

PHYSICIAN PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions`

What is the rationale for the peer support program?

Physicians face unique challenges. Even clinicians with robust personal support networks stand to benefit tremendously from sharing their experiences with peers who have been in a similar situation and can truly understand and empathize with the pain, stress, vulnerability and fear that are common emotional responses to physician experiences such as patient complaints, adverse events and others.

What is the goal of peer support?

Peer support offers a safe way for clinicians to talk about their experience and emotions with someone who has empathy from having “been there”. The focus of peer support is not to fix the problem. Instead, we offer short-term support through non-judgmental listening. We empower you to recognize existing strengths and resources to find strategies that work and we connect you to community resources if needed.

Peer support is essentially psychological first aid. It is not therapy, mentorship from an experienced peer, or direct clinical care.

When might someone benefit from peer support?

Peer support might be helpful for physicians who experience work or life stressors and require empathetic, non-judgmental support. Examples of this might include:

- Adverse clinical event (including but not limited to an adverse patient outcome)
- Patient or college complaint
- Interpersonal/relational conflict with a patient or colleague
- Acute life stressor which impacts career (e.g. birth of a new child or bereavement)
- Struggles with burnout/moral injury
- A change that has happened at work that impacts you emotionally

How can I request peer support?

Peer support request ONLINE INTAKE FORM: <https://forms.gle/dTieoEmfk9qSGW24A>

Directly Contact Peer Supporter of your choice- see our link to the provider list.

If I notice my colleague needing peer support, can I refer them to you?

Yes! First, reach out to your colleague to seek their consent to pass their name and contact information to our peer support program. Then, please contact cjruffo@gmail.com, complete intake form (**coming soon**) or share the list of peer supporters through the link provided

What happens after I make a peer support request?

e.g. We will confirm your request; your matched peer supporter will reach out to schedule a conversation with you or the colleague you referred to within 3 business days.

What does a peer support conversation look like?

Peer support conversations occur through the modality of your choice – in person, phone call or video call/Zoom. The duration of a conversation will vary based on your needs – generally 15-45 minutes. Peer support relationships are short term, which means that you will likely have one to three conversations with your peer supporter.

How are peer support conversations kept confidential?

Confidentiality is an integral part of our program. Only the peer support program administrator and your peer supporter has access to your name and contact information for the purpose of facilitating a match and contacting you. Peer supporters will not be taking written notes during your conversation (On occasion, a peer supporter might take notes to support them in structuring their conversation with you. These notes will be shredded/destroyed immediately after your conversation.)

There are rare cases where confidentiality must be broken, such as when a physician is at risk of harming themselves or others, or if a peer supporter has a direct reason to believe that someone is at risk for unsafe behaviour. These are the same reasons you might have to break confidentiality in your everyday clinical practice as a physician. In the rare case that this situation arises, your peer supporter would make you aware of the situation and support a collaborative approach to addressing the concern.

What if I have more questions?

Email cjruffo@gmail.com

