

# PEER SUPPORT ETHICAL GUIDELINES

PRESENTER: DAVE PRUETT



# ROLE BOUNDARY

- **Role Boundary Integrity:**  
The CPSS is NOT a:

Sponsor (or equivalent)

**You are moving beyond the boundaries of the CPSS role if you:**

- Perform AA/NA or other mutual-aid group service work in your CPSS role
- Guide someone through the steps or principles of a particular recovery program

# ROLE BOUNDARY

- **Role Boundary Integrity:**  
The CPSS is NOT a:

Therapist/counselor

**You are moving beyond the boundaries of the CPSS role if you:**

- Diagnose
- Provide counseling or refer to your support activities as “counseling” or “therapy”
- Focus on problems/“issues”/trauma as opposed to recovery solutions

# ROLE BOUNDARY

- **Role Boundary Integrity:**  
The CPSS is NOT a:

Nurse/Physician

**You are moving beyond the boundaries of the CPSS role if you:**

- Suggest or express disagreement with medical diagnoses (including psychiatric diagnoses)
- Offer medical advice
- Make statements about prescribed drugs beyond the boundaries of your training and experience

# ROLE BOUNDARY

- **Role Boundary Integrity:**  
The CPSS is NOT a:

Priest/Clergy

**You are moving beyond the boundaries of the CPSS role if you:**

- Promote a particular religion/church
- Interpret religious doctrine
- Offer absolution or forgiveness (other than forgiveness for harm done specifically to you”
- Provide pastoral counseling

*William L. White, MA*

# PRINCIPLES

As a Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) in South Carolina, the following principles will guide you in various role relationships and levels of responsibility as you begin your work.

# RECOVERY

- The primary responsibility of CPSS's is to help peers understand recovery and achieve their own recovery needs, wants, and goals. CPSS's will be guided by the principle of self-determination and the understanding that there are many paths of recovery and each has value.

# CONDUCT

- CPSS's will conduct themselves in a manner that fosters their own recovery and will maintain personal standards that are respectful to self and community.



# SELF DISCLOSURE

- CPSS's will be open to sharing their stories of hope and recovery with peers and coworkers and will likewise be able to identify and describe the supports that promote their recovery and resilience.

# DUTY TO WARN

- When explaining confidentiality, CPSS's have a duty to inform peers that the plan of killing one's self or harming others cannot be kept confidential. CPSS's have a duty to accurately inform peers regarding the degree to which information will be shared with other team members, based on their agency policy and job description. CPSS's have a duty to immediately inform appropriate staff members about any person's possible harm to self or others or abuse from caregivers.

# TRUST

- CPSS's will never intimidate, threaten, harass, use undue influence, physical force, or verbal abuse, or make unwarranted promises of benefits to the peers they support.

# EQUALITY

- CPSS's will not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition, or state.

# ADVOCACY

- CPSS's will advocate with peers so that individuals may make their own decisions in all matters when working with professionals.

# BOUNDARIES

- CPSS's will never engage in any sexual or intimate contact or activities with peers they support.

# BOUNDARIES

- While a peer is receiving services from a CPSS, the CPSS will not enter into a relationship or commitment that conflicts with the support needs of the peer. Specifically, the CPSS should not develop a friendship with peers outside of work or through social media and/or share personal struggles with peers. (A distinction should be made between sharing past struggles that the CPSS overcame using recovery principles and disclosing information in a nonproductive way that prevents the CPSS from his or her goal of helping the peer.) The CPSS will seek guidance from the program supervisor as needed.

# BOUNDARIES

- CPSS's shall only provide services and support within the hours, days, and locations that are authorized by the agency with which they work. CPSS's will not share their private contact information with peers.



# SUPERVISION

- CPSS's will utilize supervision and abide by the standards relating to supervision that have been established by their employer. CPSS's will seek assistance from administrators in providing quality recovery-oriented support to peers.

# BOUNDARIES

- CPSS's will not accept gifts of money or items of significant value from those they serve, according to the individual employer's policy. CPSS's do not loan or give money to peers.

# BOUNDARIES

- CPSS's will not discuss their employment situation in a negative manner with any peer.

# TRAUMA INFORMED

- CPSS's will protect the welfare of all peers by ensuring that their conduct does not constitute physical or psychological abuse, neglect, or exploitation. CPSS's will provide trauma informed care at all times.

# RESPECT

- CPSS's will, at all times, respect the rights, dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of those they support.

# CONTINUING EDUCATION

- CPSS's will keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to recovery and will share this knowledge with other CPSS's.

