

# **Guidelines for Supervision of Peer Supporters**

*In Massachusetts  
Adult Community Clinical Services*

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**ACCS Peer Support Supervision Workgroup**

*An Independent Advisory Group of  
Massachusetts Peer Support Leaders*

<https://bit.ly/MASSPSUP>

**In collaboration with iSPARC**

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<https://www.umassmed.edu/sparc/>

**Adapted from:** The National Association of Peer Supporters (2019).  
*National Practice Guidelines for Peer Specialists and Supervisors.*  
Washington, DC: <https://www.peersupportworks.org/>

# **INTRODUCTION**

With the inclusion of peer supporters as a mandatory and crucial element in the service delivery model of Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS), the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health has reaffirmed what we have known all along. Peer supporters play a vital role in the journeys of those who have experienced life-disrupting challenges with emotional distress, extreme states, trauma histories, and issues with substance use. Whether we call this process recovery, personal growth, human development, or any other relevant term, peer supporters have invaluable insights and wisdoms into the inner workings of these processes because they literally have “been there.” By offering mutual and non-judgmental support, advocating within complex social service systems, and acting as beacons of hope, peer supporters can affect change on both the interpersonal and systemic levels.

When a need arises within a community, there are generally two types of broad response: a grassroots response and a systemic response. Peer support originated in a grassroots form, and the challenge for ACCS providers is embedding a grassroots response within a systemic response. This challenging dynamic has caused some tensions and confusions with both traditional providers and peer supporters alike. The purpose of this guidance document is not to provide all the answers. Rather, it serves as a lantern, a guiding light towards establishing a model of supervision that reflects best practices and role clarity.

Adapted from the National Association of Peer Supporter’s 2019 “National Practice Guidelines for Peer Specialists and Supervisors”, the following document adopts the spirit of the original while recognizing the diversity of peer support practices from state to state. We made every attempt to include elements from both our state’s unique Certified Peer Specialist training modules as well as the larger community of peer supporters practicing throughout Massachusetts. We have gathered feedback on these Guidelines from peer supporters and their supervisors across Massachusetts. It is our sincere hope that peer supporters will see elements of their work and their words reflected in the contents of this document. It is also our hope that supervisors operating in both traditional and peer roles will see the value in using this document to form an effective and dynamic partnership with those they supervise.

Eleven Core Values of Peer Support are listed below and then the practice of each value is explained in detail. This document serves to identify a simple, direct practice phrase, and then names the steps necessary for peer supporters and their supervisors operating within the ACCS model to practice this value. The ultimate goal is to identify the tasks of an ACCS peer supporter, and then to tie these tasks to the supervisor’s specific actions so that supervisors can best offer support, guidance, and clarity to those they supervise.

# CORE VALUES

In addition to SAMHSA's Working Definition of Guiding Principles of Recovery (<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep12-recdef.pdf>), twelve core values have been ratified by peer supporters across the United States (NAPS, 2019) as the core ethical values for peer supporter practice. Eleven<sup>i</sup> of these core values form the basis for the Massachusetts Guidelines for Supervision of Peer Supporters. They are defined in each section of the document.

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

## CORE VALUE 1

# Peer Support is Voluntary

Our journey and our recovery are **personal choices**. 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 very nature of genuine peer support. The voluntary nature of peer support makes it easier to build trust and connections with another. That trust cannot be violated and should not be forced.

The giving and receiving of peer support is rooted in mutuality and is therefore an inherently unique and valuable contribution by peer supporters to ACCS services. The integrity of this mutuality should be protected; peer supports should **not** be co-opted into a role of case management or service coordination. People may want peer support for various areas important to them, such as housing, employment, or benefits, for example. The role of peer support is not just another form of service coordination, nor does it simply represent a means of accumulating resources to accomplish change in these domains.

