

Peers leading peers: An environmental scan of peer support-led initiatives across the Foundry network

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Introduction

Peer support is a practice founded on values of self-determination, hope, recovery, and a mutual agreement of what is helpful (as listed by Peer Support Canada). Formalization and integration of peer support services into Foundry centres as one of five core service streams has yielded unique results where peers have been able to create and offer peer support services beyond the traditional one-to-one medical model.

Objectives

To describe how peer supporters within the Foundry network have demonstrated a commitment to peer values and leadership through the development of several peer-led initiatives in the form of groups and written educational materials.

Approach/Methods

Using an environmental scan, we engaged peer supporters through our community of practice to identify peer-led initiatives across the network of 11 Foundry communities and our provincial virtual care service.

Results

These 3 initiatives include groups such as the Beauty of Life in Psychosis (BLIP) group from Foundry Virtual BC, the “Parents like us: The unofficial survival guide to parenting a young person with a substance use disorder” handbook published by Family Peer Supporters at Foundry Victoria, and cross-collaborative programs across centres in different geographic regions such as “Drag Night” produced in collaboration with Foundry Virtual BC and Foundry Penticton. These initiatives have been met with high engagement from young people and caregivers, measured by high and repeat attendance and invitations to present the innovations across the network and at national conferences.

Conclusion

What makes these initiatives unique is that they were initiated and carried out organically by peers in response to their local community needs and are grounded in values of sharing lived and living experience to demonstrate values of hope and recovery. The community of practice at Foundry allows for rapid sharing of learning among peer supporters, ongoing quality improvement efforts, and opportunities to maximize participation of diverse young people and families across the province.