



What does it mean to work as a Youth Peer Support Worker, and how does it impact personal well-being?

Who was the study about?

18 Youth Peer Support Workers, ages 19–36, employed at Foundry centres or Foundry Virtual BC.



Youth Peer Support Workers are young adults with lived/living experience of mental or substance use health challenges who support youth on their journey of recovery and wellness, and work within an integrated team.

What was done?

- A group of Youth Peer Support Workers co-developed the interview questions
- Study participants were interviewed
- Data were themed by researchers
- Study participants shared preferences for final quote selection

What was found?

Being a Youth Peer Support Worker is “more than just the role”


They transform the lessons from their lived experience into strengths to benefit others. This offers a sense of purpose and fulfillment, impacting their professional and personal growth.


“...It’s not reaching down to help, it’s reaching across the table”

They aim to remove unfair power differences and build a relationship with youth based on mutual understanding, trust and shared experience.




While Youth Peer Support Workers gained skills and helped others find success, they share recommendations that would support their role:


Clarify definitions and scope of their role


Increase other providers’ understanding of the Peer Support role and value


More topic-specific training and support early in employment


Ensure enough extended benefits to support well-being

What do youth and family want you to know?

Youth Peer Support Workers are in a unique role that may reach youth other service providers cannot.

Continuing to make improvements at centres and Foundry Central Office is essential to support growth of the occupation, the wellbeing of the workers and overall service delivery.

Source

Authors: Madelyn Whyte, Kaylie Schols-Flett, Bridgette Ferrara, Cassia Warren, Matt Wenger, Gina Dimitropoulos & Skye Barbic

Title: The Occupation of Youth Peer Support Workers Within an Integrated Youth Services Initiative

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Co-created with the Findings for Foundry Committee, a group of youth and family advisors.

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