Rather, peer support requires mutual and voluntary support, participation, and partnership. Through an organic process that takes place on each person's own terms, peer supporters support the person's life goals. Peer support actively encourages community, self-growth, and an increase in both self-confidence and self-worth. By acting as a bridge to community life, peer support shows by living example that people in services can be people outside of services.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
Practice: <b>Support Choice</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters do not force or coerce others to participate in peer support services or any other service.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Peer supporters, like all members of the ACCS Team, may find it difficult to work with certain individuals both for personal or professional reasons (e.g., conflicts of interests or dual relationships; trauma triggers etc.).</li><li>• In these situations, the peer supporter may develop more skills and continue to</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage peer supporters in promoting individuals' choices including the choice to participate in ACCS.</li><li>• Support peer supporters in understanding that ACCS services are voluntary and being able to fully explain to the person they support that they can choose not to enroll or stay in services.</li><li>• Develop/Maintain current knowledge about trauma-informed approaches that reduce or eliminate force and coercion, to create a safer environment for all.</li><li>• Create non-judgmental relationship with peer supporter, to promote the exploration, selection and delivery of</li></ul>

work with the individual; choose to terminate the relationship/refer to others; add another team member to deal with specific tasks etc. to provide assistance with the individuals' interests and desires.

- Peer supporters advocate for choice when they observe coercion in any mental health or substance use service setting.

effective strategies to respond to difficulties/differences in views in the peer support relationship.

- Provide support/guidance/coaching to peer supporters around the skill of advocating for choice or speaking up when coercion occurs, especially when it is subtle or systemic.
- Advocate on behalf of the peer supporter when they are asked to take part in tasks that place the peer supporter in a position of control or power over people, they support. Support the ACCS Team as a whole in understanding that peer supporters are "in but not of" the system.
- Advocate on behalf of the peer supporter with other leadership entities if a peer supporter meets resistance in advocating for change or to support them in their need to maintain autonomy over their personal lived experience and how they share this experience with others.

## CORE VALUE 2

# Peer Supporters Are Hopeful

The belief that self-defined recovery is possible brings hope to those feeling hopelessness and despair. For many people, hope is the catalyst for healing. Hope is the lighthouse that leads us on our journeys to the safe shores where our goals and dreams become a reality.

By allowing our own hope to shine, peer supporters demonstrate that recovery is real. We intentionally share our own lived experience, our own stories, and our personal accomplishments to provide concrete proof that people can and do overcome a wide variety of challenges.

As peer supporters, we understand that “hope” is not exactly the same thing as optimism. Rather, we use our lived experience to demonstrate that healing is deeply personalized; there are many pathways to self-defined recovery for the people that we support. Every pathway is valid and equally noble, and we endeavor to honor them all.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
Practice: <b>Share Hope</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters disclose their personal lived experience with the purpose and intention of promoting the other’s journey to a meaningful life.</li><li>• Peer supporters model recovery behaviors at work and act as ambassadors of recovery in all aspects of their work.</li><li>• Peer supporters often help others reframe life challenges as opportunities for personal growth, while not unintentionally invalidating the person’s pain and struggles.</li><li>• Peer supporters remain grounded in hope when individuals feel hopeless. Peer supporters believe in the potential for growth and change in those they support. Even more importantly, they recognize the importance of having someone that truly believes in you in a person’s own process of coming to believe that for themselves.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coach the peer supporter to develop their expertise in disclosing personal experience, in order to inspire hope, develop trust and rapport, and foster strengths.</li><li>• Model self-care, and an authentic belief in recovery through language, attitude, and actions.</li><li>• Advocate for remaining grounded in hope, while also supporting the Peer Supporter in doing so; educating the ACCS team on the critical necessity for doing so.</li><li>• Promote a culture of high expectations for the people that the ACCS team serves.</li></ul>

## CORE VALUE 3

# Peer Supporters Are Empathic

The Oxford Dictionary defines “empathy” as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another”. Peer supporters, however, do not **assume** that we know exactly what other people are feeling, even if we have experienced similar challenges. Even when there are many overlaps and similarities, no two people ever experience the world in exactly the same way. Everyone has their own unique worldview; we have all come to know the world in different ways.

