

Youth peer toolkit

Guidance documents and resources

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Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) guidance document

Wraparound with Intensive Services youth peer

Purpose

This document will help support the Peers with lived experience as a youth (Youth Peers) in the workplace.

As described in the WISE Manual: A peer with lived experience as a youth is an equal member of the WISE team. The role of the peer is to partner with youth to help support their engagement and active participation in making informed decisions to drive the WISE process. Youth Peers are qualified through their lived experience in behavioral health cross systems and knowledge of community resources and the wraparound or WISE process. The Youth Partner is a mediator, facilitator, and cultural broker between youth and agencies.

A Youth Peer should be someone between the ages of 18-30 who has lived experience in mental health, substance use/recovery, incarceration/juvenile justice, foster care, education, or LGBTQ+. They provide support services to youth and young adults in community-based settings. They deliver a wide range of services to help young people gain control over their lives and create change in their communities. They role-model competency in recovery (in mental health, addictions, etc.) and ongoing coping skills.

Imagine a youth is getting ready to hike Mt. Rainer...

Mt Rainer is the journey of life and in this journey the youth is going to hike 'WISE Camp Muir'. Camp Muir is the most difficult day hike. It is rated at a level four, the most intensive. The distance is eight miles and the duration is 8-10 hours.

Although the therapist has never climbed the mountain, they are skilled in prepping the youth with the tools they need to climb the mountain. They have also packed the youth's backpack with snacks and water for the journey up the mountain. In their prep talks, the therapist has instilled different ideas of which the youth can choose what the easiest way to get to the top is.

There is another vital role in supporting the youth on this journey, the most intensive hike on Mt. Rainer: a peer with lived experience as a youth. This peer will come alongside the youth with their backpack filled with tools, snacks and water. They let the youth know that it is okay to be scared and nervous for this hike; they too have climbed a similar mountain and will be there to walk alongside them on this journey. On the way up, the peer helps the youth use the tools the therapist has put in their backpack and helps them to see hope at the end of the trail. The peer role embraces the mutual relationship and shared experiences to promote recovery and resiliency. The youth feels empowered that they can climb this mountain on their own pace with someone who will support them if they stumble and will help guide them along the journey.



Role of Peer with lived experience as a youth:

- Engaging with the youth is individualized and is based on the youth’s culture and experiences.
- Sharing of story of lived experience when needed to promote hope and recovery.
- Empowering youth to voice their needs in the youth’s treatment goals.
- Helping youth with accessing resources based on their voice and choice.
- Promoting leadership to youth’s recovery and treatment

The purpose of activities with the youth should pertain to the youth’s goals and treatment.

Some examples include building self-esteem by:

- Taking the youth to a music studio or art studio. Engaging in the activity with the youth is important.
- Asking the youth what they like to do and taking an interest in activities that are of interest to the youth.
- Linking youth to Leadership trainings, FYSPRTS (Family, Youth, System Partner Round Tables, committees and councils).
- Connecting the youth to education, housing and other prosocial activities



Youth peer additional guidance information

Peers with lived experience as a youth enhance clinical treatment but are not the primary clinical provider.

Therefore, Peers should be mindful in partaking in activities such as:

- Engaging in safety checks such as taking or locking up things that can harm youth. A youth Partner could be there for support but not responsible for the Clinical oversight.
- Providing respite care
- Responding to crises without a Therapist
- Providing supervision of youth

Suggested Trainings and continued education for Youth peers:

- Youth Professional Leadership Training
- WISe symposium-
- Family, Youth, System. Partner Round tables(FYSPRT)-
- Youth Peers uniting coaching webinar
- Technical Assistance on the youth peer role, youth leadership and engagement
- Peer Pathways conference

Please contact Evelyn Clark, Youth Peer Liaison at Evelyn.Clark@hca.wa.gov for more information.

For More information on Peer Support Services please visit our website: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/billers-providers-partners/behavioral-health-recovery/peer-support>



WISe youth partner

Roles, activities, and skills

Roles

1. Assist youth in navigating systems and agencies.
2. Model effective behavior for the youth.
3. Ensure youth voice and choice.
4. Support improved self-efficacy and confidence.
5. Promote and strengthen healthy relationships.
6. Help others working with the youth to understand youth culture.
7. Use personal story to teach through experience.

Responsibilities

1. Teach by example by role modeling effective behaviors and relationships on the team, with systems, family members and others.
2. Coach youth in participation in activities related to the WISe process.
3. Demonstrate healthy responses to stress, conflict.
4. Model positive social skills.
5. Help youth to understand, organize and express their strengths and needs.
6. Promote positive self-advocacy skills and empower youth voice and choice in all phases of the process.
7. Connect youth with positive activities.
8. Link youth to resources and supports that are culturally relevant.
9. Help youth explore behaviors, actions, reactions, consequences and successes.
10. Help youth develop healthy relationships and community connectedness.
11. Assist youth in accessing necessary supports and services.
12. Help team members, system partner, providers and family understand youth culture and age-appropriate strengths, needs and challenges.
13. Share stories and experiences that promote learning, recovery and hope.
14. Help youth re-establish relationships with extended family and natural supports.



