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Mental Health Peer Support Program (PSP) Guide

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Canadian Food Inspection Agency Peer Support Program

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to establish responsibilities, procedures, and requirements necessary to achieve the objectives of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)'s Peer Support Program (PSP).

Peer support is **confidential, voluntary, non-clinical, mental health support** that utilizes the wisdom that comes from lived experience. Social and emotional support from a person with lived experience can inspire hope and empower others in similar situations. ***The PSP is complimentary to, and not a replacement for, professional medical and clinical care.***

The PSP is available to all CFIA employees who are struggling with mental health challenges, and/or employees who are emotionally affected by a family member or loved one with a mental health challenge or illness.

The term "Mental Health challenge" refers to a wide spectrum of circumstances faced by CFIA employees. These can include, but are not limited to feelings of depression or anxiety, anger, overcoming traumatic experience, feeling overwhelmed, substance abuse, or adopting self-destructive behaviors. It also includes life challenges that CFIA employees may experience such as marriage breakdown, severe workplace stress or conflict, and/or loss of a loved one or colleague.

Peer Supporters are CFIA employee volunteers who have struggled either personally or through the experience of a loved one, are now in a positive state of recovery and/or readiness, and have successfully completed peer support training.

A Peer Supporter who has traveled the road to recovery can relate and offer empathy and validation. Drawing from personal lived experience and acquired skills, a Peer Supporter can offer support as a colleague strives to find his/her own unique path to recovery (or coping in the case of a family member). Peer support is intended to be an avenue of HOPE towards RECOVERY.

2. OBJECTIVES

The PSP offers support to employees affected by mental health and/or addiction, either personally or through a family member or someone close to them, and empowers them to find their path of recovery. The objectives of the PSP are to:

- Build a supportive community at work;
- Support and empower employees coping with mental health issues, either personally or through a loved one, to find their own path of recovery; and
- Recognize and value the potential for broader societal change by championing mental health peer support in our workplace.

2.1 Mission of the PSP

Our mission is to offer support and empower CFIA employees through awareness to enhance mental health wellness.

2.2 Vision of the PSP

Our vision is to build an inclusive, healthy, supportive environment at the CFIA that enables and encourages all employees, including those with mental health challenges, to contribute fully and to recognize the value of similarities and differences, resulting in acceptance.

3. PSP FRAMEWORK AND INTEGRITY

Overarching description document

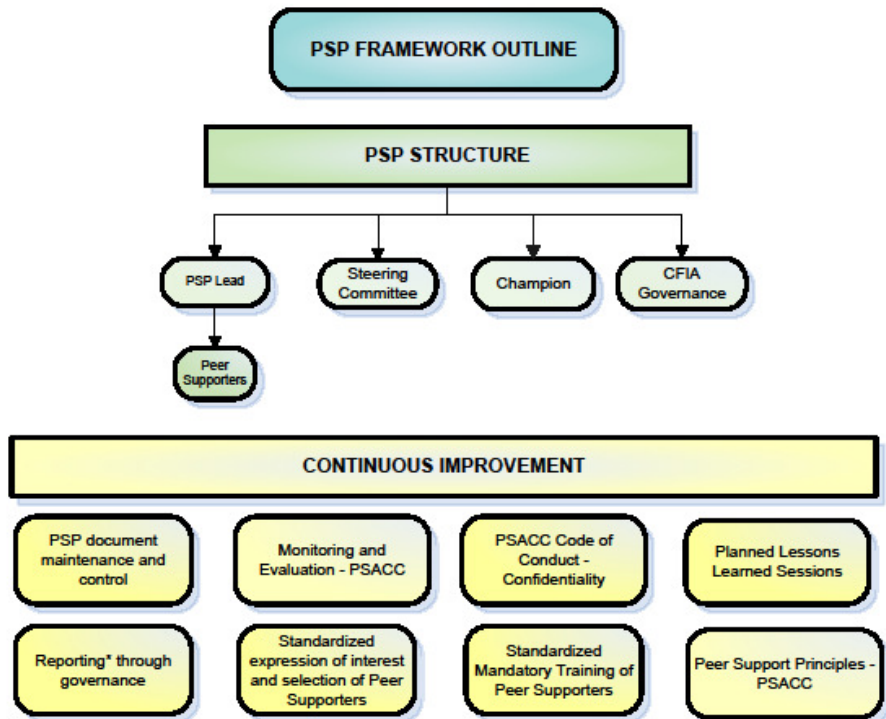
- Describes the basis of the Peer Support Program (PSP).
- Describes the structure of the PSP framework

Role and responsibilities' documents:

- Individually describe roles & responsibilities of the PSP Manager, the Steering Committee, and the Peer Supporters.

