



**PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR FIRST  
RESPONDERS/FRONTLINE WORKERS  
4-TIER STRATEGIC ROADMAP**

STAY IN TOUCH

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# INTRODUCTION

Organizations, especially those working the frontline, have a moral duty to support and care for their employees. One such way is to provide a workplace environment that is non-judgmental, supportive, and safe with the assistance of trained and experienced peer support teams. Helping a colleague who may be in crisis, struggling with unresolved trauma, or needing a trusted individual to debrief with is fundamentally important towards one's health and wellness.

The goal of peer support teams is to help initiate and maintain difficult conversations after difficult experiences, deal with acute stress management, help reduce stigma and other barriers, help build trust in the workplace, and provide emotional and social support. The overall goal of a peer support team is hope, healing, and recovery.

Peer supporters will be trained in crisis response, suicide prevention and intervention, mental health and wellness, skills for becoming a good listener and mentor, advocacy, recovery, and tools for support. In addition, training will be offered around policy development to support guidelines on building good peer support teams.

The Tema Foundation is committed to helping support organizations in becoming more aware of the needs of their employees from a mental health and wellness perspective. The goal is to help organizations make mental health and wellness a priority, which in turn should help improve employee retention, productivity, and overall well-being of those working for the organization.

Below is an outline of the 4-Tier approach the Tema Foundation has created for peer support teams. This curriculum is interactive, engaging, meaningful, and provides reflective strategies and activities to help learners. In addition, this curriculum is tailored to the organization's needs.

# TIER I

## RECRUITMENT AND NOMINATION OF PEER SUPPORTERS

The Tema Foundation will take the lead in recruitment strategies and encouragement of nominations for the peer support program within any given organization. This will be done through some form of outreach initiative such as; email to all staff, newsletters, information sessions, posters, social media, etc.

The Tema Foundation will ensure that all employees, so as to prevent bias and establish trust and fairness in the process, know about the opportunity to become a peer supporter. Peers will be nominating peers through an online application form. This form will be completed and submitted confidentially. Those who are nominated will be informed by the Tema Foundation and must agree to the nomination. If in agreement an interview will be arranged with the Tema team.

# TIER II

## SCREENING AND SELECTION OF PEER SUPPORTERS

The screening and selection of peer supporters is done with care and with the full participation of management and the local union, where applicable. The interview with chosen peer supporters will potentially consist of the Program Manager or Supervisor of the existing peer support team, a member of the existing peer support team (if applicable), and 1-2 members from the Tema Foundation.

The interview will focus on the required competencies for peer supporters and will consist of questions pertaining to their skills, attributes, and responses to some mock scenarios. These interviews will also focus on better understanding the strengths of each peer supporter and understanding any additional areas needed for training. Nominated peer supporters will be informed that their involvement is purely a volunteer position and will not be any part of a performance appraisal or performance review.

# TIER III

## 4-DAY PEER SUPPORT TRAINING

Developing peer support teams can have a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals within any organization, especially those working the frontlines. By building a sense of community, empowering individuals, and increasing access to resources, peer support teams can play an important role in supporting recovery and promoting mental health and wellness.

Peer supporters will be those nominated by their colleagues and will receive 4-days of training and ongoing support.

Training Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the principles of peer support programs.
2. Develop strong communication skills.
3. Develop crisis prevention and intervention skills.
4. Understand suicide prevention and intervention skills.
5. Understand mental health and wellness and the importance of supporting those struggling.
6. Learn about community resources and support systems.
7. Understand the importance of self-care and develop a self-care plan.

## TIER IV

# ONGOING SUPPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY

After the creation of the peer support team, it will be important to continue to offer ongoing training and support on a bi-monthly basis. Peer support volunteers need help to ensure that they continue to be equipped to provide effective support to their peers. It will also be important to foster a sense of community through regular meetings, social events, and other activities that bring people together and provide opportunities for ongoing connection.

Ongoing evaluation will be important in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and make changes as needed. This can involve soliciting feedback from participants, tracking outcomes, and adjusting the program structure and activities to better meet the needs of the organization. By implementing these supports, peer support programs can be sustained over the long-term, provide a valuable source of support, and continue to help make mental health healthier for the workplace.

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