Top FAQs Leaders Often Ask

We recognize that there are many programs that leaders are asked to approve and finance. Because of budget constraints, leaders have the difficult task of separating *need to have* from *nice to have.* This handout will provide basic information about peer support and help leaders determine if this program will add value to the organization.

1. What is peer support?

Peer Support is an informal, in-house program utilizing vetted and trained personnel (known as *peers*) to provide care and offer hope to colleagues struggling with stress and overwhelmed by daily difficulties.

Utilizing peers in a stressful work environment has a preventative component as well. In many cases, peers are able to identify and diffuse concerns before it reaches crisis levels. Through training, peers learn to read the subtle (or not so subtle) "signs" and compassionately move towards those in need.

For more, check out our article: *Does Peer Support Really Work?*

2. How does peer support differ from Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)?

CISM is defined as "adaptive, short-term psychological helping-process" often applied following a critical incident. Depending on the organization, CISM teams may be locally, regionally or nationally-based. Because of this, CISM responders may or may not know the personnel involved.

Peer support, on the other hand, is not contingent on a critical incident. Peers are trained to "*stand with and walk beside*" colleagues struggling with daily difficulties. Peer support is relational and requires ongoing sense of trust, safety and familiarity. Peers are trained to listen, assess and address in order to reduce stress, increase clarity and empower healthy decision-making.

3. Do we really need peer support when employees have access to Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

Peers are NOT mental health counselors or clinicians; therefore, peer support does not *compete* with programs like EAP - it *complements*.

Because rapport is already established, colleagues tend to trust and accept peer support before considering "outside" help. From this relationship, peers are able to credibly refer to "next-level" care. Some agencies have even reported an increase in EAP utilization following implementation of their peer program. In many cases, peers become the number one referral source for EAP.

4. What are the benefits of having a peer program?

In 2014, Harvard Business Review (HBR) published an article stating that employees who felt they worked in a loving, caring culture reported higher levels of job satisfaction and teamwork.

In 2017, Professor of Business Administration and Psychology, Dr. Jane Dutton, discovered that demonstrations of compassion at work decreases absenteeism, turnover and healthcare costs while increasing motivation, engagement and pride in the organization.

Although there are many ways to cultivate a *culture of care* in the workplace, we believe peer support is the most cost-effective and efficient vehicle for delivering credible care.

For more, read these blogs: How Caring Benefits the Bottomline, The Cost of Not Caring and Cost / Benefit Analysis: The Case for Supporting Peer Support.

5. What is the liability associated with a peer program?

Liability is a key concern when starting a peer support program. Leaders often worry about confidentiality and/or a peer's lack of expertise in handling perceived "life-and-death" situations. Mitigating liability includes drafting policy, vetting and selecting volunteers according to core values, basic training and continuing education.

Because no peer or peer program is perfect, violations possible. Therefore, we recommend two key roles to guide and assist peers in their efforts: (1) clinical

consultant - a mental health professional prepared to offer confidential feedback, coaching and accept referrals when needed. For many organizations, their EAP program serves as a vital resource for peer consultation and referral. (2) program coordinator - an employee who is responsible for the operation and organization of the program. Depending on the size of the organization and peer team, this position is often ancillary and serves as a liaison between peers and leadership - communicating needs and reporting statistics.

To assist in drafting policy, CSS offers a free, online course: **Policy and Protocols for an Ethical Practice** (available now on [Teachable](#) - enrollment is required).

CSS also offers a free "Coordinator Crash Course". Email info@crisissupportsolutions.com to enroll.

For more, read our blog: [The Importance of Policy (and why I wouldn't run a program without one)](#).

6. How much will it cost?

Although employees volunteering their time provide peer and crisis support services, there is still a cost associated with building and maintaining such a program.

Because, this is primarily a volunteer-based response, the main cost of this program (at least initially) will be basic [training](#) for support team members. Basic training cost can run between $130 and $300 per person / per day.

Be sure to get the most *bang for your buck* - don't *buy* more than you need. **Only purchase training that your team needs to satisfy program goals.** The type of skills your team will need will determine the number of training days.

Click [here](#) for information on our 2-day basic peer training.

7. Why select CSS to deliver peer training?

After years of research and field-experience, we've developed an exclusive [6-part protocol](#)© as a guide for supporting **anyone**, at **any time**, dealing with **any difficulty**. This protocol is the foundation of all our trainings. Each block includes interactive instruction, instructor demonstration, table exercises and/or scenario-based role play labs (with personalized coaching / feedback).

CSS also provides a password-protected webpage for students to electronically access textbook, slides, quick guides, videos and other reference materials. Graduates of CSS training also have free lifetime access to live, interactive webinars for continuing education.

8. Does CSS offer train-trainer option?

Depending on the size of your organization and potential rate for growth, CSS recommends train-trainer as a cost-saving, long-term training solution.

CSS train-the-trainer curriculum is designed to teach, coach and develop instructors to provide quality peer support training for your organization. This course teaches student-instructors how to balance the "science of teaching" with the "heart" of peer support.

Delivering peer support training requires more than teaching from slides. Peer support trainers are responsible for developing peers and nurturing a supportive response that moves beyond the classroom. In the CSS train-trainer course, student-instructors will learn the mechanics of structuring, organizing and preparing a course, as well as providing continuing education opportunities for ongoing development.

In this course, student-instructors will practice teaching content while learning to put students into scenario-based role plays and deliver coaching-style feedback for improved response.

CSS also provides student-instructors with a password-protected webpage to electronically access textbook, slides, quick guides, training videos and other reference materials to enhance the learning and growing process.

For more information on train-trainer, email dorie@crisissupportsolutions.com