## Eating Disorder Peer Workforce GuidelinesAppendix G: Peer work information sheet

What is a Peer Worker?

A Peer Worker is a member of the care team who draws on their own personal experience of difficulties and recovery to help them relate to you as a person, and support your journey of recovery by listening, inspiring hope, role modelling recovery, sharing information, and providing a safe, stable point of contact during your recovery.

Peer workers at this organisation have completed training in various components of peer work including:

Note: Organisations might choose to list what training their peer workers have completed.

Our peer workers also receive ongoing supervision and support in their work and are a valued member of the team. Our peer workers provide support in various ways including (organisations can change based on their services):

1. Running groups
2. Providing meal support
3. Providing one-to-one support

By engaging with a peer worker, you will learn about each other and build a relationship based on mutual respect, trust, safety, and cooperation. This relationship offers you the unique opportunity to develop a supportive relationship with someone who has worked through similar challenges in their own lives. Our Peer Workers will use their personal experience of recovery to help you to set your own recovery goals and support you to move towards those goals.

Working from a strength’s perspective, the Peer Worker plays an important role, helping you to:

* Reduce feelings of social isolation
* Share from experience and develop self-awareness
* Develop and sustain hope and motivation for change or sustained recovery
* Define and work towards personal goals
* Learn practical strategies for recovery
* Enjoy social contact and daily activities
* Negotiate setbacks in recovery
* Develop self-esteem and taking pride in their achievements

Our Peer Workers will:

* Develop a safe and trusting relationship with you
* Provide encouragement and support, in a nurturing and respectful manner
* Contribute to your growth and goal setting
* Teach you relevant skills to help you achieve your goals
* Review and respond to your changing needs and goals
* Work with you as part of your care team to support your recovery

Our Peer Workers will not:

* Meet all your needs
* Tell you what to do. But they may be able to share helpful information from their own experience.
* Provide counselling or professional treatment. Peer work is an additional support for you in your recovery journey.
* Replace your friendships and are not a friend. Like other members of your professional care team, peer workers work with professional boundaries in place and the duration of the relationship may be limited based on your support needs. You will have an opportunity to discuss this further when you first meet your peer worker.

Note: Organisations may choose to specify time limitation based on their model of care.

* Provide crisis support. When you start working with your peer worker, you will agree on when they are available to be contacted and work with you to develop a plan for crisis support.

Is peer work support right for you?

Working with a peer worker may be the right choice for you if:

* You want to make changes in your life by participating in treatment or sustaining your wellbeing after treatment
* You have a GP and/or Mental Health Professional
* You are in good general health
* You feel isolated and need someone to listen to you
* You are looking for an opportunity to share your experience with someone who has similar experiences, set goals and learn new ways to move forward in your recovery journey.

What will be offered to you?

* In the initial intake, we will ask you some questions to help find the right peer worker for you.
* Your peer worker will meet with you either weekly or fortnightly. The frequency of these appointments can be reviewed based on your needs.
* You will meet your peer worker either in person (at a location that you agree on beforehand) or through a pre-arranged phone or video call.
* You will set specific goals with your peer worker and identify specific areas of challenges that you want support with. This might be in relation to meal support, completing food challenges, working through communication barriers, help with meal planning/food shopping etc.
* Deciding when and where you will meet is one of the first things that you will negotiate with your Peer Worker.

What are your responsibilities?

When you engage in one-to-one peer work, you are entering into a partnership and hence you will have an active role to play. You and your Peer Worker will work together to develop an agreement that will spell out what each of you will do to help the relationship to develop as you work on your recovery goals. This agreement is intended to help keep on track and be able to review your progress.

Your agreement will include:

* Your objectives and what you would like to achieve, with specific timelines identified. As part of this process, you may be asked to write down a paragraph about yourself and your goals.
* When and where you will meet and how long each session will be
* The type of contact that you prefer (e.g. face to face, telephone) and at least one alternative
* How and when you will review the relationship and what you will do if you experience challenges that you cannot resolve together
* Your preferred contact details and emergency contact details
* A privacy and confidentiality statement
* The finishing date for your individual peer work support
* A statement of the mutual commitments made by you and your peer worker.

Usually, you and your peer worker will be asked to agree to things like:

* Keeping to the scheduled meeting times
* Letting each other know if you need to make any changes to meeting arrangements
* Checking your emails or phone messages
* Respecting each other’s time and avoiding contact outside the agreed meeting schedule
* Building the relationship together
* Maintaining each other’s privacy and confidentiality
* Sharing honestly with each other from your experience
* Listening respectfully to each other
* Working together to set goals and resolve problems
* Taking responsibility for your own actions and choices
* Reflecting and learning through the experience of mentoring
* Letting the Program Coordinator know of any issues or concerns as soon as they come up

Program basics

In this section, organisations can outline specific details about the program including but not limited to:

* Duration for which one-to-one support might be offered (e.g. X months) and number of sessions per week and length of each session (e.g. once/week for 1 hour).
* Details about how to express interest/refer self for the program
* Any program non-negotiables (e.g. medical monitoring/GP review, expected engagement with other members of treatment team, abusive language/aggressive behaviour, lateness, non-attendance, costs).
* Mechanisms to provide feedback about the service.