Continuous Improvement

- Tools, practices and/or principles implemented in the PSP to support consistency in application of the framework, and ensure continual improvement and sustainability.



PSP Guide Outline:

To assist readers in understanding CFIA’s Peer Support Program (PSP) Guide, which is the PSP’s primary reference document, Figure 1 above was developed. This figure and the accompanying text, outline key elements of the PSP. This document should be accompanied by the PSP Policy document.

***CONFIDENTIALITY** will be maintained – the information will be general and will not include names or specifics related to a case. Statistical information will be used to determine trends and identify needs.

PSP structure:

The Peer Supporter will likely be dealing with sensitive issues. Due to the nature of mental illness and the often associated stigmatization, Peer Supporters must be positioned to maintain confidentiality of shared information by peers, unless a breach of that confidentiality is warranted as outlined further on in this document.

The CFIA has accepted and endorses this reality, and the PSP was structured accordingly; however, it was also recognized that having Peer Supporters report to a single leader promotes consistent support to peers and to other Peer Supporters across an organization. For this reason, a flexible and feasible PSP structure was devised.

As the figure on the previous page depicts, Peer Supporters report to a PSP Lead responsible for the daily management of issues and activities. In addition to and separate from the PSP Lead, the PSP is guided by a PSP Steering Committee and an assigned Chair. The PSP Lead, in conjunction with the PSP Steering Committee Chair, reports to and works in collaboration with the CFIA's Mental Health Champion and Vice-President, Human Resources Branch (VP HRB). Although most decisions required to enhance and sustain the PSP will be either taken by the PSP Lead or the PSP Steering Committee, it is recognized that some decisions will require involvement of the Mental Health Champion and the VP HRB, and more infrequently, CFIA's upper management through CFIA's governance senior management committee(s).

The role and responsibilities of the PSP Lead (RDIMS 4581917), the PSP Steering Committee (RDIMS 4582056) and Peer Supporters (RDIMS 5468652) have been identified and documented separately.

Continuous Improvement:

CFIA's PSP was based on a proven robust methodology comprised of national standards of practice, an organizational readiness assessment, and an evaluation and monitoring strategy. Additional mechanisms were also implemented to assist in ensuring the continued credibility, quality and longevity of the PSP.

The standards of practice applied in developing the CFIA's PSP were developed in collaboration with experienced Peer Supporters and peer support experts from across Canada by Peer Support Accreditation and Certification Canada (PSACC). PSACC specifies standards for knowledge, lived experience, and acquired experience, and sets competency requirements for Peer Supporters, in all types of organizations, nationally. Additional detailed information on these PSACC competencies and the standardized recruitment and selection process for Peer Supporters can be found further along in this document in Sections 6 and 8 as well as in Appendix 4.

The CFIA will monitor and evaluate the strategy to ensure it is achieving set goals and will ensure the PSP's continual improvement. To do so, the PSP Lead, assisted by Peer Supporters, will collate generic information regarding daily PSP activities. For example, information on the number of peers using the PSP will be collected. Personal peer information will not be collected.

The CFIA's PSP is also based on a Peer Supporter Code of Conduct which outlines behaviours expected from all selected and trained Peer Supporters. Appendix 2 outlines the Code. It should be noted that Peer Supporters are also bound by all other CFIA policies and Codes of Conduct. Furthermore, information on the CFIA's PSP expected enforced practices regarding Confidentiality can be found under Section 9.

In addition to the adoption and implementation of standardized methods and practices for Peer Supporter training, recruitment and selection, and the application of best practices dictating Peer Supporter conduct, treatment of confidentiality, and monitoring and evaluation, the PSP Steering Committee instituted other mechanisms to promote continuous improvement of the PSP.

For instance, regular lesson learned sessions and document maintenance and control will be conducted. Annual reports will also be produced and distributed through the CFIA's governance and Peer Supporters will receive on-going training and/or professional development.

CONFIDENTIALITY will be maintained – the information will be general and will not include names or specifics related to a case. Statistical information will be used to determine trends and identify needs.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every CFIA employee has a role to play in promoting a safe, respectful and caring workplace. To ensure that the benefits are fully realized, it is necessary to:

- Promote awareness of the PSP across the organization;
- Train a sufficient number of Peer Supporters; and
- Ensure the continual availability of Peer Supporters, as needed.

