



Workplace Peer Support Program

The power of human connection for workplace mental health



Peer-based mental health support in the workplace

Mental health issues are a growing workplace problem, with 500,000 Canadians on average absent from work in any given week for psychiatric reasons¹, and \$51 billion² the estimated economic toll of mental illness in Canadian workplaces each year.

One way you can help employees with mental health issues is by offering a workplace peer support program. Through a new referral arrangement with Mental Health Innovations (MHI), Sun Life can provide you with access to a consulting service that can work closely with you to foster the peer to peer employee networks that have been proven to work effectively.

What is workplace peer support?

A workplace peer support program is based on people connecting who have a shared experience with mental health issues. The confidential face-to-face interaction with a co-worker who has lived with similar problems can be very effective in helping overcome the stigmas related to mental illness – and in helping promote mental health in your workplace.

How does it help employees?

Offering resources to employees with mental health difficulties is key to maintaining the psychological health and safety of your employees.

Studies have shown that peer support can be as effective as group therapy in treating depression, for example.³

How does it help my organization?

As part of nationwide efforts to counter the hazards of mental illness, the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace calls on employers to implement, document and maintain a psychological health and safety management system, and continually improve its effectiveness.

Offering a workplace peer support program can help you meet the Standard and implement processes that can reduce the impact of mental illness on your organization. And since (retired) Lieutenant-Colonel Stéphane Grenier helped develop the Standard, you'll have access to first class consulting advice.

1. CAMH: Statistics on Mental Illness and Addiction - camh.ca

2. Dewa et al (2008). A New Population-Based Measure of the Burden of Mental Illness in Canada.

3. Pfeiffer, Heisler, et al. (2011). Efficacy of peer support interventions for depression: A meta-analysis. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 33(1), P.29-36.

4. Smetanin et al. (2011). The life and economic impact of major mental illnesses in Canada: 2011-2014.

Peer support in your organization

One in five⁴ Canadians suffers from a mental health problem, and many such issues seem invisible on the surface. The reality is that your organization is likely affected by mental health issues, but the shroud of silence and stigma associated with mental illness tends to socialize us to look the other way.

But what if you could leverage the employees who have experienced and recovered from a mental health problem? There are people in many workplaces with the competencies, lived experiences and desire to help others who are currently struggling.

We are led to believe that people who have faced mental health problems in the past are fragile or would never want to take part in such a corporate program. On the contrary, clients of MHI have experienced high levels of engagement in the voluntary program – and have seen a decrease in sick leave and short and long-term disability cases related to mental health.

The reality is that you have the human capacity to transform your workplace from within. And MHI can help you get there.

About Mental Health Innovations Consulting

Founded by retired Lieutenant-Colonel Stéphane Grenier, Mental Health Innovations Consulting (MHI) is a national bilingual consulting service that assists organizations in setting up sustainable peer-based, non-clinical mental health programs.





The healing power of human interaction

A workplace peer support program is a powerful tool for safeguarding mental health in the workplace.

Depending on the needs of your organization, MHI can design an informal peer support program, or one with a defined structure and measurement tools. Whatever method you choose, workplace peer support can help bolster your organization's mental health and overall wellness strategy.

For more information, please contact your Sun Life group representative.

www.sunlife.ca/mentalhealth

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