

## **Peer Support Group Meeting Policy**

Created August 2023

Peer Support Meetings are held in support of one another. Here, we will share experiences, concerns, and challenges in a nonjudgmental and confidential environment. This is a safe space for everyone; the identity of the attendees, what is said and by whom or what occurs here must stay completely confidential and should not be repeated outside of this group meeting space even with other members of the group. Confidentiality is based on the honour of each participant. Respect for one another is a key element and must always be maintained.

The ONLY exceptions to confidentiality are:

- If a facilitator learns that a member has expressed or implied the intent to harm themselves or another.
- Disclosures that trigger an LSO reporting obligation under the Rules of Professional Conduct.

All participants must respect diversity and maintain cultural competence and sensitivity by avoiding allusion to cultural or ethnic stereotypes.

Meetings start promptly – participants are asked to respect meeting start times and to keep distractions to a minimum: no cross-talking, carrying on side conversations, or failing to turn off cell phones.

Meetings are non-clinical and focus on building connections and sharing experiences. Facilitators are not mental health professionals and do not provide mental health treatment.

No unsolicited giving of advice – participants should speak from the “I/My” perspective to maximize the amount one is centering on one’s own experience and perspective when sharing.

No one is required to talk or give their name.

Groups are not a space for political debate. If political issues are discussed, they should be in relation to the individual’s experiences.

Groups are not to be used for personal marketing purposes. One can feel free to celebrate one’s accomplishments and how they make them feel but should not market services or content to the other participants.

Everyone comes to meetings seeking different things. Some may want suggestions regarding what is affecting them. Some may want to share what they are experiencing without judgment or advice. Some may just want to listen. Group members agree to respect what others are seeking in this space.

Participants may have experienced forms of systemic oppression, inequity, and injustice – for example, bias, harassment, discrimination, or experiences of being devalued based on race, gender, ability, diagnosis, sexual orientation, immigration status, class, employment status, body shape, generational traumas, neurodivergence, and other struggles. In meetings, members are welcome to discuss how such experiences may have affected them.

Facilitators will assertively and respectfully ensure that such discussions are respectful and that group participants maintain such respect throughout. While the facilitator will take the lead in holding the peer-support space and guiding the session, each participant is ultimately responsible for their own adherence to these guidelines.

In the event of a disruption or where a participant needs individualized attention (crisis, distress, inappropriate behaviour), facilitators may take the person aside to talk to them or assist them, so as to attend to their needs and to minimize disruption for the other participants (including virtually using rooms or offline interaction).

In the event of a participant being triggered or appearing to be in crisis, in addition to being taken aside, resources will be made available to the individual (by way of crisis line, emergency department, general practitioner, etc.)

Groups may be led by one facilitator or by co-facilitators (the latter is preferable but not always possible).

Post-meeting feedback will be sought from participants to assist in meeting their ongoing needs and improving the process for everyone.

For virtual meetings:

- Meetings will not be recorded, and participants are asked not to use any computer recording equipment, phones, or other devices to record conversations.
- Video participants agree to join discreetly, meaning no one else is in the room with them.
- In order to participate it has been recommended by experts that your camera be on.
- Please mute yourself when you are not speaking.
- Please silence any distractions that could affect other participants' ability to focus, including email and other computer alerts.
- Chat boxes are not to be used during meetings as they can be distracting and disrespectful to those speaking.

The OBA provides a virtual or in-person venue for lawyers to find support from one another. The OBA staff and volunteers facilitate the gathering of lawyers and may facilitate the discussion. The OBA is not providing expert advice and we do not have the means to enforce confidentiality and rely on each participant following this policy.