4.1 CFIA's Mental Health Champion and Vice President of Human Resources

The Champion and VP are committed to:

- Supporting the PSP and its activities, including training, and continuous development;
- Maintaining open and on-going communication with members of the PSP to ensure the program is relevant to the needs of employees;
- Promoting the PSP through communicating educational information to all employees; and
- Providing this as a complementary program to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the Return to Work Program, and the Occupational Health and Safety program.

4.2 CFIA Executives, Managers and Supervisors

CFIA's management will:

- Allow reasonable time and encourage access to the PSP by all employees as required per the PSP Policy. (RDIMS 4612908)

4.3 Peer Support Program (PSP) Steering Committee

The PSP Steering Committee ensures that all CFIA employees have a representative voice at the table as the PSP is designed, implemented, managed and enhanced.

The Committee will ensure that the PSP is designed and enhanced in a manner that maintains a grassroots approach and promotes its sustainability. For information on the Committee's mandate, responsibilities, composition and roles, please refer to the document Workplace Mental Health Peer Support Program Steering Committee Terms of Reference. (RDIMS 4582056)

4.4 Peer Support Program (PSP) Lead

The PSP Lead oversees the management of daily activities of CFIA's PSP. As such, he/she acts as the primary contact for any issues, concerns, questions and suggestions regarding the delivery of peer support within the CFIA. The PSP Lead also leads the design, development, implementation, operations, enhancement, and sustainability of the PSP. For a full description of the PSP Lead's role and responsibilities, please refer to the document entitled CFIA's PSP Lead Role Description. (RDIMS 4581917)

4.5 Peer Supporters

Peer Supporters are trained CFIA employees who volunteered, for a minimum of two years, to meet with other CFIA employees (peers) to socially support them throughout their mental health difficulties whether they be their own or a family member's. Peer Supporters work with their peers, as necessary, to affirm and reframe issues, identify strengths, and identify desires and goals as indicated or requested by peers. As such, Peer Supporters may, for example, explore the availability of existing resources and empower and support the peers in contacting and accessing those resources.

4.6 Peers

A peer is a CFIA employee who reaches out for support.

5. ACCESSING PEER SUPPORT SERVICES

The PSP operates on the principle of anonymity of the peer. Confidentiality¹ for peers is assured within the Peer Supporter Code of Conduct and legal limitations.

Information on the PSP is available on Merlin, the CFIA's internal website.

Employees who wish to connect with a Peer Supporter may do so by either contacting the Peer Supporter directly by phone or email, or by contacting the PSP Lead or any member of the Steering Committee.

In an effort to ensure that all employees are made aware of the program, information about the PSP may be made available through:

- The President's Pipeline;
- Management meetings;
- Newsletters such as the Agency's National ZList messages;

¹ For detailed information on what confidentiality entails, please refer to Section 8

- Websites such as the CFIA intranet site (Merlin); and
- Generic e-mail address

Other CFIA groups, such as the Human Resources' Wellness team, Union representatives, Management, external third party EAP, and Public Service Health Care Plan Service Provider resources will be informed of the program and may suggest the PSP to any member who may find it to be helpful. Connecting with a Peer Supporter is voluntary and will always be offered as an option, never as a requirement.

6. REQUIRED COMPETENCIES FOR PEER SUPPORTERS

PSACC has identified the required competencies for Peer Supporters in mental health, as part of the National Standards of Practice (currently in draft format). The required competencies can be found in Appendix 4.

Peer Supporters are selected and trained to provide support to their colleagues who are currently struggling with mental health and/or addiction challenges. Peer support is based on a relationship of common experience, and in the case of mental health, the experience that individuals have in common is in relation to a mental health and/or addiction challenge (PSACC includes addiction as a mental health issue). This common experience might be relative to one's own mental health or that of a family member.

Peer Supporters can inspire hope and empower others in similar situations by providing social and emotional support. Best practices are such that Peer Supporters with:

- Personal lived experience provide support to employees personally experiencing mental health challenges; and
- Experience through a loved one provides support to employees who have loved ones experiencing mental health challenges.

7. PEER SUPPORTER COMMITMENT

The following is a list of expectations of Peer Supporters in the CFIA's PSP:

- a) The Peer Supporter is a volunteer member of the CFIA's Peer Support Program;
- b) The Peer Supporter provides support to his/her colleague and is not a professional counsellor;
- c) Strict adherence to the CFIA's Program Policy and the CFIA's PSP Codes of Conduct are required;
- d) The Peer Supporter must abide by strict confidentiality guidelines, the infringement of which may lead to revocation from the program;
- e) A Peer Supporter may be requested to provide peer support on short notice; and

- f) The Peer Supporter will maintain the responsibilities of his/her position within the Agency while offering peer support to others; and
- g) If the Peer Supporter has a question or concern during or after a peer support session, it is essential that he/she consult with the PSP Lead - in a crisis, refer to section 12, Crisis Management Protocols.

8. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR PEER SUPPORTERS

The success of the PSP is based on the careful selection and training of Peer Supporters. Peer Supporters must be CFIA employees, and have lived experience with mental health and/or addiction challenges either personally or as a family member.

8.1 Expression of Interest Principles

- a) The communication must be done in a manner that ensures the opportunity is known to all employees, so as to prevent bias and establish trust and fairness in the process;
- b) At its starting point, a sufficient number of interested employees are to be assessed to guarantee a high quality of candidates;
- c) The most suitable potential Peer Supporters are selected based on assessments and a reference check, with special consideration on the candidate's ability to maintain confidentiality, and provide peer support in a manner that promotes the credibility and reputation of the program;
- d) Selection of potential Peer Supporters also takes into account strategic considerations (e.g., availability, geography, operational functions, type of lived experience (family, personal, addiction, etc.) to ensure an appropriate distribution across the organization; and
- e) Suitability of potential Peer Supporters is based on their lived experience with mental health and/or addiction challenges, their apparent readiness (including their positive state of recovery) to support others, their ability to relate with a range of other colleagues, and their competencies as outlined in Appendix 4.

The Steering Committee oversees the expression of interest and selection process and ensures that the process is communicated in a manner that promotes and sustains a grassroots approach.

8.2 Expression of Interest Process

All CFIA employees will be made aware of the program with the assistance of a communication plan that includes the following elements:

- Newsletters;
- Information sessions;
- Brochures/Posters;
- CFIA wide emails; and
- Intranet messages/articles.

Expressions of interest must be submitted in writing and include:

- Reasons for wanting to participate, including how the applicant feels their lived experience benefits them to be a Peer Supporter;
- A description of what they think they can contribute to the program;
- A description of what they expect to get back from the program; and
- Identification of any worries/concerns they have about involvement in the program, if any.

Expressions of interest will be reviewed by the PSP Lead and/or an external expert(s) with experience in mental health peer support.

8.3 Assessment and Selection

The assessment panel will consist of the PSP Lead, a member of the PSP Steering Committee, and an external expert with experience in mental health peer support.

The assessment will be based on the PSACC competencies identified for Peer Supporters in Appendix 4.

The panel will identify those individuals they recommend as Peer Supporters. Recommended potential Peer Supporters will undergo a character reference check by the PSP Lead to ensure the person is respected and has credibility, with employee consent. References must include the employee's supervisor to ensure that the employee is in good standing and can appropriately manage the demands of their job and Peer Supporter responsibilities.

8.4. Supervisor / Peer Supporter Conflict

The PSP Lead will be contacted as an intermediary when there is a concern expressed by the Peer Supporter or a supervisor in relation to peer support commitments. The PSP Lead will investigate the validity of the concern and propose a way forward for the two parties.

A Peer Supporter will never break confidentiality in discussion with either a supervisor or the PSP Lead, unless exceptions stated in Section 9 are met.

8.5. Revocation/Relief of a Peer Supporter

The role of the Peer Supporter is revocable at the discretion of the PSP Lead, in consultation with the Chair of the PSP Steering Committee. This action is appropriate for, but not limited to the following:

- a. Personal health issues that impact the Peer Supporter's ability to support colleagues (note: potential suspension only - the Peer Supporter may be eligible for Peer Supporter functions once wellness is re-established);
- b. Failure to maintain strict confidentiality of peers, including topics discussed and personal details;
- c. Breach of the Peer Supporter Code of Conduct;
- d. Failure to follow PSP policies and directives;
- e. Acting against the recommendations of the PSP Steering Committee; or
- f. Continued absenteeism at PSP meetings or training sessions.

In agreeing to be a Peer Supporter, the employee agrees that the PSP Lead may, at any time, after proper supervision and evaluation, for a specific reason or reasons, recommend revoking the Peer Supporter of his/her peer support duties. Revocation of peer support duty will not affect the employee's employment with the CFIA barring extenuating circumstances.

8.6 Revocation/Relief Process

The PSP Lead will investigate the details surrounding a potential revocation or suspension of a Peer Supporter. Results will be presented to the Chair of the Steering Committee for a decision to be taken.

