



# The PEARS Project Mandate

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PEARS stands for Prevention, Empowerment, Advocacy, Response, for Survivors.

The PEARS Project is a grassroots, trauma-informed coalition that provides support and resources to survivors of sexual violence across the University of Toronto. Founded and led by survivors, PEARS recognizes survivors as leaders in the field and the voices which need to be heard to implement policy change. The tri-campus initiative has formed, trained, and supports 10 teams of peer supporters one at each St. George campus college; one at each satellite campus, and one within the Faculty of Engineering.

By formalizing a community and resource network that is by and for survivors we can better support one another and increase access to legal, mental health, and capacity-building supports. Furthermore, by integrating PEARS ‘branches’ into pre-existing communities, PEARS will be better able to create mutual relationships with broader student communities and help promote the work of other divisional stakeholders.

## **The goals of The PEARS Project are to:**

- Create and train teams that will work independently within their college and/or campus to provide 1-on-1 peer support, scope divisional resources/recommendations, and connect survivors to resources
- Refer survivors to a variety of resources as needed, including forms of psychological, financial, and legal aid
- Promote trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, and survivor-centred values through prevention as well as response-based mechanisms
- Ensure that survivors’ voices are heard and that the voices are used to meaningful, evidence-based policy changes are developed and implemented
- Promote a culture of consent and address the challenges survivors face within the University as part of a broader anti-sexual violence movement working towards addressing systemic rape culture on post-secondary campuses
- Make the policies surrounding sexual assault more accessible and be able to hold the university accountable to their policy and lobby for change
- Create funds for survivors to access counselling, healthcare, and legal aid
- Create trauma-informed and safer housing options for students in domestic violence situations

- Build alliances/relationships with faculty, student unions and other organisations on the campuses in order to reach more students, normalise sexual safety education, and make resources easily accessible

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## **Gender Based Violence and Intersectionality**

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Rape culture, the pervasive normalization of sexual assault and gender-based violence, as it exists in post-secondary contexts poses intersectional challenges. Failures to address these challenges have disproportionate and lasting consequences for BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, low-income, disabled, and mentally ill student survivors. We also act from a place of recognition and acknowledgement that PEARS operates on stolen land and the need for cultural competency within survivor advocacy. By addressing these issues and intersections at a student level in a trauma-informed and survivor-centred approach we can begin to work to combat campus rape culture. It is only through addressing these issues and intersections in trauma-informed and survivor-centred approaches that rape culture can be effectively addressed and dismantled at the University. Throughout each hiring session and support process special attention will be paid to the ways in which multiple oppressed community members are supported and able to help lead our work. We will also be seeking training and mentorship opportunities from community members and organisations that work with multiple oppressed populations as often as possible. Examples of this could include the Asian Community AIDS Services, Native Youth Sexual Health Network, BWSS, etc. Whenever possible, financial remuneration, programming, and other elements of PEARS will seek to reflect the diverse strengths and vulnerabilities of the communities we seek to serve. Furthermore, PEARS supporters will be given extensive and ongoing training on issues of oppression as they intersect with sexual and gendered violence including transphobia, racism, misogyny, etc.

### **Branch Structure**

PEARS will work collectively and through various branches across all three campuses and in various professional faculties. Currently, PEARS encompasses the following:

- UTM CASA → University of Toronto Mississauga Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- TASA → Trinity Against Sexual Assault and Harassment
- PEARS Engineering Branch
- UC US → University College Branch
- WISH → Woodsworth Initiative Against Sexual Harm
- UTSC START → Scarborough Campus Sexual Trauma and Assault Resource Team
- NASAH → New College Against Sexual Assault and Harassment

- VOICES → Victoria College
- INNIS PEARS → Innis College Branch
- SAGA → Saint Michael's College Branch
- Graduate and Post Graduate Branch

The PEARS Branches collectively will work to produce a thorough and accessible policy analysis, university recommendations, and research and data collection.

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## **Confidentiality and Transparency**

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Respecting the confidentiality of individuals who access PEARS supports is a core principle of PEARS. It is imperative that confidentiality is kept as often as possible in order to avoid violating the trust or boundaries of a survivor. Complete transparency regarding boundaries and confidentiality is important between PEARS members and the community. A more in-depth understanding of PEARS confidentiality practices can be found [here](#).

### **Trauma-Informed and Survivor-Centric Principles**

All members of The PEARS Project are to recognize and follow core principles when interacting with any survivor.

- Accessibility/Approachability
- Acknowledgement
- Agency and autonomy
- Safety
- Empowerment
- Trustworthiness and Reputation
- Cultural competence
- Collaboration

## Promoting collaboration, institutional memory, and recognition

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As a new initiative, PEARS will work to establish a strong presence on and off campuses in order to assist in achieving our goals such as consent culture. We wish to amplify and listen to a broad range of voices and as such hope to connect and collaborate with existing, new, and established UofT or external organisations.

The PEARS Project has received funding, endorsement, consultation, or collaboration with the following recognized organisations:

- UTSU
- UTMSU
- SCSU
- APUS
- CUPE3902
- Dandelion Initiative
- SFCC
- SIV

Pears utilises the following social media accounts in order to be accessible and have a strong online presence

- Email: [thepearsproject@gmail.com](mailto:thepearsproject@gmail.com)
- Instagram: [thepearsproject](https://www.instagram.com/thepearsproject)
- Facebook: [ThePearsProject](https://www.facebook.com/ThePearsProject)
- LinkTree: <https://linktr.ee/ThePEARSProject>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/77260412/admin/>