

After Stroke Peer Support Toolkit



A Guide to Develop, Deliver and
Maintain Group-based Peer Support



SECTION 3

Run Peer Support Group Meetings

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Disclaimer

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Project Team

Gayatri Aravind, Program Lead, Innovations in Peer Support, March of Dimes Canada. Adjunct Lecturer, Department of Physical Therapy, University of Toronto

Christina Sperling, Director, After Stroke, March of Dimes Canada

Michelle Nelson, Principal Investigator, Science of Care Institute, Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute, Sinai Health. Associate Professor (status), Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation, Division of Clinical Public Health (cross-appointment), Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto

Co-Design Group

Margaret Hansen, Member

Robert Mahony, Member

Tim McCleary, Member

John McGowan, Member

Christy Nich, Member

Paul Roberts, Member

Susan Robertson, Member

Amanda Nash, Project Lead, Lived Experience Engagement Support, Heart & Stroke

Sarah Munce, *Scientist*, KITE-Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network. Assistant Professor (status only), Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, Rehabilitation Science Institute, Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation, University of Toronto

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Contact

March of Dimes Canada

202-885 Don Mills Road

Toronto, ON, M3C 1V9

peersupport@marchofdimes.ca

www.marchofdimes.ca

www.afterstroke.ca



Section Three | Run Peer Support Group Meetings

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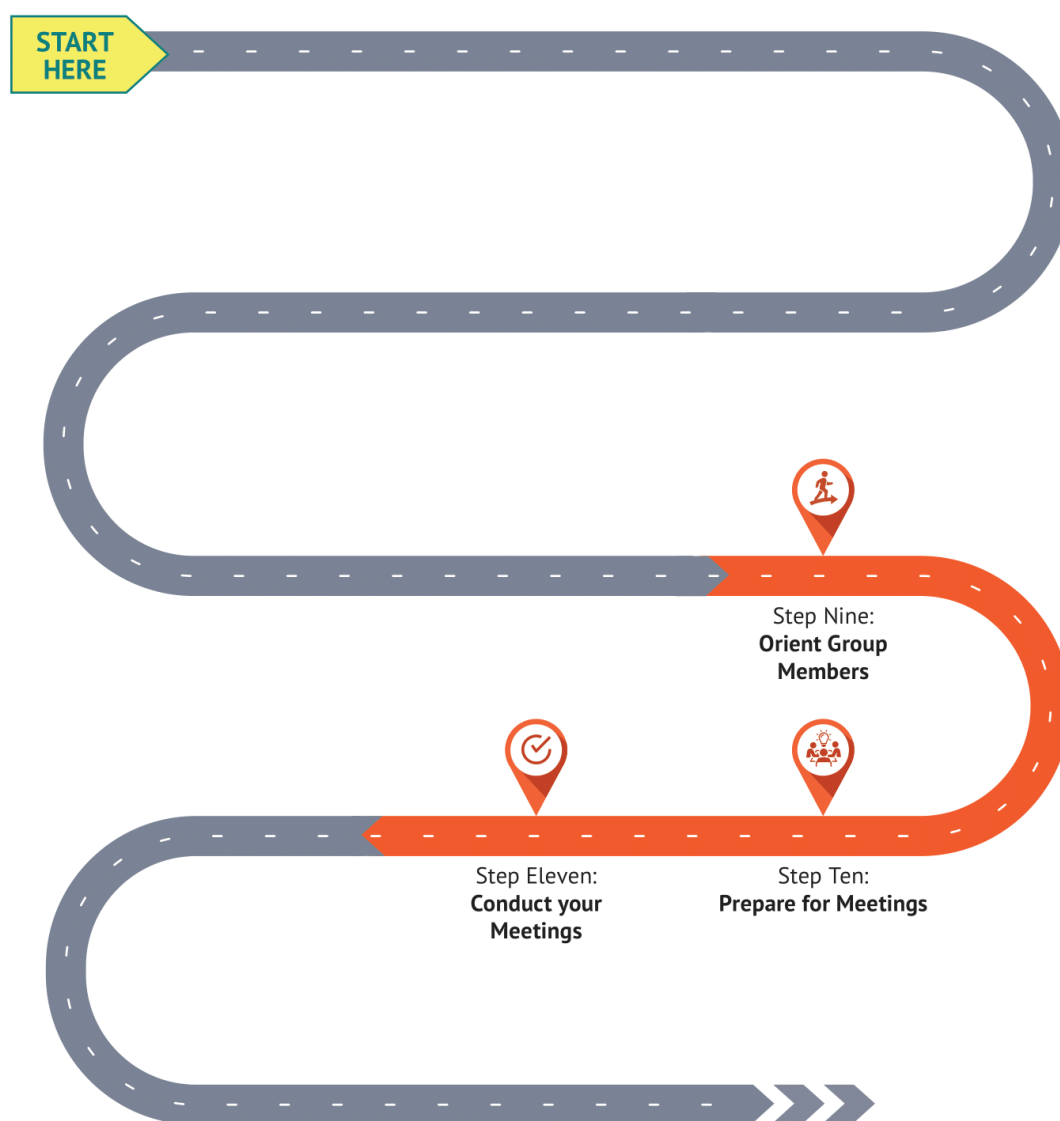


Quick Overview

With your peer support group design complete, you are ready to start holding peer support meetings. This section will help you welcome new members, plan, and run your peer support meetings.