Barring violations of the CFIA Code of Conduct, any action taken within the program will not impact the Peer Supporter's normal work duties, will not be recorded in annual performance review documents or employee's work records, and will not have career implications unless the circumstances also included significant work related issues. Work related issues must be evaluated in their own right and not be confounded with peer support issues. Only work related issues can have career implications. The actions of a Peer Supporter could have career/job implications if, for example:

- the Peer Supporter uses his/her knowledge of a Peer's mental health challenge to influence the Peer's manager or colleagues, suggesting the Peer is no longer capable of handling certain files or job responsibilities; and
- the Peer Supporter spends too much time helping Peers at the expense of his/her regular CFIA roles and responsibilities, negatively impacting his/her job performance.

8.7. Professional Development

The PSP Lead and all Peer Supporters are required to attend the introductory Peer Support Training Course and refresher courses or additional workshops, as may be required, at a minimum, every two years.

The introductory course provides information and tools to help in providing peer support, in understanding constraints of breach of confidentiality, and enhancing the peer-to-peer relationship, communication skills, self-care strategies, and crisis management. Additional courses will be determined based on the identified needs of individual Peer Supporters or as determined necessary by the PSP Lead and/or steering committee.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Maintaining confidentiality is vital to the success of the PSP. A standard rule of confidentiality applies to all peer support activities as well as all individuals who are involved in the peer support program: in particular, names of peers and specific details about peer support discussions and interactions must be kept confidential. The only time that a breach of confidentiality can occur is in matters of imminent danger and in accordance with one of the following three requirements:

Confidentiality can be breached when there is:

1. Imminent threat of harm to oneself; or
2. Imminent threat of harm to others; or
3. Suspicion of, or known, child abuse or serious neglect.

All peer support program members will respect confidentiality. Failure to maintain confidentiality will result in revocation of their role in the peer support program.

9.1 Questions/Concerns Related to Confidentiality

In any case where a Peer Supporter is concerned about an issue of confidentiality, they should immediately contact the PSP Lead. The Peer Supporter should discuss the nature of the case with the PSP Lead without disclosing the name of his/her colleague or any specific details unless a breach of confidentiality is required. The PSP Lead may choose to follow up with an external expert for advice, at his/her discretion while maintaining confidentiality.

9.2 Informed Consent

Written informed consent will be required from a peer before any information can be released to or obtained from another individual, agency or institution, (unless the breach is for one of the 3 reasons stated above in which case informed consent is not required). In the rare case where this is appropriate, if consent is obtained, the Peer Supporter may share privileged information for the sole purpose of engaging additional support for the peer.

9.3 Retention of Information

At no point will a Peer Supporter maintain their own sets of notes on peers being supported. Peer Supporters must only use the confidential database platform provided and ensure that any information entered in the database platform could not be used to determine the identity of the individual being supported.

10. CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct mirrors the Core Values of peer support work and describes the behaviour expected of Peer Supporters, in accordance with the National Standard of Practice being established by PSACC. All Peer Supporters are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct can be found in Appendix 2.

11. SELF CARE PROTOCOL

All Peer Supporters are required to pay particular attention to their own self-care in order to minimize burnout or relapse. Several steps have been put in place to assist with and encourage self-care strategies.

11.1 Peer Supporter Training

The training course discusses self-care strategies that can be used by Peer Supporters. It is the primary responsibility of each individual to maintain, review and adapt self-care strategies, as required.

11.2 Personal Self-Care Plan

Peer Supporters must continuously work on and improve their ability to:

- Identify what **triggers** them;
- Gain introspection regarding their own particular **early warning signs** that their mental health is starting to slip.
- Establish clearly when their **health has broken down** to the state where outside intervention is necessary.

Knowing what to do and preplanning actions for each of these three distinct phases is paramount for a Peer Supporter.

11.3 Support from Other Members of the Peer Support Program

The work environment plays a pivotal role in performance and self-esteem. Peer Supporters are encouraged to request the support of other Peer Supporters when necessary. In addition, the PSP Lead is available during working hours by telephone or e-mail to offer administrative and program support on an as-needed basis. Should the PSP Lead be unavailable, someone will be designated to act in the PSP Lead capacity on a temporary basis.

11.4 Self-Care Activities

Most people have activities or hobbies they find enjoyable and helpful in calming themselves. The range of such activities is as diverse as the people who engage.

Example of these are knitting, reading, sculpting, hiking, yoga, biking, painting, collecting, watching movies, etc. As a Peer Supporter, it is very important that such activities be nurtured to assist in re-centering one's self, especially following intense peer support engagements or interactions. The CFIA PSP cannot mandate such activities but strongly encourages Peer Supporters to nurture these and remain engaged in them.

