

OnTrackNY Peer Specialist Role & Peer Support for Young Adults

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Agenda:

- Introduction to Peer Specialists in the OnTrack Model
- Role Responsibilities of Peer Specialists
- Peer Support and Young Adults
- Strategies for Integrating Peer Support Practices

What does it mean to be “Peer”?

Formal Definition:

“a peer is one that is of equal standing with another”

- Not a job, nor a definition of lived experience in the mental health system
- But, a relationship.



“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time.

But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilla_Watson



Peer Specialists within OnTrackNY Teams

- The OnTrackNY Peer Specialist plays a critical role on the team. The role is considered embedded in the team, they work alongside other disciplines to support the participant and their family.
- Working as part of a team allows for productive synergy to take place between the clinical and peer roles, helping to support and define each other, while positively influencing one another's perspectives and cultures.

Integrating the Spirit of Peer Support

For Settings without Peer Specialists on Staff:

- All staff can take on elements of the following role responsibilities
- Program Participants can develop peer relationships with one another
- Learn about Peer Run agencies in your region and connect participants and families
- Bringing in experts and consultants with lived experience to train staff
- Advocate for the role on your team!

Role Responsibilities of OnTrack Peer Specialists

12 role responsibilities specific to peer specialists on OnTrack NY teams



Peer Specialist Role Responsibilities

- Outreach & Engagement
- Relationship Building
- Embracing Creative Narratives
- Co-Creating Tools for Success
- Supporting & Partnering with Families
- Eliciting Stakeholder Feedback
- Bridge Building
- Group Facilitation
- Community Mapping
- Influencing Team Culture
- Team Communication & Collaboration
- Ongoing Professional Development

Outreach & Engagement

- Involved in all aspects of community and participant outreach
- Engaging participants in services
- Keeping participants connected to care.
- Helping to promote community awareness of and facilitate engagement with OnTrackNY teams
 - participating in outreach activities alongside other team members.
 - Reaching out to participants and their families in order to introduce them to the unique benefits of working with OnTrackNY, so that they may build strong connections with the team.
 - Walking alongside new participants as they go through the introduction, evaluation and orientation

Relationship Building

- Develop relationships with participants that are reciprocal
- Connecting around our shared mental health experiences and other aspects of our personal lives
- Building shared space in interactions
- Allowing the participant to guide us

Embracing Creative Narratives

- Explore and discuss multiple frameworks for understanding life experiences such as psychosis with participants and the OnTrackNY team.
- Embrace diverse narratives in order to create space for complex personal stories of recovery and resilience.
- Support our team members in expanding their understanding of experiences to include perspectives outside of the traditional mental health system.

Co-Creating Tools for Success

- Engage in a mutual relationship of learning and building together.
- Collaborate on strengthening self-awareness, building life skills, and clarifying their personal visions via the use of wellness tools (e.g., OnTrack Maps, The Power Statement Worksheet).
- Trying new activities together
- Creating opportunity for the participant to teach us

Supporting & Partnering with Families

- Form a partnership with the participant and their families, as crucial members of the team.
- Participate in mutual disclosure
- Participating in family nights or groups

Eliciting Stakeholder Feedback

- Peer Specialists support and partner with current and former program participants to learn about their experiences to ensure that the OnTrackNY program is best serving participants, their families and the community at large and must be complimented with a robust system to communicate responses and shift practices as needed.
 - Holding focus groups
 - Connecting with current participants to learn how the program could adapt to better meet their needs

Bridge Building

- Bridge between OnTrackNY team members and participants to help facilitate participants' recovery related goals.
- Bridge between participants and the broader community in order to connect participants to resources and opportunities outside of the OnTrackNY team.

Group Facilitation

- Facilitate groups that we develop
- Co-facilitate groups with participants
- Co-facilitate groups with other team members
 - These might include groups that are focused on sharing stories, strengthening support networks, healthy living, or providing support to families.

Community Mapping

- Peer Specialists develop a strong awareness of resources available in their region and familiarize themselves with organizations, agencies, businesses and public programs in order to support participants and their supporters in accessing.

Influencing Team Culture

- Positively influence the team culture
- Emphasizing the perspectives and experiences of participants and ourselves , which team members who have not been diagnosed with a mental illness may not be aware of or may have difficulty understanding.
- Work alongside other team members to promote a youth friendly approach and encourage the use of recovery-oriented language among team members.

Team Communication & Collaboration

- Maintain open and frequent communication with the team to ensure integrated and cohesive services.
- Collaborative Documentation with participants
- Joint visits with team members

Ongoing Professional Development

- Regularly check in with our team leaders and agencies concerning opportunities to expand and deepen our professional skills by participating in peer-centric/peer-run mental health related conferences, workshops, continuing education courses, and web-forums. Also included:
 - Supervision
 - Self Care

Tasks of Peer Specialists

Common Themes of Peer Support Work :

- Mutuality and reciprocity
- Taking a learning stance
- Allowing the participant to lead
 - Non-coercive
 - Non-hierarchical
- Outside of clinical or medical model
- Focused on the specific relationship

Peer Support & Young Adults

Strategies to implement on your site:

- Meaningful Youth Engagement
- Peer Support Groups
- Participant Advisory Committees
- Family Nights
- Local Peer-Led Agencies
- Regional, Statewide, National, International Peer Networks

Peer Support & Young Adults

- **What is already in place to support this work?**

- **What structures would need to be built within your program?**

Thank you!

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