When viewed in this light, empathy is an emotional connection actively co-created by two or more people striving to understand one another’s worldview through a process of mutual sharing and exploration. Peer supporters ask open-ended, thoughtful questions and listen with an open mind and an open heart in order to respond emotionally and spiritually to what the other people are feeling and expressing. This ongoing process serves to both establish and then deepen a sense of true human empathy and sensitivity for all of those involved.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
<b>Practice: Listen with Emotional Sensitivity</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters practice effective Listening skills that are non-judgmental and clearly focus on the experience of the other/ They approach the people they support with curiosity and seek to learn about and understand their worldview.</li><li>• Peer supporters understand that even though others may share similar life experiences, how people are impacted by and respond to those experiences may vary considerably.</li><li>• Peer supporters share relevant aspects of their own story to build a human connection.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct supervision sessions using non-judgmental empathy, utilizing the supervisor’s expertise in active listening.</li><li>• Provide adequate time and space, with coaching and feedback, for peer supporters to become proficient in the critical skills of active listening, validation, and establishing emotional connection.</li><li>• Train, coach, and mentor peer supporters on the practice of strategic self-disclosure while also helping other ACCS team members to understand the purpose, intention, and benefits of the peer support practice of sharing personal experiences.</li></ul>

## CORE VALUE 4

# Peer Supporters Are Respectful

Every person in this world has inherent value. We all possess different gifts and strengths that we can share with those in our communities. Peer supporters accept and are open to differences, encouraging people to share these gifts and strengths that flow naturally from the well-spring of human diversity. Every 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. We also honor and make room for everyone's ideas and opinions and believe every person is equally capable of contributing to the whole. We are eternally curious about the experiences, viewpoints, and cultures of others around us.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
<b>Practice: Be Curious and Embrace Diversity</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters embrace a diversity of culture and thought. They respect every person's right to their reality in addition to a full range of approaches, to recovery for those they support and for themselves.</li><li>• Peer supporters encourage others to explore how differences can contribute to their lives and the lives of those around them.</li><li>• Peer supporters practice patience, kindness, warmth, and dignity with the people they support and see them as worthy of all basic human rights.</li><li>• Peer supporters respect the unique boundaries within the tradition of each discipline on the ACCS Team and are clear about the purpose of their own boundary choices.</li><li>• Peer supporters respect each ACCS role, seek to work collaboratively while</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen the peer supporter's core role of supporting the individual as a person, rather than "working with a case":<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Support peer supporters in relating to many different world views, i.e., support peers to refrain from seeing differences as pathology (symptoms); consider "what happened?" rather than focusing on "what's wrong?"</li><li>○ Support peer supporters to view differences as an opportunity for learning.</li></ul></li><li>• Coach peer supporters to recognize the difference between problems as perceived by a person served, and the peer supporter's own perceptions of the problems to address.</li><li>• Identify and work through the supervisor's own world view, including personal stigmas, stereotypes, and bias, that can interfere with the ability to treat all employees, including peer supporters, with respect and fairness.</li></ul>



maintaining the integrity of their own unique role within the Team.

- Identify the extent to which agency employees, peer supporters and supervisors have expertise in the concept of “cultural humility” and its applications.
- Arrange for additional training on this topic when necessary.
- Ensure that there is adequate education for all team members, including peer supports, on the critical roles, practices, principles, and responsibilities within those practices, of each member of the ACCS Team, e.g., self-disclosure is a critical element of peer support.
- Coach the peer supporters, as well as the other team members, in ways to act as agents of change in working to shift these perspectives.

## CORE VALUE 5

# Peer Supporters Facilitate Change

People with psychiatric diagnoses, trauma histories and substance use challenges often experience some of the worst human rights violations. 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 enjoyed by others. Additionally, when someone’s rights are violated, this runs a real risk of opening old wounds and reactivating past traumas.

