers.
- Capacity to keep case notes and confidentiality.
- Possess a solid foundation rooted in harm reduction, cultural safety, advocacy and individual autonomy.
- Ability to recognize ones' own limits and ask for help when needed.
- Understands and can operate email and basic documents on a computer. Also possess the ability to do appropriate online searches in seeking support for individuals.

Note: This job description was developed by peers/ experiential workers that currently work in similar roles. Organizations are welcome to tailor the job description, or split the role into multiple roles, as per their needs.

Conclusion

This manual is not exhaustive; it provides only a baseline for supporting workers with lived/living experience of substance use. Supporting peers/ experiential workers is a work in progress, and each organization is encouraged to invest time and effort in trying to understand the needs of the peers/ experiential workers they hire.

These documents were developed in the context of the Vancouver Island, Vancouver Coast and Fraser regions in BC. It may not be applicable to other regions with diverse socio-cultural contexts. Organizations across BC and Canada are encouraged to revise and tailor these templates based on the needs of their peers/ experiential workers.

Whilst it is only a start, we hope that this guideline will facilitate reflection on the supports that are lacking in BC.

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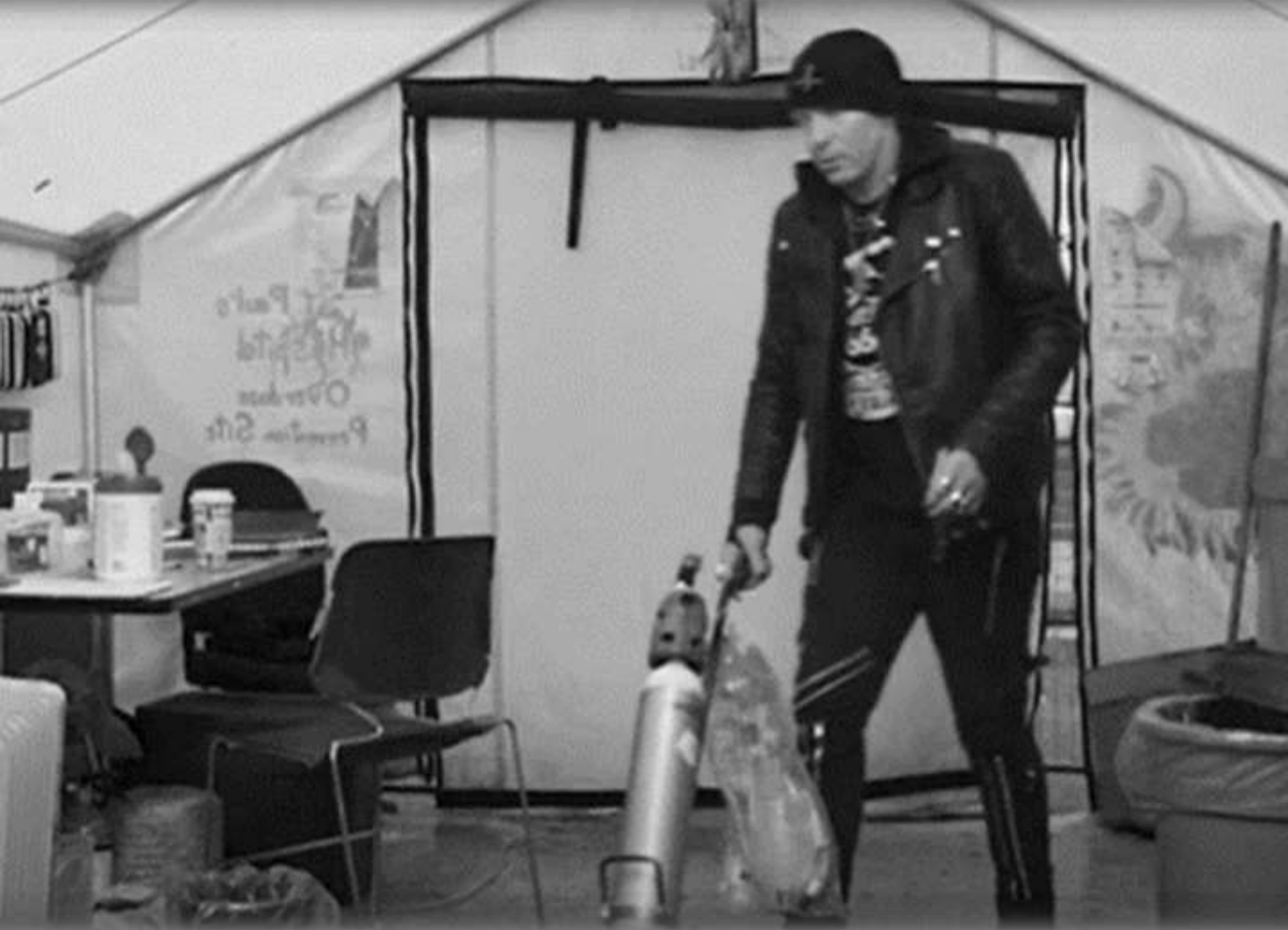
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