



A TOOL FOR YOUTH PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Program Readiness Self-Assessment

Where your program stands, and what to strengthen first

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Why readiness matters

Youth peer support can reach young people that other services struggle to reach. But peers can't do that work alone. They need a program around them that's ready: someone to turn to, a clear role, a fair way in, a reason to stay, and a record of the work.

When a peer program struggles, it's rarely because of the peers. It's usually because of a gap no one planned for.

Peers do their best work inside a program built to hold them.



How to use this assessment

This assessment looks at five areas that shape whether a youth peer support program can start strong and last: supervision, role clarity, recruitment, retention, and documentation and reporting.

Who should fill it out

A small group works best: a director, the person who supervises peers (or will), and a peer supporter if you have one. Each of them sees different gaps.

How to score

Answer each question with the option that fits your program today, not the one you're planning.

0 Not yet

1 Partly

2 Yes, in place

What the bands mean

Build the foundation

Key pieces are missing. Start here before you launch or grow.

Strengthen what's there

The basics exist. Some are informal or depend on one person.

Ready to grow

This area can support a new or larger program.

A lower score that's true is more useful than a high score that isn't. No score is a pass or a fail. It's a starting point. Credential, supervision, funding, and billing rules for peer support vary by state. Where a question touches those rules, check what applies where you are.

Organization or program _____

Completed by _____

Date _____

Supervision

Federal guidance from SAMHSA says peer specialists “need skilled, recovery-oriented supervisors.”¹ Good supervision keeps peers from carrying heavy conversations alone.

	Not yet 0	Partly 1	Yes 2
1. Is there a named supervisor for peer staff, with protected time to do the job?	☐	☐	☐
2. Do peers get regular, scheduled supervision, not just when something goes wrong?	☐	☐	☐
3. Has the supervisor had training on supervising peers, including how the role differs from clinical work? Rules differ by state, and some states require this training.²	☐	☐	☐
4. Can a peer reach someone for help with a safety concern at any hour?	☐	☐	☐

What your score suggests

Your score / 8

0-3 Build the foundation

Name who supervises peers and protect time for it. Put an after-hours safety path in writing before peers start.

4-6 Strengthen what's there

Make supervision regular instead of as-needed, and look into training built for supervising peers.

7-8 Ready to grow

You can likely support more peers. Keep checking that caseloads leave room for real supervision.

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Incorporating Peer Support Into Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services (TIP 64), Chapter 5, 2023. Written for substance use treatment settings. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK596264

² For example: California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), “Training for Supervisors.” capeercertification.org/supervisor-training. In Ohio, supervisors of certified peer supporters, including youth, complete a “four-hour supervising peers training” (Ohio Adm. Code 5122-29-15.1).

Role clarity

When a peer's role is fuzzy, it drifts toward whatever the team needs that day. A clear role protects peers and the young people they serve.

	Not yet 0	Partly 1	Yes 2
1. Is there a written job description for peers that is distinct from clinical and case management roles?	☐	☐	☐
2. Do other staff know what peers do, and what they don't do?	☐	☐	☐
3. Are there written boundaries for contact, such as hours, channels, and how relationships end?	☐	☐	☐
4. Do peers know when and how to hand a situation off to someone else?	☐	☐	☐

What your score suggests

Your score / 8

0-3 Build the foundation

Write the job description and contact boundaries first. It's hard to supervise, hire for, or fund a role no one has defined.

4-6 Strengthen what's there

The role exists on paper. Make sure the rest of the team understands it, and that peers know exactly when to hand off.

7-8 Ready to grow

Your role is clear. Revisit it once a year, and whenever the program adds new services or settings.

Recruitment

Lived experience is the core qualification. Your hiring process should help you find it, not filter it out.

	Not yet 0	Partly 1	Yes 2
1. Do you know where to find candidates whose lived experience reflects the young people you serve?	☐	☐	☐
2. Have you reviewed your hiring requirements to make sure they don't screen out the lived experience you're hiring for?	☐	☐	☐
3. Do you know whether your state has a youth peer support credential, and what it requires?	☐	☐	☐
Not every state has one, and the names differ. Ohio's, for example, is the Certified Youth Peer Supporter (CYPS). ³			
4. Do young people or current peers have a voice in hiring?	☐	☐	☐

What your score suggests

Your score / 8

0-3 Build the foundation

Start with your state's credential rules, if it has one, and your job posting. Then list the places and people who already have trust with the young people you serve.

4-6 Strengthen what's there

You can find candidates. Look at where good ones fall out of the process, and bring young people or peers into interviews.

7-8 Ready to grow

Your pipeline is working. Build lasting ties with community groups so recruitment doesn't start from zero each time.