Adopting a basic framework of trauma informed care means understanding that the people we support are very likely the survivors of trauma and violence (including physical, emotional, spiritual and mental abuse and/or neglect). Trauma often manifests in the form of extreme states, emotional distress, or behaviors and beliefs that have deeply personal meanings, but are not readily understood by the world at large. Those with certain beliefs and behaviors that make others uncomfortable may find themselves stereotyped, stigmatized and outcast by society. Internalized oppression and negative self-image are common among people who have been rejected by society and have experienced oppression within systems originally designed to help. Help isn’t help if it’s not helpful.

Peer supporters treat people as human beings and remain alert to any practice that is dehumanizing, demoralizing, or degrading. This includes working diligently to explore and reframe the way that people treat themselves because of internalized oppression, stereotypes, and stigmas. We use our personal story and/or advocacy to be an agent for positive change, on both the personal and systemic levels.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
Practice: <b>Educate and Advocate</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters recognize injustices faced by those who use services, in all contexts, act as advocates, and facilitate change where appropriate.</li><li>• Peer supporters encourage, coach and inspire those they support, to challenge and overcome injustices when and as they are able, often by joining with others</li><li>• Peer supporters model use of human experience/” people first” language that is supportive, encouraging, inspiring, and respectful, while also being sensitive to differences across disability communities in its use.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define and model advocacy for peer supporters, including advocating for organizational changes. This requires positive relationships with ACCS team leaders/directors and GLE managers/directors.</li><li>• It requires allies in MH service leadership who help the supervisor raise issues in a way in which it does not create defensiveness or negative feelings</li><li>• Coach peer supporters on how to respect the rights of individuals they support, while also helping individuals challenge and overcome injustice.</li></ul>

- Peer supporters help those they support, to explore areas in need of change for themselves and others.

- Act as an ally to peer supporters and the people they are supporting when bringing up issues of real or perceived injustice.
- Advocate for peer supporters within the overall DMH workforce system to ensure respect for the role and equity in the workplace.
- Assist colleagues with understanding the role, the perspective and experience of peer supporters on the ACCS Teams.
- Address the differences of opinion that may occur on the team, particularly in situations in which the supervisor has the responsibility to balance issues of liability, risk management, disclosure, confidentiality and other ethical issues - with the peer supporter's potential perspectives.

## CORE VALUE 6

# Peer Supporters are Honest and Direct

True safety is created through trust.

When we adopt truly trauma-informed philosophies of care, we must come to realize that most people in programs have very good reasons not to give their trust easily to others. Too often, the actions of others have been a source of our pain. When service providers are not fully transparent and direct in their interactions, it can serve only to replicate those sources of trauma. Peer supporters understand that all healing relationships are built upon the foundations of trust, and that even the perception of coercion and/or deception is extremely damaging to the formation of healing processes that feel safe to all involved.

Peer supporters and peer support supervisors encourage traditional providers to partner and collaborate in modeling interpersonal dynamics that foster mutual honesty and informed consent. Ensuring privacy and confidentiality in all encounters also rebuilds trust. This unified and uncompromising commitment to trust is what ultimately builds safe, supportive relationships and environments.

Clear, thoughtful, and intentional communication is fundamental to human relationships of any form. “Being intentional” means “communicating in a manner that encourages all involved to step outside of their current narratives”. In order to further such simultaneously challenging and supportive relationships and communications, it is crucial that all conflicts and differences of opinion are addressed directly and respectfully. This applies equally whether such conflicts involve peer supporters, traditional providers, or people in ACCS programs.