11.5 Personal Clinician

If a Peer Supporter is attending therapy at the time of becoming involved in the PSP they are encouraged to continue with the therapeutic relationship for as long as is necessary. The personal clinician can assist the Peer Supporter to monitor and maintain their personal wellness and will be able to offer the appropriate clinical support where necessary.

11.6 Community of Practice

CFIA Peer Supporters are encouraged to develop a supportive Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP is intended to provide connections across workplaces to enable sharing of resources and ongoing learning opportunities.

12. CRISIS MANAGEMENT

During crisis situations, where imminent harm to self or others may occur, Peer Supporters must not jeopardize their own personal safety. It is not the responsibility of a Peer Supporter to personally rescue any individual in a crisis.

Peer Supporters must be mindful of appropriate community resources where there are employees with specialized skills for crisis management and intervention. Peer Supporters must contact the appropriate services/authorities, even if they believe they could defuse the situation.

In many cases, a Peer Supporter might be the first point of contact for a peer experiencing a crisis. The Peer Supporter is not expected to physically intervene but rather to help the peer access their community resources (i.e., emergency services, their personal therapist and/or formal support network).

If, during an extreme/life threatening crisis situation, the peer is in contact with the Peer Supporter, the Peer Supporter must maintain the role of Peer Supporter and involve additional and separate resources appropriate to the circumstances. If weapons are known to exist, the Peer Supporter should call emergency services and forewarn them of the weapon. Peer Supporters must never place themselves at risk by attempting to defuse a situation involving weapons unless they are a police officer and trained to do so.

Peer Supporters should not, under any circumstances, take any actions that could risk their own safety. In addition, a Peer Supporter should not leave a peer alone unless the Peer Supporter's personal safety is at risk.

If they are speaking by phone every effort must be made to not hang up on the person. If at all possible another phone should be used to contact additional resources such as 911.

All Peer Supporters need to be aware that they can be negatively affected by other's crisis. Self-care strategies must be exercised on a regular basis to foster personal wellness. When involved in a crisis situation, the Peer Supporter must report to his/her PSP Lead to discuss the situation and reflect on the event. The PSP Lead, in consultation with the Peer Supporter, will determine whether it is appropriate for the Peer Supporter to contact the PSACC Community of Practice or a professional clinician for reframing or additional support.

In summary, the Peer Supporter should adhere to the following **crisis protocol**:

1. Do not jeopardize own health or safety;
2. Listen carefully to the needs and imminent problem;
3. Assess the situation and identify the appropriate resource to address the particular situation;
4. Help the peer determine if and which community resource would be most helpful, and help the peer to overcome any roadblocks that may be in existence in reaching out to the resource;
5. In cases where confidentiality must be breached, reach out to authorities (Police, EMS, Child Protective Services etc.) and ensure contacts are appropriately made;
6. Inform the PSP Lead and discuss other actions that may need to be taken;
7. Attempt to stay connected to the peer, but remain at arms-length from the crisis situation per se - simply continue to be supportive;
8. Proactively monitor self-care and ensure you remain engaged in self-care activities, especially following the crisis situation; and
9. Follow up with the peer following the crisis situation.

13. BOUNDARIES

In working with peers, there will be many occasions when Peer Supporters must remind themselves that the role of a Peer Supporter is to LISTEN and SUPPORT. The Peer Supporter Code of Conduct is quite explicit in this regard and the Peer Supporter is expected to understand and comply with it.

Peer Supporters are not advocates; however, there may be a time for advocacy on behalf of a peer. The Peer Supporter, in consultation with the PSP Lead, will carefully weigh each situation and attempt to maximize support and empower the peer in making his or her own decisions in dealing with the situation.

Overstepping boundaries may also put the Peer Supporter in the position where they become, in the peer's mind, responsible for the outcome of events thereafter.

- By giving specific direction to the peer or taking over the situation, the Peer Supporter may interfere or be in conflict with another service or care provider (i.e. Employee Assistance Program, Health Care Professionals) who is working with the peer.
- A Peer Supporter may feel justified in telling a peer who seems overwhelmed what to do or to take action on behalf of the peer. However, this may increase the peer's sense of helplessness and delay the peer from gaining back control of their life and their decisions.
- The Peer Supporter could be overstepping boundaries related to the workplace.

A Peer Supporter will need to understand when it is time to "hand off" support to another resource. In most cases, Peer Supporters can avoid boundary conflicts by:

1. Following policies and procedures provided during training;
2. Developing strong positive working relationships with other Peer Supporters within the organization to facilitate open and ongoing discussions on issues as they arise (while maintaining confidentiality);
3. Consulting with the PSP Lead in cases of difficulty;
4. Respecting the mandate and dedication of all other professionals who work with peers;
5. Realizing that in many cases no one individual, including the peer being supported, is aware of all factors that are involved in a situation;
6. Avoiding direct advice on a subject which the Peer Supporter is not qualified to comment on, including the personal health care, medication, benefits being received; and
7. Avoiding potential conflicts of interest, such as providing peer support to colleagues who may be related or in conflict with each other.