# SAMHSA CORE ETHICAL GUIDELINES



1. Peer support is voluntary
2. Peer supporters are hopeful
3. Peer supports are open minded
4. Peer supporters are empathetic
5. Peer supports are respectful
6. Peer supporters facilitate change
7. Peer supporters are honest and direct
8. Peer support is mutual and reciprocal
9. Peer support is equally shared power
10. Peer support is strengths-focused
11. Peer support is transparent
12. Peer support is person-driven

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## **Peer support is voluntary**

Recovery is a personal choice. The most basic value of peer support is that people freely choose to give or receive support. Being coerced, forced or pressured is against the nature of genuine peer support. The voluntary nature of peer support makes it easier to build trust and connections with another.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## **Practice: Support choice**

1. Peer supporters do not force or coerce others to participate in peer support services or any other service.
2. Peer supporters respect the rights of those they support to choose or cease support services or use the peer support services from a different peer supporter.



# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer support is voluntary (*continued*)

Recovery is a personal choice. The most basic value of peer support is that people freely choose to give or receive support. Being coerced, forced or pressured is against the nature of genuine peer support. The voluntary nature of peer support makes it easier to build trust and connections with another.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Support choice

3. Peer supporters also have the right to choose not to work with individuals with a particular background if the peer supporter's personal issues or lack of expertise could interfere with the ability to provide effective support to these individuals. In the situations, the peer supporter would refer the individuals to other peer supporters or other service providers to provide assistance with the individuals' interests and desires.
4. Peer supporters advocate for choice when they observe coercion in any mental health or substance abuse service setting.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer supporters are hopeful

Belief that recovery is possible brings hope to those feeling hopeless. Hope is the catalyst of recovery for many people. Peer supporters demonstrate that recovery is real – they are the evidence that people can and do overcome the internal and external challenges that confront people with mental health, traumatic or substance use challenges. As role models, most peer supporters make a commitment to continue to grow and thrive as they “walk the walk” in their own pathway of recovery. By authentically living recovery, peer supporters inspire real hope that recovery is possible for others.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Share hope

1. Peer supporters tell strategic stories of their personal recovery in relation to current struggles faced by those who are being supported.
2. Peer supporters model recovery behaviors at work and act as ambassadors of recovery in all aspects of their work.
3. Peer supporters help others reframe life challenges as opportunities for personal growth.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer supporters are open minded

Being judged can be emotionally distressing and harmful. Peer supporters “meet people where they are at” in their recovery experience even when the other person’s beliefs, attitudes or ways of approaching recovery are far different from their own. Being nonjudgmental means holding others in unconditional positive regard, with an open mind, a compassionate heart and full acceptance of each person as unique individual.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Withhold judgment about others

1. Peer supporters embrace differences of those they support as potential learning opportunities.
2. Peer supporters respect an individual’s right to choose the pathways of recovery individuals believe will work best for them.
3. Peer supporters connect with others where and as they are.
4. Peer supporters do not evaluate or assess others.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## **Peer supporters are empathetic**

Empathy is an emotional connection that is created by “putting yourself in other person’s shoes.” Peer supporters do not assume they know exactly what the other person is feeling even if they have experienced similar challenges. They ask thoughtful questions and listen with sensitivity to be able to respond emotionally or spiritually to what the other person is feeling.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## **Practice: Listen with emotional sensitivity**

1. Peer supporters practice effective listening skills that are non-judgmental.
2. Peer supporters understand that even though others may share similar life experiences, the range of responses may vary considerably.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer supporters are respectful

Each person is valued and seen as having something important and unique to contribute to the world. Peer supporters treat people with kindness, warmth and dignity. Peer supporters accept and are open to differences, encouraging people to share the gifts and strength that come from human diversity. Peer supporters honor and make room for everyone's ideas and opinions and believe every person is equally capable of contributing to the whole.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Be curious and embrace diversity

1. Peer supporters embrace diversity of culture and thought as a means of personal growth for those they support and themselves.
2. Peer supporters encourage others to explore how differences can contribute to their lives and the lives of those around them.
3. Peer supporters practice patience, kindness, warmth and dignity with everyone they interact with in their work.
4. Peer supporters treat each person they encounter with dignity and see them as worthy of all basic human rights.
5. Peer supporters embrace the full range of cultural experiences, strengths and approaches to recovery for those they support and themselves.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer supporters facilitate change

Some of the worst human rights violations are experienced by people with psychiatric, trauma or substance use challenges. They are frequently seen as “objects of treatment” rather than human beings with the same fundamental rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as everyone else. People may be survivors of violence (including physical, emotional, spiritual and mental abuse or neglect). Those with certain behaviors that make others uncomfortable may find themselves stereotyped, stigmatized and outcast by society. Internalized oppression is common among people who have been rejected by society. Peer supporters treat people as human beings and remain alert to any practice (including the way people treat themselves) that is dehumanizing, demoralizing or degrading and will use their personal story and/or advocacy to be an agent for positive change.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Educate and advocate

1. Peer supporters recognize and find appropriate ways to call attention to injustices.
2. Peer supporters strive to understand how injustices may affect people.
3. Peer supporters encourage, coach and inspire those they support to challenge and overcome injustices.
4. Peer supporters use language that is supportive, encouraging, inspiring, motivating and respectful.
5. Peer supporters help those they support explore areas in need of change for themselves and others.
6. Peer supporters recognize injustices peers face in all contexts and act as advocates and facilitate change where appropriate.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer supporters are honest and direct

Clear and thoughtful communication is fundamental to effective peer support. Difficult issues are addressed with those who are directly involved. Privacy and confidentiality build trust.