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.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
<b>Practice: Address Difficult Issues with Caring and Compassion</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters respect privacy and confidentiality and explain to the person they are supporting the bounds and limitations on confidentiality as pertaining to their involvement in ACCS services.</li><li>• When the limits of confidentiality become an issue, peer supporters are able to identify natural and community resources outside of the traditional service framework and are able to inform both those they support and traditional</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish clear, self-defined boundaries, set reasonable and mutually agreed-upon expectations that are consistent with and unique to peer support practice rather than clinical expectations. I.e., peer supporters openly share their stories in accordance with our Code of Ethics, whereas traditional providers often set up boundaries around sharing about their personal life and experiences.</li></ul>

providers around the scope of these resources and their limitations on confidentiality.

- Peer supporters engage when desired by those they support, in candid, honest discussions about stigma, abuse, oppression, crisis or safety. Peer supporters will facilitate conversations around crisis and safety in a manner that fosters partnership and emphasizes the needs of those they support first and foremost.
- Peer supporters strive to build peer relationships based on integrity, honesty, respect, and trust.

The peer supporter's role may be more nuanced in practice. Support the supervisee in navigating grey areas when partnering with the people they are supporting.

- Build trust and develop the integrity of the supervisory relationship with peer supporters through honest and respectful communication about strengths and areas that need improvement.
- Directly and honestly address any identified area of professional development, performance issues, or personal needs.
- Model and support the supervisee in presenting information that they are passionate about to others in a way that is honest and impactful, even when it may seem critical or controversial.
- Support supervisees to act as change agents, offering honest and direct critical feedback to each other, to providers, to the agency and to the funders. The supervisor must be knowledgeable and skilled in advocacy that allows for effective change and must also be willing and able to fully support supervisees when they are acting as advocates and agents of change.

## CORE VALUE 7

# Peer Support is Mutual and Reciprocal

In most community relationships, each person gives and receives in a fluid, constantly changing manner. Community life is based on the premise that we all have something to contribute and to learn from one another.

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. When people in programs take on the identity of a “service recipient” or a “person served”, it de-emphasizes the nature of genuine human relationships found in most community life. Each person in a community is generally seen as capable of both giving and receiving. Too often programs mimic institutional life where this intimate concept of mutuality is not the standard.

The Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics states: “Certified Peer Specialists will advocate for the full integration of individuals into the communities of their choice and will promote the inherent value of these individuals to those communities. Certified Peer Specialists will be directed by the knowledge that all people have the right to live in the least restrictive and least intrusive environment of their choice.”

Therefore, it is the task of peer supporters to model the mutual, genuine human relationships found in community life with not only those they support, but also with other service providers. This is what it means to be an agent of change, to encourage other providers to adopt an approach and ethos that fully allows for community integration. This is what it means to be “in but not of the system”, to not take on the rigid, institutional roles of a fixer, a helper, an expert. Peer supporters hold mutuality as so vitally sacrosanct because it rebuilds those vital bridges into community life, into the communities that people can freely choose to belong.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
<b>Practice: Encourage to Give and Receive</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters embrace the fundamental principle that we are all capable of giving and receiving, that we all have things to learn from one another. Peer supporters focus on establishing this mutuality in all interactions and set that as the standard for all roles and relationships within the ACCS framework.</li><li>• Peer supporters encourage those they support to fulfill a fundamental human need – to be able to give as well as receive. Peer supporters work with other</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tailor the supervisory style and approach to the PS’ preference and learning style (e.g., different avenues for supervision – 1:1, group, experiential, co-reflection)</li><li>• Encourage co-learning (collaborative learning) and welcome peer supporters’ input in decision-making wherever possible. Push upward within the program and agency leadership structure to continue creating space for peer support driven co-learning, and advocate for the voices of peer support to be</li></ul>

ACCS and agency staff to also encourage the fulfilment of this need in those they support in order to empowerment towards fulfilling

- Peer supporters respect and honor a relationship with those they support that evokes power-sharing and mutuality, wherever possible. They seek to reduce or eliminate power differentials wherever possible, while also acknowledging that such power differentials will always inherently exist due to the nature of the paid role.

present at all program and agency decision-making platforms.

