

April 2017

Mental Health and Addictions Peer Support/Consumer Survivor Initiatives Update

Peer support is an essential and valued component of a client-centred, recovery-oriented system of mental health and addictions care in the South West.

The Peer Support Strategy vision is to create a connected, seamless system that provides consistent and equitable peer support built on the best available evidence across the South West LHIN. There is a pressing need to better integrate existing Consumer Survivor Initiatives (CSIs)/Peer Support programs with community MH&A services to improve client access to a coordinated range of peer services and supports and ensure that individuals with mental health and addiction challenges are able to access high quality peer support programs into the future. Integration will also address identified risks and challenges related to governance, financial controls and human resources, and will enable individuals with lived experience to focus on peer support programming and the delivery of peer services while relieving the challenges associated with sustaining a separate organization.

Progress to Date by Sub-Region

Huron Perth Sub-Region

A Formal Notice of Intended Voluntary Integration was submitted to the South West LHIN by Choices for Change (CFC) and Phoenix Survivors Perth County on December 16, 2016. Pending the integration with Phoenix, CFC will provide peer support services within Perth County and Phoenix will cease to operate as an independent organization. CMHA Huron Perth will continue to provide peer support services within Huron County. Although CMHA Huron Perth is not a formal partner within the integration submission, they have been and will continue to work with CFC and Phoenix to ensure service coordination within the sub-region. On April 1, 2017, Peer Support program accountability previously held by Phoenix will be integrated with existing programs and services of CFC in Perth County.

Oxford Sub-Region

A Formal Notice of Intended Voluntary Integration was submitted to the South West LHIN by CMHA Oxford and the Oxford Self Help Network (OSHN) on December 20, 2016. The integration will result in the dissolution of OSHN as a separate entity and the Peer Support program will merge into CMHA Oxford which serves as the lead MH&A organization for the Oxford sub-region. On April 1, 2017 Peer Support program accountability previously held by OSHN will be integrated with existing programs and services of CMHA Oxford.

Grey Bruce Sub-Region

Peer support programming within the Grey Bruce area is provided by Hope Grey Bruce Mental Health and Addiction Services. The existing model within the Grey Bruce area has served as a best practice example within the South West. While the peer support program has not been offered through a stand-alone peer run agency, there has been significant peer leadership and support to enable an effective grass roots approach that has been well received by consumers of mental health and addiction services. The South West LHIN continues to explore opportunities to strengthen programming within this already integrated model of service delivery. Hope Grey Bruce Mental Health and Addiction Services remains the MH&A lead agency for this sub-region.

London Middlesex Sub-Region

Planning discussions continue in London Middlesex where there has been a number of challenges associated with facilitating the integration of Can-Voice peer support services into CMHA Middlesex, which has been identified as the MH&A lead for this sub-region. A Board to Board engagement session facilitated by South West LHIN Board members was held with Can-Voice Board representatives on December 19, 2016. The engagement session was productive and specific next steps were identified to continue to advance integration plans. On January 16, 2017, a meeting facilitated by South West LHIN Board representatives was held with Can-Voice and CMHA Middlesex Board members to continue integration planning. Two scheduled February meetings were cancelled by Can-Voice. On March 6, 2017, the South West LHIN Board representatives met with Can-Voice Board representatives to present a proposed approach to the integration of Can-Voice into CMHA Middlesex and to discuss next steps. On March 17, 2017, Can-Voice notified the South West LHIN that they do not wish to proceed with a voluntary integration with CMHA Middlesex.

CONNECT for Mental Health is a non-LHIN funded peer support program providing community and hospital based programs and services in London. Peer support is associated with a reduction in hospitalization for mental illness, reduction in length of hospital stays, improved social supports and quality of life. In 2016, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care committed one-time funding to support hospital-based peer support. These one-time funds were allocated directly to CMHA Middlesex, who used them to purchase services from CONNECT for Mental Health for 2016/17 to provide hospital-based peer support in London.

Elgin Sub-Region

Initial planning discussions continue in Elgin. Psychiatric Survivors Network (PSNE) currently provides peer support services and CMHA Elgin has been identified as the MH&A lead for this sub-region. Board to Board engagement sessions facilitated by South West LHIN Board members were held with the Psychiatric Survivors Network of Elgin (PSNE) on December 19, 2016. The engagement sessions were productive and specific next steps were identified to continue to advance integration plans. Four scheduled meetings occurred from January to March 2017. Another meeting will be scheduled for mid-April to continue integration planning with PSNE and CMHA Elgin.