For the Peer Supporter, there are three main areas where boundary concerns may arise:

1. Issues in the Workplace;
2. Employee Assistance Program (EAP); and
3. Health Care Professionals.

14. RESOURCES REQUIREMENTS

To ensure the continuation of the PSP, resources are required for the following:

- PSP Steering Committee Quarterly Meetings;
- Peer Support Training Workshops;
- Peer Support Program meetings/workshops;
- Selection and training of new Peer Supporters to address attrition and demand;
and
- Other associated costs including telephone charges, education material and publications, and travel.

Appendix 1 – VALUES OF PEER SUPPORT² (PSACC)

The integrity and intention of the Peer Supporter are critical to the success of this delicate peer relationship. The Core Values provide the foundation for this important work:

- **Mutuality** – We value the empathy that comes from shared experience
- **Dignity** – We honor and respect the intrinsic worth of all individuals
- **Self Determination** – We honor an individual’s autonomy and inherent right to make their own choices as they determine their path of recovery
- **Personal Integrity** – We value interpersonal relationships that honor authenticity, trust, respect and ethical behavior that upholds our Code of Conduct
- **Trust** – We are honest, reliable, and accountable for our actions
- **Health, Well-being and Recovery** – We value health, well-being, recovery and the power of hope for ourselves and others
- **Social Inclusion** – We respect diversity and value social justice
- **Lifelong Learning** – We value personal growth through professional and personal development

² Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). National Certification Handbook (Standards of Practice). www.psac-canada.com.

Appendix 2 - PEER SUPPORTER CODE OF CONDUCT³

The Code of Conduct mirrors the Core Values of peer support work and describes the behaviour expected of Peer Supporters. All Peer Supporters must abide by the following Code of Conduct:

- I will act ethically, according to the values and principles of peer support.
- I will treat all people with respect and dignity.
- I will respect human diversity and will foster non-discriminatory activities.
- I will honour the rights, beliefs and personal values of individuals.
- I will behave with honesty and integrity in providing support to peers.
- I will respect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality within the limitations of program policies and the law e.g. potential harm to self or others.
- I will not knowingly expose a peer to harm.
- I will not take advantage of the peer relationship for personal benefit, material or financial gain.
- I will respect the boundaries of peer support work and will not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with the peers that I support.

³ Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). National Certification Handbook (Standards of Practice). www.pfac-canada.com.

Appendix 3 – PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE⁴

The Principles of Practice embody the character of the relationship and the philosophy of the work. The Principles of Practice flow from the Core Values and will help to define the Standards for certification as a Peer Supporter.

Peer Supporters:

- Recognize the importance of an individual approach to mental health recovery.
- Honour and respect where each individual is in their own unique journey of recovery recognizing that the focus is on the process and not just the end result.
- Facilitate the self-determination and the empowerment of peers to take an active role in their recovery and wellbeing.
- Recognize that the goals, values and beliefs of their peers may not be the same as their own.
- Are collaborative in building equal, open and trusting relationships with peers.
- Share their lived experiences in a manner that demonstrates compassionate understanding and inspires hope for recovery.
- Ensure that the knowledge gained from personal experience is used in a manner that contributes to the well-being of the peer and that the relationship is always peer-focused.
- Maintain mutually agreed upon limits and boundaries in the peer support relationship.
- Respect external limits and boundaries within the context of their role as a Peer Supporter.
- Practice self-care, monitor their own well-being and are aware of their own needs, as well as promote self-care for their peers.
- Play an active role in connecting peers to other resources and are open to seeking help when needed.
- Are collaborative with community partners, service providers and other stakeholders.
- Aspire to be current within their field of practice by remaining up-to-date regarding available resources, especially those that are locally available, and by engaging in continuous learning.
- Conduct themselves in an ethical manner upholding the core values, principles of practice and the Code of Conduct of Peer Support Accreditation Certification (Canada).

⁴ Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). National Certification Handbook (Standards of Practice). www.psac-canada.com.

Appendix 4 - PEER SUPPORTER COMPETENCIES⁵ (PSACC)

The following are competencies to look for when identifying and nominating employees as Peer Supporters:

1. Communication

Listens with empathy and without judgement; holding peers in unconditional high regard. Utilizes various communication styles and skills to improve understanding and adapts the style and tone of communication to suit the listener and the situation. Communicates using recovery language and emphasizes the strengths of their peers.