- Model mutuality and the reciprocal nature of peer support by offering opportunities for and welcoming feedback from peer supporters during supervision sessions.
- Coach peer supporters to ask exploratory questions and discuss shared emotional experiences, especially when a peer supporter is working with someone whose life experience, background, culture, worldview, and recovery journey may differ from their own.

CORE VALUE 8

# Peer Support is Based on Equally Shared Power

Sharing power in a peer support relationship means providing an equal **opportunity** for each person to express ideas and opinions, offer choices and contribute to community life and dialog. By definition, peer supporters engage in promoting a mutual relationship to the greatest extent possible, based on the perspective of the person we are supporting.

Obviously, peer supporters carry both real and perceived power. We are in paid agency roles, we received specialized training, and we have immediate access to people and information within our organizations that the people we support may not. These factors carry the potential for the abuse of power, which must be avoided at all costs. Collaboration and open communication allow for the exploration and resolution of any real or perceived power imbalances. When the container created by peer support is a truly collaborative one, we avoid the abuse of power and move forward together, as a unified body and mind.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
Practice: <b>Embody Equality</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer supporters use language and behave in ways that reflect respect for the intended mutuality of the relationship with those they support.</li> <li>• Peer supporters foster relationships that are meant to be transparent and in which power is equally shared, within the limits of the inherent power differentials (e.g., one is paid, and the other is not)</li> <li>• Peer supporters offer services which may be complementary to diagnostic or medical services, which they do not offer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate peer supporters on the concept of interpersonal and organizational power and the potential for inadvertently reinforcing power differentials in the PS relationships.</li> </ul> <p>Educating peer supporters may include role-play scenarios that might be encountered, to help the peer supporter navigate challenges (e.g., power imbalances, role confusion/ misunderstanding of roles, lack of education or knowledge about the different roles in ACCS and how they fit together – both for the peer supporter and for the other ACCS team roles).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the network of relationships the peer supporter has (e.g., with the people they are supporting, the supervisor and the ACCS team members and others).</li> <li>• Discuss the application of the CPS/CARC Code of Ethics and core values to the ACCS service model,</li> </ul>



	<p>related to dual relationships and conflict of interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Model how to support the person in their self-determination, identifying areas where they have control and power, and help them to explore their options so they feel more empowered and practice more autonomy.</li><li>• Reinforce the non-clinical nature of the peer support role with both the peer supporters and other colleagues, to avoid “peer drift”, co-optation, and role ambiguity.</li><li>• Support peer support values and the scope of non-clinical, voluntary and anti-oppression practice, especially in situations in which the peer supporter is called upon to endorse or enforces a form of treatment or clinical practice.</li><li>• Support the peer supporter in balancing the need to navigate conflict and avoid adversarial relationships that will prevent the peer supporter from being most effective in their advocacy-- while also respecting the need to be consistent with the peer support role.</li><li>• Step in to mediate issues/advocate for the integrity of the peer role with other ACCS team members, especially when peer role drift has occurred or is suggested, or when the peer support function of being a change agent conflicts with other team members’ views.</li><li>• Create a safe work environment by considering how power in relationships, including the relationship between the supervisor and PS effects those with histories of trauma.</li></ul>
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CORE VALUE 9

# Peer Support is Strength-Focused

Every person has skills, gifts, and talents we can use to better our life, to create meaning, to find fulfillment, and to move towards self-defined actualization. As peer supporters, we share our own experiences to validate the hardship of adversity while also promoting the building of resilience. We all possess the ability to persevere through a wide variety of life challenges, and ultimately to learn and grow from such challenges.