SECTION 3

Run Peer Support Group Meetings



Step Nine | Orient Group Members

Now that you have chosen and trained your team members, you are ready to move into implementation and delivery of the peer support group. Thanks to your promotion, interested people will begin to reach out to you.

Someone on your team (usually the group representative) can welcome new members, find out more about them, and answer any questions they may have.

Invite interested individuals to understand the program well before deciding to participate. You can provide an informed consent form to help with this. After an individual decides to participate, you can invite them to share some information about themselves.



Right to Privacy: Any information that includes a person's name, contact information, or any personal information needs to be recorded and stored securely. With your planning group decide how member information will be stored and how it will be used.

Template | Member Information Form

It's important to gather information about your new members, including emergency contacts and accommodations. You can use this template as is, or as inspiration to create your own.



Member Information Form

Thank you for your interest in joining our Peer Support Group! Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

Basic Information Name: Pronouns:	
Contact Information Phone number: Email address:	
Emergency Contact Information Name: Phone number:	
What are you looking for in a peer support group?	
What are some things you would like us to know about you?	
Do you need any assistance or accommodations?	
Date of Completion	

Your personal and contact information will only be used for communications related to the peer support group meetings. We will not share this information with anyone. You have the right to modify this information at any time or request that this information be deleted.



Template | Informed Consent Form

Some groups require participants to sign an informed consent form when signing up. The goal is to make sure the group is protected from liability and that members understand the group's values, and goals. You can use this template as is, or as inspiration to create your own.



Informed Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in joining our Peer Support Group!

This document includes information about some of the procedures and policies for the Peer Support Group. People who are interested in becoming a member of this group are requested to read this document before confirming their participation.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Brief Description _____

Participation Requirements _____

Description of Activities _____

Group Goals _____



Personal Information

Participants must provide their name and contact information so that we can reach you with information and updates about the group meetings. You are also requested to share the name and contact information of an emergency contact. We will not share your personal information with anyone.

During meetings, you may use an alias to protect your information. Sharing details of your stroke, and other aspects of your life is not required for participation. All participants are required to maintain confidentiality about other members' identities and experiences.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Confidentiality is critical to peer support. Information that members share during meetings should never be discussed outside of the meeting. Please speak to a member of the planning team if you need any accommodation.

Signed Consent

- ☐ I have read and understood the information included in this document.
- ☐ I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers.
- ☐ I agree to respect the rules set forth.
- ☐ I understand that I can leave at any time, which will void my consent.

I, _____, **agree to be a participant in this group.**

Participant

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Peer Support Group Volunteer

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

A signed copy of this document will be provided to you.
A second copy will be kept for group records.



Template | Orientation Booklet

An orientation document can help new members learn about the group and feel welcome. This should include details about your group, meetings, and expectations. You can use this template as is, or as inspiration to create your own.



Peer Support Group Orientation Booklet

Welcome to our Peer Support Group! This orientation booklet has information that will help you better understand how the group works.

Please review this before your first session.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Brief Description: _____

Participation Requirements: _____

Meeting Details: _____

Cost: _____



Core Values

Peer support groups are guided by values that help others feel welcome and safe.



Hope and Recovery. You will help promote hope and express realistic confidence in others to be successful in their journey of recovery. You will encourage individuals to find strength, take responsibility to make positive changes.



Self-Determination. You may offer suggestions but must always respect others' decisions, goals, and decisions about what is best for them.



Authenticity and Trust. You will act ethically and with integrity. You will maintain the anonymity, and confidentiality of the members of this group. You will be your true self and will accept other members as they are.





Health and Wellness. You understand that recovery is not a linear process and looks different for everyone. You must respect and care for your own health and well-being.



Dignity, Respect and Social Inclusion. You will be intentional with your language and words. You will be welcoming to everyone, regardless of age, identity, ethnicity, ability, or cultural and religious background. You will strive not to assign labels, stereotypes, or being influenced by biases.

Do's And Don'ts

To have a respectful and effective peer group discussion, please remember:

<div data-bbox="219 499 308 583"></div> <div data-bbox="337 520 409 562">Do's</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be supportive. • Encourage others by telling your story. • Ask respectful questions. • Listen patiently and without judging. • Wait your turn to speak. • Treat others with empathy. • Share what worked for you. • Turn off or silence your electronic devices during meetings. 	<div data-bbox="824 489 914 573"></div> <div data-bbox="943 520 1047 562">Don'ts</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use disrespectful or abusive language. • Make inappropriate references or jokes. • Pressure others to follow your advice. • Start or engage in arguments. • Judge the preferences, or experiences of others. • Share stories with people outside of the group.
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Virtual Meeting Details

The web-conferences platform we use is secure. We use passwords and waiting rooms so that only known members of this group will be admitted into the meeting. During the meeting the members may share private and personal stories, and it is important that these conversations remain private.