Key Messages

- Peer Support is recognized as an essential and valued component of a client-centered, recovery-oriented system of mental health and addictions (MH&A) care in the South West.
- There is a pressing need to better integrate existing Consumer Survivor Initiatives (CSIs)/Peer Support programs with community MH&A services to improve client access to a coordinated

range of peer services and supports and ensure that individuals with mental health and addiction challenges are able to access high quality peer support programs into the future. Integration will also address identified risks and challenges related to governance, financial controls and human resources, and will enable individuals with lived experience to focus on peer support programming and the delivery of peer services while relieving the challenges associated with sustaining a separate organization.

- Stabilized peer support services will be embedded in the MH&A continuum of care and within sustainable peer support hubs and organizations.
- Peer support will be available wherever individuals are in their recovery journey including locations such as the community, hospital, outpatients, work and school, as well as wherever they live - urban, rural or remote locations across the South West LHIN.
- Peer support is associated with a reduction in hospitalization for mental illness, reduction in length of hospital stays, improved social supports and quality of life.
- Peer support training and education will be standardized
- Improvements are based on promising practices found in peer support research

Timeline and Next Steps

The South West LHIN is committed to working with CSIs on implementing the Peer Support Strategy within each sub-region as this will provide an opportunity to offer integrated and accessible peer support services to support the ongoing recovery and well-being of people with lived experience. Standardized peer support training will be provided for all organizations by the end of March 2017 and ongoing joint education opportunities will continue as part of a regional peer network. Implementation of the new model will begin in Oxford, Huron Perth and Grey Bruce April 1, 2017. Planning efforts are continuing to ensure achievement of the goals of the Peer Support Strategy within the London Middlesex and Elgin sub-regions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Why are peer support programs important?

A Peer support plays an important role in mental illness recovery. One of the key benefits is greater perceived empathy and respect for individual supported. As per the Mental Health Commission of Canada:

- *“An important contributor to recovery, peer support is a supportive relationship between people who have a lived experience in common. The peer support worker provides emotional and social support to others who share a common experience”.*
- *“Peer support programs work by offering people support, encouragement, and hope that recovery is possible. Peer support considers the wellness of the whole person and focuses on health and recovery rather than illness and disability, in order to assist people in finding their own path to recovery. There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to peer support. It can take many different forms and be offered wherever people need it, whether in peer-run organizations, workplaces, schools, or healthcare settings. Peer support is intended to complement traditional clinical care and vice versa.”*

- *“Peer support works. Empowerment and the development of personal resourcefulness — the foundation of peer support — not only improves people’s lives but also saves money by reducing the use of more formal mental health, medical, and social services.”*
- *“Peer support initiatives can have a great impact on a person’s journey of recovery. The relationship forged between the peer supporter and the person with a mental health problem or illness can help improve quality of life as well as reduce the need for hospitalization. These initiatives also have the potential to connect families of people with mental health problems or illnesses, allowing them to share their understanding of the mental health system, which in turn can improve their ability to care for their loved ones and themselves.”*

Q What is the plan to integrate peer support programs in the South West LHIN?

A Peer support will no longer be provided by stand-alone organizations, but will be integrated into the mental health and addictions (MH&A) system so that formal peer matching can occur as people transition into and out of the MH&A system.

Q Why does the LHIN want to integrate peer support programs?

A Peer support has been recognized as a valuable component of the mental health and addictions system, however, across the South West LHIN, there is a wide variance in how the LHIN-funded agencies provide peer support services. An integrated peer support system will improve access, enhance services, and ensure people can receive high quality support, wherever they live in the South West LHIN. Identified gaps include:

- Inequitable peer support program delivery. There is a broad spectrum of models ranging from friendship models/informal support to intentional peer support and clinical care in clinical settings
- Lack of peer supports in workplaces and clinical settings
- Lack of peer supports for families or special populations
- Challenges in accessing services due to transportation, distance or location
- Inconsistencies in training, human resource plans, risk management and matching peers to peer supporters

Q How will the integrations benefit clients?

A The integration of LHIN-funded peer support agencies is all about improving access to services and providing a better experience for clients with mental health and addictions concerns.

By collaborating with larger organizations, consumer support initiatives/peer support agencies would be able to strengthen the services they offer. This would not only allow them to respond to more people in need of support, but would let them benefit from the training, financial and other supports a larger organization could offer. This would ensure the sustainability of peer support for the future.

Q Will peer support services be lost or reduced by integrating?

- A** Peer-to-peer support will be enhanced, not lost. Integration of peer support in the MH&A system will ensure there is availability of peer support for individuals regardless of where they are in their recovery journey, whether they are in the community, hospital, at work or school, or whether they come from urban, rural or remote locations.

Resources

Please visit the South West LHIN Website for additional information on peer support

<http://www.southwestlin.on.ca/goalsandachievements/Programs/MentalHealthAddictions.aspx>