Through peer support, people get in touch with their strengths and the positive things we already have going on in their lives. We rediscover childhood dreams, unveil deep-seeded hopes, and reignite long-lost passions to fuel recovery, healing, and growth towards reaching our full potentials. Through this process of personal transformation, we are able to see what is strong in our lives, rather than simply what's been traditionally defined as "wrong." These strengths become the foundation that allows for continuous transformation and upward growth towards self-actualization.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
<p>Practice: <b>See what's Strong, Not What's Wrong</b></p>	<p>The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer supporters walk alongside a person as they explore and identify their strengths and how to utilize them to make desired changes.</li> <li>• Peer supporters use their own experience to demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity while empathizing with the challenging emotions and experiences of those they support</li> <li>• Peer supporters acknowledge the strengths, informed choices and decisions of people they support as a foundation of recovery. Peer supporters are honest and direct (core value #6), while also building off a person's strengths.</li> </ul> <p>Peer supporters support others to explore dreams and goals that are meaningful to them and work to assist in advocating for those goals with others involved in the person's life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model a focus on strengths rather than deficits, with all employees.</li> <li>• Explain the reasoning for using a strengths-based approach is part of creating a recovery-oriented system of care, and how to productively and more effectively correct others when problematic language is used.</li> <li>• Encourage peer supporters to use a strength-based approach to evaluate their own progress and performance; invite them to provide a similar strength-based approach when working with others.</li> <li>• Encourage peer supporters to develop meaningful personal, career, and leadership development goals and suggest they use a similar process with those they support.</li> <li>• Use existing agency performance evaluation tools, Recovery Coach</li> </ul>

- Peer supporters don't fix or do for others what they can do for themselves.

supervisory tools, and other measures, to support peer supporters in self-evaluating their performance, strengths, and areas where they may need or want to grow, in order to set personal and professional development goals.

- Use supervision to discuss progress on goals, using the peer supporter's strengths as a springboard for professional and personal growth.
- Brainstorm and partner with the peer supporter.
- Value all peer supporters as assets / resources / contributors vs. dictating what to do.

## CORE VALUE 10

# Peer Support is Transparent

Peer supporters communicate in plain language that people can readily understand. We make everything we do visible to the people we support in order to build trust and promote participation in a truly self-directed decision-making process. Peer Support is predicated on the premise of treating people as capable of hearing all of the details and being fully informed about any and all conversations related to the services they receive.

Transparency in peer support means all of the above, and there is a deeper level. It also refers to the mutually agreed upon expectations navigated with each person about what can and cannot be offered within the context of a peer support relationship. This includes privacy, confidentiality, mutual agreements around safety, a shared vocabulary, and the nuances of navigating a mutual and reciprocal relationship that occurs in a professional setting.

Such a navigation can be extremely challenging for all parties involved. Our duty is to be upfront about what our agencies require us to report or document, so that the people we support can make informed choices on what they choose to share with us, and what they choose not to. When we become skilled in doing so, transparency also becomes a powerful means of empowering personal choice, agency and autonomy in the lives of those we support.

<b>PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES</b>	<b>SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES</b>
<b>Practice: Set Clear Expectations and Use Plain Language</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters clearly explain what can or cannot be expected of the peer support relationship.</li><li>• Peer supporters use language that is clear, understandable and judgement - free.</li><li>• Peer supporters use language that is supportive and respectful. They promote a shift in language towards words that align with the lens through which the person views their experience.</li><li>• Peer supporters make only promises they can keep and use accurate statements.</li><li>• Peer supporters do not diagnose, nor do they prescribe, recommend medications or monitor their use.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Orient peer supporters to job duties and requirements based on job descriptions, including the type of documentation a peer supporter is expected to keep, and to guide understanding of the performance review process.</li><li>• Strategize with the peer supporter in finding and implementing strategies to minimize power differentials inherent in some agency-specific job requirements (e.g., writing service/encounter notes).</li><li>• Explain the supervisor's role, including connecting peer supporters to other colleagues with additional expertise, as needed.</li><li>• Describe the benefits and expectations of the supervisory relationship, including</li></ul>

- Peer supporters are upfront and actively acknowledge their own privilege in relationships with the people they support.

the frequency and duration of supervision meetings.