Activities and skills for Phase 1: Engagement and team preparation

1. Collaborates with the care coordinator by doing one-on-one orientation, sharing his/her own experience with WISE, and helping the youth understand how WISE might be a positive opportunity for them.
2. Explains the role of youth partner including limits to the role.
3. Partners with the Care Coordinator in explaining confidentiality and client rights and responsibilities, and as needed, helps to ease fears and answer questions from the youth perspective.
4. Partners with the Care Coordinator in the development of the crisis stabilization plan to make sure the plans are individualized and based on youth voice and choice.
5. Spends time with the youth to prepare them for the initial WISE meetings, making sure they understand each of the parts of the agenda and are prepared to use their voice and choice.
6. Helps the youth organize thoughts and what/how they would like to share at the meeting.
7. Negotiates with the youth to decide the role of youth partner during the meeting.
8. Works with the Care Coordinator to make sure youth needs are met for the WISE meetings.

Activities and skills for Phase 2: Plan development

1. Empowers youth voice and choice at the WISE team meetings.
2. Coaches the youth in active participation during relevant agenda items.
3. Helps the youth understand the needs of team members and helps the team members to understand the needs of the youth.
4. Encourages thinking beyond the usual services and supports.
5. Agrees to take on action steps that are compatible with their role and that they have the time and resources to complete.
6. Ensures that the youth understands the reason for the crisis plan and why it is being done.
7. Checks in with the youth to ensure they feel they were heard, that the developed plan is individualized to who they are, and that it is realistic.

Activities and skills for Phase 3: Implementation

1. Summarizes and interprets elements of the plan to make sure the youth understands it and agrees with it.
2. Encourages the youth in completing action steps, through motivation, support, and reminders.
3. Works with the youth to determine if the plan is working and to decide when they need to ask for changes in the plan.
4. Checks with the youth on their feeling of support from the team and whether they are beginning to feel a lack of support, too much support, or if the youth is not content with the team.
5. Helps the youth to prepare for follow-up WISE meetings.
6. Role models positive communication with all team members.
7. Documents the work with the youth through progress notes that meet the criteria set by the participating agencies.



Activities and skills for Phase 4: Transition

1. Teaches the youth about the transition process.
2. Listens to concerns the youth has about transition.
3. Assists the youth to identify the successes they have had and the lessons they have learned through the WISe process.
4. Facilitates the youth deciding if and how they would like to celebrate success in a culturally appropriate manner.
5. Works with the youth and family to decide on a time-line for phasing out the youth partner role.
6. Connects the youth with natural supports.



Sample Job Description—Certified Peer Counselor (Youth Partner), Catholic Community Services

Overview

Peer Youth Partners have a personal history of receiving mental health, child welfare or juvenile justice services. They use personal experience to bring support to youth receiving services. The primary focus of the Peer Youth Partner is to build a strong partnership with youth based on mutual respect, shared experience and relatable history. This position builds a positive connection enabling the young person to have support, skills and resources necessary to influence the direction of their own life. Successful applicants must have first person experience receiving system services and be prepared to disclose about their personal experiences with youth and others.

Responsibilities

- Review personal history receiving services and disclose common elements to youth being served.
- Identify self as a peer rather than a provider.
- Find ways to relate personal experience to the experience of the youth as both a connection strategy for the young person and education strategy for others involved with the young person.
- Provide supportive connection rather than becoming a change agent focused on correction.
- Work with young people in home, school and community settings in order to gain an understanding of their situation.
- Empower young people to communicate about their own position and perspective while avoiding speaking for them.
- Attend team meetings as necessary to represent a youth's perspective.
- Maintain contact with therapist/care coordinator responsible for youth participants' service plans.
- Work collaboratively with other staff, including parent partners, who are providing support, service and intervention to other family members and help other system partners to understand the youth's perspective.
- Seek assistance and report incidents when appropriate.
- Assure that adults can understand the young person's perspective, even if they disagree.
- Collaboratively function as part of a multi-service team.
- Work with staff to ensure that the young person's perspective is understood and considered in programmatic decisions.
- Complete documentation that reflects a stance of respect for the young person.



Self-care for peer supports

Self-care is an important part of staying healthy while working as a youth peer. Having a strategy or plan can help you deal with everyday stressors and other big issues in your life. Self-care is unique to everyone, but you can always take steps towards doing so with some introspection about yourself.

Tips and Tricks

- **Nurture your social support system.**

It is important to have people in our lives who care about us and are there through the good times and the bad. These are the folks who make up our social support system—friends, family, and peers—that we can turn to when we need help.

- **Honor your emotional needs.**

Self-care activities are simple: be good to yourself. Do things you like that keep you happy. Know when you need to take time out or be near other people. Get in the habit of staying in tune with your emotions.

- **Manage stress.**

Know your key stressors and how best to cope with or neutralize them.

- **Love yourself.**

Work on cultivating a positive self-image and high self-esteem.

- **Come up with a self-care plan.**

Research “self-care plans/ideas” or use templates below.

- **Get counseling.**

If you’re uncertain how to proceed and feel constantly overwhelmed, try talking to a therapist. This work can be triggering for individuals with lived experience.

- **Find a trusted mentor.**

Having a safe person to talk with about the work you do is important. Remember to do this in a way that does not breach confidentiality and maintains Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance.



Resources

Resources on peer support

- [Mental Health of America](#)
- [International Association of Peer Supporter's](#)
- [YouthMOVE National](#)
- [Federations for families](#)
- [SAMHSA providing youth and young adult peer support through Medicaid](#)