

Recovery is Possible

Everyone's mental health recovery journey is different. It is important to support individuals and their families throughout this process.



Issue Summary

Peer support is undervalued in Alberta, despite knowing the recovery-oriented practice allows people to experience great improvements in their lives through relatively small investments. Peers help alleviate some of the pressure on the healthcare system by reducing the need for hospitalization and emotional distress experienced by patients.



Solution

Support and implement peer-informed and peer-led support programs that contribute to improved mental health and well-being.

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Research

“Peer support programs can help alleviate some of the pressure on Canada’s strained healthcare system by reducing not only the need for hospitalization, but also the emotional distress experienced by patients. They also help people develop the skills they need to take charge of their lives. Yet despite these benefits, peer support is still undervalued by the mental health community... People can experience great improvements in their lives through relatively small investments in peer support but growing and sustaining such initiatives requires adequate funding.”

–Mental Health Commission of Canada,²⁷ n.d.



Alberta Examples

Alberta Recovery Colleges provide training and education, equipping and supporting individuals with lived experience. Individuals with lived experience transcend traditional barriers between those seeking help and those offering support.

Caregiver Connections is an Alberta-wide family support initiative, where peers support others in their journey caring for a child, youth, or other dependents with a mental health concern or illness. CMHA Regions in Alberta, including Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Camrose and Wood Buffalo, conduct this network of peer-to-peer family support services, sharing information and resources to assist caregivers in achieving wellness for themselves in their journey supporting their child or other dependents.

Alberta Addicts Who Educate and Advocate Responsibly (AAWEAR) is a group of people in Alberta with addictions.²⁸ “Through supporting each other, educating others in the community, and raising awareness of health issues, AAWEAR strives for an improved quality of life for those in the drug-using community.”

²⁷ Peer Support (n.d.). *Mental Health Commission of Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/recovery/peer-support>

²⁸ Our Mission (n.d.). *Alberta Addicts Who Educate and Advocate Responsibly*. Retrieved from <http://www.aawear.org/about>