



Ontario Peer Development Initiative

OPDI Peer Support Core Skills™ Training Program

Consumer/survivor groups, provider agencies, mental health system planners and policy makers in Ontario have for years lamented the absence of a common curriculum for peer support training. Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) has created just such a program and rolled it out for the first time across the province over the summer of 2010.

OPDI Peer Support Core Skills™ Training Program was developed for and by OPDI and its membership of consumer/survivor initiatives (CSI's), through a fully consultative process undertaken by Christine Gayler and Associates. The project was funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The creative process began with a year-long exploration through literature review, key informant interviews, member surveys & interviews, focus groups, teleconferences and webinars. Over the summer of 2009 eight regional workshops were held across the province to pilot one first-draft module in each region. In January 2010, 28 individuals from member organizations came to Toronto to pilot the first version of the 8-day classroom component. Many of them have since completed 50-hour internships in their own cities and towns, in order to earn the designation "OPDI Certified Peer Supporter".

In late March, ten of the Core Skills "graduates" returned to Toronto for an additional three day train-the-trainer training. Over the summer of 2010, ten trainers moved toward OPDI Peer Support Trainer certification by delivering their first training course in their regions, with onsite and telephone support from the CG&A team and biweekly webinar support from the entire trainer group. A total of 174 participants, mostly from OPDI member organizations, enrolled in 11 locations, and 140 successfully completed the 50-hour classroom component of Core Skills, to earn their Level 1 or 1R^(*) recognitions. Of the 129 who were ^(*)Recommended to go on to the internship stage, 13 have completed 50 hour Internships to earn their Level 2, or OPDI Certified Peer Supporter, certificates. The rest of the entire group of 129 1R's, including the original 28, have until November 1, 2011 to complete their Internships to earn their OPDI Peer Supporter Certificates.

An Internship consists of using the learned Core Skills to deliver 50 hours of face-to-face peer support to individuals through the intern's local CSI or another mental health & addiction service. Interns are expected to find and negotiate a site and supervisor for their own placements, submit their internship plan to OPDI, and submit their time tracking and evaluations (by supervisor and by participants they support) to OPDI within a year of completing Core Skills Training. At the moment, OPDI has a BSW student on work placement acting as volunteer internship coordinator to track their progress and work through any questions or issues that arise during Internships. We will be seeking ways to make this a permanent part time position.

Sustainability for the training program beyond the OTF funded project is being addressed in the following ways

- developing additional modules of learning not covered in the Core Skills
- offering continuing education to the trainers
- offering the Core Skills training to consumers from CSI's, CSO's and mainstream provider agencies at a reasonable cost, which we are currently working to identify.

To ensure quality control, and to keep the training always grounded in principles of recovery and consumer empowerment, OPDI trainers must be members in good standing of an OPDI member organization. Only trainers who have been licensed by OPDI will be qualified and permitted to teach from this training toolkit, and the licenses will be renewable and revocable. A licensing agreement developed by legal counsel is in the latter stage of development and to be vetted and finalized with the trainers.

Currently OPDI is a partner in the CMHA Ontario-led project funded by Lawson Health Institute, to develop a module of Diabetes skills and competencies for peer supporters. In February, eight of the trainers will come to Toronto for this training piece and will then roll out the Diabetes module under the parameters of that project.

It is the intention of OPDI to continue to seek partners and funding opportunities to develop other, more specific skills sets for peer workers in various types of settings. Many of our participants are working in settings and programs, or in some cases TYPES of programs, that have not used peer supporters before. Their experience will identify needs and opportunities for modules of training that would be specific to such settings (housing, emergency departments, inpatient units, and more). We want to develop capacity for peer supporters to work not only within CSI's, but throughout the mental health and addiction system.

Members and other agencies interested in collaborating to have people with lived experience of mental illnesses become trained in OPDI Peer Support Core Skills™ on a user-pay basis are encouraged to contact us.

Individuals interested in receiving training are encouraged to watch for any of these offerings through our weekly e-mailed bulletin NewsToGo. *All open trainings will be advertised there.*

Mental health and addiction agencies interested in providing an internship opportunity are also welcome to contact us.

Message us at opdi@opdi.org and visit our website soon, and often, for more information* on this project (this portion of site is currently under reconstruction).