Honest communication moves beyond the fear of conflict or hurting other people to the ability to respectfully work together to resolve challenging issues with caring and compassion, including issues related to stigma, abuse, oppression, crisis or safety.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Address difficult issues with caring and compassion

1. Peer supporters respect privacy and confidentiality.
2. Peer supporters engage, when desired by those they support, in candid, honest discussions about stigma, abuse, oppression, crisis or safety.
3. Peer supporters exercise compassion and caring in peer support relationships.
4. Peer supporters do not make false promises, misrepresent themselves, others or circumstances.
5. Peer supporters strive to build peer relationships based on integrity, honesty, respect and trust.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## **Peer supporters is mutual and reciprocal**

In a peer support relationship, each person gives and receives in a fluid, constantly changing manner. This is very different from what most people experience in treatment programs, where people are seen as needing help and staff is seen as providing that help. In peer support relationships, each person has things to teach and learn. This is true whether you are a paid or volunteer peer supporter.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## **Practice: Encourage peers to give and receive**

1. Peer supporters learn from those they support and those supported learn from peer supporters.
2. Peer supporters encourage peers to fulfill a fundamental human need – to be able to give as well as receive.
3. Peer supporters facilitate respect and honor a relationship with peers that evokes power-sharing and mutuality, wherever possible.



# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer recovery support is strengths-focused

Each person has skills, gifts and talents they can use to better their own life. Peer support focuses on what's strong, not what's wrong in another's life. Peer supporters share their own experiences to encourage people to see the "silver lining" or the positive things they have gained through adversity. Through peer support, people get in touch with their strengths (the things they have going for them). They rediscover childhood dreams and long-lost passions that can be used to fuel recovery.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: See what's strong not what's wrong

1. Peer supporters encourage others to identify their strengths and use them to improve their lives.
2. Peer supporters focus on the strengths of those they support.
3. Peer supporters use their own experiences to demonstrate the use of one's strengths, and to encourage and inspire those they support.
4. Peer supporters encourage others to explore dreams and goals meaningful to those they support.
5. Peer supporters operate from a strength-based perspective and acknowledge the strengths, informed choices and decisions of peers as a foundation of recovery.
6. Peer supporters don't fix or do for others what they can do for themselves.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer support is transparent

Peer support is the process of giving and receiving non-clinical assistance to achieve long-term recovery from severe psychiatric, traumatic or addiction challenges. Peer supporters are *experientially credentialed* to assist others in this process. Transparency refers to setting expectations with each person about what can and cannot be offered in a peer support relationship, clarifying issues related to privacy and confidentiality. Peer supporters communicate with everyone in plain language so people can readily understand and they “put a face on recovery” by sharing personal recovery experiences to inspire hope and the belief that recovery is real.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Set clear expectations and use plain language

1. Peer supporters clearly explain what can or cannot be expected of the peer support relationship.
2. Peer supporters use language that is clear, understandable, and judgment free.
3. Peer supporters use language that is supportive and respectful.
4. Peer supporters provide support in a professional yet humanistic manner.
5. Peer supporter roles are distinct from the roles of other behavioral health service professionals.
6. Peer supporters make only promises they can keep and use accurate statements.
7. Peer supporters do not diagnose, nor do they prescribe or recommend medications or monitor their use.

# ETHICAL GUIDELINES

## Peer support is person-driven

People have a fundamental right to make decisions about things related to their lives. Peer supporters inform people about options, provide information about choices and respect their decisions. Peer supporters encourage people to move beyond their comfort zones, learn from their mistakes and grow from dependence on the system toward their chosen level of freedom and inclusion in the community of their choice.

# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

## Practice: Focus on the person, not the problems

1. Peer supporters encourage those they support to make their own decisions.
2. Peer supporters, when appropriate, offer options to those they serve.
3. Peer supporters encourage those they serve to try new things.
4. Peer supporters help others learn from mistakes.
5. Peer supporters encourage resilience.
6. Peer supporters encourage personal growth in others.
7. Peer supporters encourage and coach those they support to decide what they want in life and how to achieve it without judgment.