³ Ohio Department of Behavioral Health, "Become a Certified Youth Peer Supporter (CYPS)," dbh.ohio.gov/community-partners/peer-supporters/certified-youth-peer-supporter-cyps

Retention

Peers often come to this work at a busy point in life. Keeping them means building a job that fits a real life and leads somewhere.

	Not yet 0	Partly 1	Yes 2
1. Do hours and expectations fit around school, family, and other commitments, and can peers keep them up over time?	☐	☐	☐
2. Do peers have a visible path to grow, such as advancement, leadership, or supervision?	☐	☐	☐
3. Is there a plan to support peers through the emotional weight of the work?	☐	☐	☐
4. Are peers treated as full members of the team, included in meetings and decisions?	☐	☐	☐

What your score suggests

Your score / 8

- 0-3

Build the foundation

Ask your peers, or the people you hope to hire, what would make this job workable. Start with schedules and support for the hard days.
- 4-6

Strengthen what's there

Peers can stay, but may not see a future. Map what growth could look like in your organization, even one small step.
- 7-8

Ready to grow

You're building a place peers want to stay. Make sure what's working is written down, so it survives budget and staffing changes.

Documentation and reporting

If the work isn't documented, it's hard to supervise, hard to fund, and it leaves when a peer leaves.

	Not yet 0	Partly 1	Yes 2
1. Do peers contact young people through a secure platform the organization provides, not personal phones or social media?	☐	☐	☐
2. If a peer left tomorrow, would the record of their work stay with the program?	☐	☐	☐
3. Could you show a funder how often peers are connecting with the young people they serve?	☐	☐	☐
4. Do you know where young people's information is stored, who can access it, and how it's deleted?	☐	☐	☐

What your score suggests

Your score / 8

0-3 Build the foundation

Move peer contact onto a secure platform the organization provides, so the work has a record. Then find out what your funders require you to document. This varies by state and funder.

4-6 Strengthen what's there

Records exist, but may be scattered. Make sure supervisors can see caseloads, check-ins, and flagged concerns, and that you can produce reports you can save and share without chasing down each peer.

7-8 Ready to grow

Your documentation can support funding and oversight. Review who can access what, and how long you keep it.

Your readiness snapshot

Copy each area score here and mark its band.

Area	Score	Build the foundation	Strengthen what's there	Ready to grow
Supervision	/ 8	☐	☐	☐
Role clarity	/ 8	☐	☐	☐
Recruitment	/ 8	☐	☐	☐
Retention	/ 8	☐	☐	☐
Documentation and reporting	/ 8	☐	☐	☐
Total	/ 40			

What your total suggests

0-15

Build the foundation

Focus on your lowest one or two areas before you launch or expand.

16-31

Strengthen what's there

You have a base to build on. Close your biggest gaps as you grow.

32-40

Ready to grow

Your program is well placed to launch or expand. Keep your lowest area in view.

Start with your lowest area. A strong total can hide one weak area, and that's usually where problems show up first.

Next steps

Readiness isn't a finish line. It's a habit of checking what's in place and fixing what isn't.

1 Share your results

Walk through them with leadership and with your peer staff. Peers often see gaps others miss.

3 Put it in writing

Roles, boundaries, supervision, and escalation steps belong in documents everyone can find.

5 Plan for training

Youth MOVE National's Peer Connect is one training for youth peer supporters.⁴ Your state's credential, where one exists, has its own requirements. Check those directly.

2 Pick one area for 90 days

Choose your lowest area, or the one that would cause the most harm if it failed.

4 Check your state's rules

Credentials, supervisor requirements, funding, and billing vary by state. Confirm what applies to you.

6 Retake this in six months

See what's moved, and choose your next focus.

The area we'll strengthen first _____

Our first step _____

Date to retake this assessment _____



Ready to act on your results? Blueprints, step-by-step toolkits for program leaders, are at shareandsolve.app/#blueprints.

⁴ Youth MOVE National, "Peer Connect – Impact Spotlight." youthmovenational.org/peer-connect-impact-spotlight

ABOUT

Share+Solve and Peer Bridge

Share+Solve and Peer Bridge help organizations run their own youth peer support programs. They don't replace your peer supporters, your training, or your program. They give the work you already do a safe, supervised home.

They can support the supervision, escalation, and reporting parts of readiness. The roles, people, and policies stay yours to build.

Share+Solve

Where peers and young people connect: messaging, check-ins, goals, and meet-ups, with a one-tap 988 call button on the home screen.

Peer Bridge

Where supervisors see the whole program: caseloads, check-ins, escalations, and program-level reporting.

Private conversations between peers and young people stay between them. Your organization controls its program data, and deletion requests are handled through the platform.

Built by John Dellick, MBA, a nationally recognized peer support professional with nearly a decade in youth peer support and behavioral health.



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