



Peer Support Program

Peer Support is a program in which people on site are trained to assist workmates affected by stress.

What is Peer Support?

While organisations go to great efforts to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of personnel, it's known that stress and mental health issues continue to impact on the workgroup. The nature of the work, demanding rosters and difficult environmental conditions are all factors which can have an impact.

The reluctance of many workers to seek assistance for such concerns has been reduced by organisations putting in place a Peer Support Program to complement existing services available to them.

Why have a Peer Support Program?

Many organisations make use of a range of services including "Employee Assistance Programs" to assist workers to deal with stress. These initiatives are valuable and often have high success rates for the workers who make use of them. However, there are some workers who are either unaware of these services or avoid accessing assistance. A useful, complimentary initiative is the use of collegial assistance, such as Peer Support, to take a more proactive approach to this problem.

What's the value of Peer Support?

There are a number of benefits that arise from using a Peer Support Program to encourage and assist employees to access help. The peer supporter:

- ▶ Has job knowledge and an understanding of the problems workmates are dealing with.
- ▶ Knows the organisation and can direct workmates to appropriate help.
- ▶ Is in the work location, so there's ready access when someone is looking for information.
- ▶ Provides credibility and trust, often because of shared experiences with his / her workmates.
- ▶ Provides information support options available, both within and beyond the organisation.

What are the advantages of having a Peer Support Program?

- ▶ Creates an additional avenue of support for employees
- ▶ Acts as a linkage between the workforce and professional services
- ▶ Can proactively reach those who typically wouldn't ask for assistance
- ▶ Promotes positive discussion around mental health and the importance of reaching out for help when needed
- ▶ Creates a culture of care within the organisation. ▶



Peer Supporters assist by:

- ▶ Being available to assist someone under stress
- ▶ Actively listening in a non-judgemental manner
- ▶ Providing information about stress and stress reactions
- ▶ Normalising and validating typical responses in stressful situations
- ▶ Providing information on resources and further help
- ▶ Encouraging peers to take action
- ▶ Providing practical support.

Getting the Peer Support Program underway

The first part of the process involves a number of steps broken up into four key components:

1. Program Development

BSS will assist you by providing:

- ▶ Advice in best practice peer support programs to ensure your program is set up for success
- ▶ Customisable policies, procedures to ensure guidelines are in place internally to support the program
- ▶ Advice and information on key roles and responsibilities
- ▶ Templates for seeking expressions of interest and assessing suitability of candidates.

2. Peer Supporter Training Phase

Suitable candidates are trained in the 2-day Peer Support Training Program. The training, a skills based, experiential learning program seeks to effectively onboard peer supporters in their role.

3. Program Launch

With all the appropriate training and processes in place to ensure psychological safety for both the peer supporters and those they are supporting, you now have the exciting opportunity to launch and promote the Peer Support Program in your workplace.

4. Program Sustainability

BSS is available to continue to support the organisation throughout the lifespan of the program. BSS will continue to support you by:

- ▶ Delivering an ongoing dedicated support service to your peers supporters which they can access 24/7 through a free call number
- ▶ Offering elective interaction data reporting
- ▶ Facilitating refresher training and other supplementary training programs for your peer supporters
- ▶ Providing ongoing consultancy services to address any challenges that may arise.

For more information on the Peer Support Program or to contact our team, call +61 8211 3700 or email training@bsspsych.com.au



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