

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS: NEW APPLICATIONS

Characteristics of a Peer Support Group (PSG)

Peer Support Groups have the following characteristics:

- Participants share a common interest or need.
- The organizational structure is completely flexible to meet the needs of the participants.
- Participants are not necessarily members of a Chapter, nor is there pressure to join.
- The Facilitator need not be a trained Ostomy Canada Peer Visitor.
- They last as long as there are two or more people who are benefiting.
- When the need has been fulfilled, they disappear without comment.

Benefits. The benefits of being part of Ostomy Canada include:

- name recognition,
- use of the official logo,
- pamphlets and educational material,
- access to the national website,
- subscriptions to the Ostomy Canada magazine and Ostomy Canada Connects newsletter,
- notifications of special events and conferences,
- a national youth camp for ages 10-18
- national certification standards for your visitor program,
- access to Chapter Outreach Support Services,
- national liability insurance for registered volunteers during official Ostomy Canada business,
- income tax receipts for allowable donations, and
- access to national funding to support local projects that enhance the mission of the Society, among others.

Procedure for Forming a Peer Support Group

- Submit the volunteer application form to Ostomy Canada to become a facilitator.
- Find others who share your interest
- Think "Mutual Aid" from the beginning
- Get approval to name your Peer Support Group:
(for example: Ostomy Canada Peer Support Group Location)
- Determine location and time of meetings
- Inform the others about the first meeting
- Publicize your meetings, including on Ostomy Canada website

At your first meeting,

Be prepared to sign people in as they arrive with their contact information, and

- Host the first meeting
- Be guided by the hints for Facilitators
- Define the purpose of the group
- Decide on a meeting format
- Encourage participants to become Ostomy Canada volunteers and supporters.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

PEER SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATOR

Date: _____

Ostomy Canada Society thanks you for your interest in joining our team of volunteers. Please complete this application form so we are able to register you as the Peer Support Group Facilitator for your local chapter. Ostomy Canada Society protects the confidentiality of the information collected within this document.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

(First) (Middle Initial) (Last)

Address: _____ Apartment: _____

City/Town: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone (Home): _____ Phone (Office): _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Relationship: _____

Emergency Contact Phone: _____

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Please list any other skills or specialized training that would be useful in your volunteer work with us.

In an effort to provide you with better control of the types of messages we send you, we have introduced additional subscription options to help you select the messages that are most appropriate for you. Indicate which you would like to receive:

1) Newsletters; 2) Event invitations; 3) Notifications and alerts.

Please return completed form by mailing it to:

Ostomy Canada Society,
Suite 501, 344 Bloor St. W
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 3A7

Or, email it to: info1@ostomycanada.ca

Once your application has been screened and approved, you will be contacted by the Peer Support Group Committee Leader who will advise you how Ostomy Canada can help you help your fellow ostomates in your community.

Hints for Facilitators

In many situations, the role of facilitating or leading a group, meeting, or discussion is not the responsibility of only one person but is the responsibility of several in the group. This is not always the case, and therefore, it is important for leaders to keep in mind that with the leadership role comes a certain amount of responsibility to other consumers/survivors. People often turn to leaders for assistance, guidance, and sometimes see them as mentors or someone they trust and “look up to.” As a result, leaders should maintain a degree of “professionalism” when working with others and be aware of their ability to:

- Use good judgment when working with a group or issues that arise in that group.
- Share a common goal with the group, be passionate, have integrity, and be trustworthy.
- Pursue self-knowledge, accept responsibility and blame no one.
- Help members feel comfortable and get to know each other.
- Be sure the speaker has finished describing his/her problem before offering advice.
- Listen carefully and considerately when another member is speaking and discourage side conversations by others in the group.
- Promote positive comments and new viewpoints, that is, keep the discussion positive and upbeat so the discussion doesn't deteriorate into a gripe session.
- Notice silent people in the group and encourage them to participate.
- Participate in the discussion by sharing problems, and offering ideas and advice.
- Let individuals talk openly about negative or angry feelings. Often this must be done before positive advice can be given and received.
- Make a commitment to the group, contributing whatever talents, skills, resources or information that are necessary to make certain that the group is successful.
- Set goals, plan programs, identify jobs that need to be done, recognize and carry out the jobs that keep a group going.
- Keep the group on topic and briefly restate what individuals have said.
- State/summarize all sides of a dispute or argument.
- Help individuals evaluate how they are doing and to figure out how to improve things.
- Suggest ways to solve a problem.