2. Hope

Operates from a sense of hope, expressing confidence that others will be successful in their own personal journeys of recovery. Strives to model realistic optimism and a belief that even in difficult situations positive choices can be made.

3. Demeanour

Is sensitive to what another might be feeling, demonstrates a capacity for non-judgmental empathy, and responds from an equal, genuine, and sharing point of view. Selectively self-discloses own experience in a manner that ensures the relationship remains peer focused.

4. Interpersonal Relations

Interacts in a manner that honors the dignity of others and strives to build positive respectful relationships. Strives to make others feel comfortable and conveys genuine interest in the other person. Even in a difficult or tense situation he/she strives to maintain a level of respect and consideration for others.

5. Critical Thinking

Engages in active listening skills to better understand a situation and recognizes that there is more than one way to look at an issue. Considers the possible implications or outcomes of actions and, when asked, will help peers to explore the outcome or possible consequences of various options. Demonstrates good judgement in respecting the limits and boundaries of their role.

6. Flexibility and Adaptability

Open to new ideas, deals comfortably with ambiguity, and adjusts plans or behaviours to better suit a given situation. He/she is willing to be open-minded and compromises when needed.

⁵ Peer Support Accreditation and Certification (Canada). National Certification Handbook (Standards of Practice). www.psac-canada.com.

7. Initiative and Commitment

Is dependable and carries tasks through to completion. He/she demonstrates good judgement knowing when insight or assistance should be requested from another and are trustworthy when working independently.

8. Self-Awareness and Confidence

Interacts in a manner that demonstrates a balance of self-confidence with openness to the thoughts and opinions of others. Self-reflects and understands that personal thoughts and attitudes can influence behaviour and actions.

9. Self-Management and Resiliency

Understands the importance of self-care and stress management and models the practices that work best for them to remain healthy while supporting others. He/she strives to maintain calm and diffuse stressful or challenging situations.

10. Teamwork

Shares knowledge, ideas and resources with team members in a cooperative and collaborative manner. He/she strives to fulfill their role and responsibility within the team while respecting the roles and responsibilities of the other team members.

11. Continuous Learning & Development

Strives to approach life and work in a curious manner, identifies areas where personal growth may be helpful, and takes advantage of opportunities to learn and develop. He/she recognizes the value of on-going personal growth and skill development and maintains a connection with a peer support community as a resource to stay 'grounded' in the work of authentic peer support.

Appendix 5 - PEER SUPPORTER SELECTION INFORMATION

Peer support is based on a relationship of common experience, and in the case of mental health, the experience that individuals have in common is in relation to a mental health challenge. This common experience might be relative to one's own mental health or that of a loved one / family member.

Peer Supporters can inspire hope and empower others in similar situations by providing social support and emotional support. Best practices are such that:

- Peer Supporters with personal lived experience provide support to employees personally experiencing mental health challenges;
- Peer Supporters with experience through a loved one provide support to employees who have loved ones experiencing mental health challenges.

The term "Mental Health challenge" refers to a wide spectrum of circumstances faced by CFIA employees. These can include, but are not limited to feelings of depression or anxiety, anger, overcoming traumatic experience, feeling overwhelmed, substance abuse, or adopting self-destructive behaviors. It also includes life challenges that CFIA employees may experience such as marriage breakdown, severe workplace stress or conflict, and/or loss of a loved one or colleague.

Peer Supporters will:

- Successfully complete peer support training, and additional training modules as identified by the Peer Support Steering Committee and PSP Lead;
- Establish rapport with colleagues and build a relationship based on trust, respect, genuineness, confidentiality and empathy while maintaining clear boundaries;
- Work with peers (colleagues) seeking support to affirm and reframe issues, and support peers in meeting their needs;
- Support peers as they strive to make positive changes by identifying strengths and desires, which may involve helping to set goals and exploring how they might work towards those goals;
- Explore with peers the availability of existing resources, empower and support peers in contacting and accessing appropriate existing services such as Employee Assistance Program, community services (not strictly mental health), health care providers and others services to meet the various needs expressed, as required;
- Respect and maintain confidentiality of personal information, in accordance with program policies;
- Apply and respect the principles of self-care to mitigate the impact of peer support work and reduce the possibility of relapse;

- Complete peer support interaction notes and other reports, as required;
- Read, understand, and abide by CFIA Policies and the CFIA and PSP Codes of Conduct; and
- Support the research and evaluation agenda by gathering peer support outcome data in accordance with the confidentiality requirements of the program.