



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Alberta
Mental health for all

CMHA Campus Peer Support mini training Q & A

The Q & A portion of this training was not recorded. This document serves as a condensed transcript of the Q & A. The questions (in bold) and answers (below) have in some places been edited or paraphrased for the purpose of clarity. The participant names have been omitted.

In this framework, is engagement during the training primarily between the peer support trainees themselves, or is there that opportunity for the trainer to provide feedback on supportive listening and other communication skills practiced in the scenarios?

Absolutely. In your facilitator's guide, when you're doing those scenario situations, at the bottom, it provides some examples of responses that you can have.

What you would do in those scenario situations is to put them into groups. The students will go through each scenario themselves and try to come up with their own responses. And then afterwards, it is very important to give them feedback so that they know that they're on the right track.

You don't have to come up with all the answers yourself. The facilitator guide right at the bottom gives those potential responses to those scenarios.

Do you have any guidelines or recommendations for remuneration? What are the pros and cons of remuneration versus volunteer or a combination.

This is the first year that we've had volunteers and it really kind of fell in our lap. We repost for the position and advertise and hire. And then when those positions are full, if someone reaches out, which is what happened this year, two people reached out and wanted to be a part of it.

And so, they moved into the volunteer position. We then did some one-on-one training. The hope is that next year they've done quite well. And so, the hope is next year they'll move into a paid position as the peer supporters graduate or leave. We might also continue to have both if needed so that you have both volunteer and paid positions.



Best practice is to pay, which unfortunately not every place can do. So again, you might have a combination of both if you're able to, which may be a better route to go.

Does CMHA have any guidelines or recommendations for remuneration and what do you base that on?

From the national perspective or the pilot perspective, there are no broad guidelines that every site would need to follow because we know some schools are unionized versus unionized. Pay grades may be different. We couldn't really restrict or put in these guidelines that would be implemented across all the sites. It really depended on what practice is within each of the campuses and they had to sort of follow along with that. We didn't even have recommendations about the amount to pay or what an hourly salary would be because it really is up to each site what they have to work with.

As peer support starts to become more common in Alberta, it would be great for campuses to be able to share what they are doing. The HCA Community Hub peer support conversation is a great place to start. Collaborative discussions around remuneration and fund sourcing for these programs in different or creative ways might be helpful. So, facilitating those conversations might be something that the HCA community of practice can look at moving forward.

Collaboration here can be helpful. So, thank you for that question.

We are from a small university with about 800 students. We have tried this in the past and the big issue that we have had is that students felt uncomfortable sharing with a peer that they saw almost every day and that they know. So, when we heard that it was successful for Medicine Hat, we would like to know how they overcame that barrier. A program like this may do well with our community care leaders who are formerly known as residence assistants; however, a majority of our students are commuting students. How does that work?

That's a great question. The Brooks campus is quite small, and they've made it work very well. Having clear guidelines with your peers like confidentiality is very important. Making sure that the students are very aware of that as well and communicating this with the people that they're going to be working with.

Be transparent of what the peer support program is and what it is intended to do.

This might help some of that hesitation.

Brooks has only a few thousand people, a very small community. It's a very high population of international students. It has gone very well in such a small community. So,



the campus itself doesn't have very many students, yet they have really been able to make it work.

It is possible.

We had talked earlier about boundaries too, as another thing that can be important, like setting aside like in this space, I'm your peer supporter in this space, I'm a student alongside you.

Actual physical spaces can help with that as well, where it's like when we sit here, this is the person that I, this is our relationship.

And when I sit next to you in a classroom, this is our relationship. Another thing that can be worked into that training to make sure that it is tailored to your campus as well.

Some peer supporters have a uniform so when they're wearing their t-shirt like they're working as a campus peer supporter. When they're not you know they're not working, they're not wearing their uniform. This can also, especially on the Brooks campus, help them differentiate. Now I'm talking to a peer supporter versus when they're in class, they're classmates.

That's huge. And that can help with the boundaries of the peer supporters themselves too and understanding that like, I'm not going to be just someone that you can access at any given moment in the day. I'm working at some times and I'm not another just to make sure that those rules stay clarified.