- Model transparency by being up front about what can and cannot be expected from the supervisory relationship (i.e., the supervisor can provide emotional support around challenging situations, difficult interactions, and losses, though should not be someone’s main support system or therapist).
- Emphasize using plain person-first, “human experience language” – in trainings, discussions, supervisions, writing – and caution against excessive usage of jargon/clinical language. Having a shared language helps to create a recovery-oriented system of care.
- Identify potential issues in informed consent that require that a peer supporter notify their supervisor or others, so that the peer supporter can be equally clear in their communications with those whom they support.

## CORE VALUE 11

# Peer Support Is Person-Driven

The first and most fundamental tenant of the CPS Code of Ethics states: "The primary responsibility of Certified Peer Specialists is to help people achieve what they want most in life, their own goals, needs and wants. Certified Peer Specialists will be guided by the principles of self-determination for all"

All people have a fundamental right to make decisions and to be their own experts on the things related to their own lives, hopes and dreams. This is essential to any model that incorporates person-centered approaches, such as ACCS. It is also essential that any agency that acts as an ACCS provider fully demonstrates a top-down philosophy of person-centeredness in congruence with the principle of self-determination. Peer supporters can further drive a person-centered agency culture by informing people and providers about options, providing the most accurate and up-to-date information about choices, and then making sure those decisions are truly honored and respected.

Peer supporters encourage people to move beyond their comfort zones, learn from their missteps, and grow from dependence on the system toward their chosen level of freedom and inclusion in the communities of their choice.

PEER SUPPORTER GUIDELINES	SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES
<b>Practice: Focus on the Person, Not the Problems</b>	The supervisor role vis a vis ACCS is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer supporters encourage those they support to embrace self-determinism, to make their own decisions, and to self-advocate for their wants, needs, and goals.</li><li>• Peer supporters encourage those they support to try new things, and partner with people to explore new activities and experiences when desired and/or needed.</li><li>• Peer supporters help others learn from mistakes and see them as opportunities for growth and learning.</li><li>• Peer supporters encourages resilience in the face of a system that is not always ideal in supporting personal agency. Peer supporters will empower those they support to use their own voices and</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide an environment where peer supporters are empowered to move beyond comfort zones and learn from their mistakes.</li><li>• Reframe unexpected outcomes as opportunities for personal growth, recovery, and resilience while also creating ways for the program and agency staff to debrief and review what went well, what did not, and what needs to change in the future to support better outcomes.</li><li>• Assist peer supporters in identifying areas for personal growth and creating professional and development plans.</li><li>• Recognize when the issues a peer supporter brings up in supervision, are</li></ul>

<p>stories to also self-advocate for the changes that will best support their autonomy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer supporters encourage personal growth in others and will seek ways to reframe challenging situations often referred to as “crises” into learning and growth opportunities.</li> <li>• Peer supporters encourage and coach those they support to decide what they want in life and how to achieve it.</li> <li>• Peer supporter role is to offer open-ended, non-directive supports in order to encourage the people they support to discover their own pathways and solutions.</li> </ul>	<p>beyond the supervisor’s role, expertise, or knowledge; and suggest constructive ways to obtain help for these issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instead of problem-solving for them, use intentional, open-ended questions and empower peer supporters to develop creative solutions to the problem at hand in order to undertake their own journey and learn from their own experiences on the job.</li> </ul>
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<sup>i</sup> While the original NAPS document contained “open-mindedness” as a 12<sup>th</sup> Core Value, the Massachusetts Peer Support Supervision Workgroup believes that open-mindedness is both implied and explicit in the other 11 values. Open-mindedness and genuine curiosity are foundational in all aspects of peer support. We don’t know what we don’t yet know. Additionally, we believe that all those working in human services should constantly strive to be open-minded. Whether it applies to new trainings, new evidence, new practices, or new folks we work with, open mindedness is the diamond thread that runs through all aspects of agencies, programs, services and supports, making way for new meaning.