Please do not share meeting information without speaking to your group representative or facilitator first.

You will need:

- A computer, a tablet, or a phone.
- A stable and secure internet connection (public areas may not be secure).
- A private and safe space for the duration of the meeting.
- Preferably, a camera, microphone, and speaker/headphones.

To Join the Virtual Meeting: _____

If you need help or have never attended
a virtual meeting, contact:



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Step Ten | Prepare For Meetings

Leading up to your first meeting, you will have many things to remember.

One week before, facilitators, group representatives and volunteers should:

- Review the session plan.
- Make sure all resources are available.
- Review the member list and identify individuals who may need accommodation or additional support.
- Make reminder calls to the members about the meeting details.

It's always a good idea to plan out your meetings beforehand. Creating and sharing an agenda for each meeting will help members understand how the group will spend its time. They can also mentally prepare for sensitive topics, recall useful resources, and think of important questions.



Template | Readiness Checklists

Leading up to your first meeting, you will have many things to remember and prepare. A readiness checklist can help you to make sure nothing is forgotten. You can use this template as is, or as inspiration to create your own.



In-Person Meeting Readiness Checklist

- ☐ Is the meeting space booked?
- ☐ Are the meeting materials ready (chairs, tables, computer, projector, microphone, wi-fi password, etc.)?
- ☐ Are facilitators, and volunteers available and ready for the meeting?
- ☐ Has an agenda been created and shared?
- ☐ Are reminder phone calls and emails done?
- ☐ Do any members need accommodations?
- ☐ Is the paperwork ready (attendance sheet, incident report sheet, etc.)?
- ☐ Is the emergency contact list readily available?
- ☐ Are materials for members ready (name labels, pens, paper, etc.)?
- ☐ Who will pick up the refreshments?

Virtual Meeting Readiness Checklist

- ☐ Are facilitators, and volunteers available and ready for the meeting?
- ☐ Do you have the license to use the web conferencing platform?
- ☐ Do the facilitators and the volunteers know how to use the platform?
Can you teach it to members who may have challenges?
- ☐ Has an agenda been created?
- ☐ Has meeting information and agenda been shared with members?
- ☐ Have reminder calls been done?
- ☐ Do you have the member list and emergency contact list?
- ☐ Are the meeting materials ready?
- ☐ Are there any accommodations to be taken care of?
- ☐ Is the paperwork ready (attendance sheet, incident report sheet, etc.)?



Template | Incident Report

Sometimes, no matter how well you plan, something unexpected happens and people get hurt. It is important to track these moments to make sure your members stay safe. You can use this template as is, or as inspiration to create your own.



Incident Report

Incident Details

Date and Time	
Location	
Participant(s) Involved	
Witnesses Present	
Description	
Actions Taken	
Follow Up Plan	

Report Details

Report Completed By	
Date and Time	



Storing Documents And Participant Information Safely

Any document (paper or email) that has the name, contact information, or any personal details of members and volunteers need to be stored safely. This includes consent forms, member information forms, surveys, emails, etc.

Some suggestions for safe storage of information:

- Create a system to manage member information.
 - Using an excel sheet or a table on a word document to add member name, contact, emergency contact, etc.
 - Save the document on a secure computer/laptop (password protected and stored safely).
- Store paper documents.
 - Consent forms, surveys, member information forms, etc. should be kept in a safe place so that no unauthorized person can access it. Ensure it is safe from damage from rain, fire, and animals.
- Limit access.
 - Only members of the group who are assigned to certain roles should be allowed to complete forms or access stored documents.
- Create an email address for the group.
 - Only individuals in key roles should have access to the account and password.
- Do not share member information.
 - Member information should not be shared with anyone (even local partners) for any reason. If members would like to connect with each other, encourage them to do so during the group meeting.



Tip: Your organizational partner may help create a system to manage your emails and records.

11 Step Eleven | Conduct Your Meetings

Your members are oriented, and you have confirmed that all the resources you need for the meeting are available. You are now ready to start the peer support group meetings.

Here are some suggestions for different things you can do during meetings. Do not try to do everything in one meeting. Give your members plenty of time to participate and discuss issues that are important to them.

Welcoming And Opening Remarks



Welcome (5 minutes)

- Hand out name tags.
- Thank everyone for attending.
- Remind members where bathrooms are, how to step away if they need, and that they are welcome to participate as much as they want.

Acknowledgements (3 minutes)

- Acknowledge funders, donors, and sponsors.
- Consider including a sincere land acknowledgement.

Introductions And Ground Setting



Facilitator Introduction (3 minutes)

- Let members know what your role is.
- Knowing the facilitator is important for members to feel safe. Consider sharing your journey with stroke, your experience with peer support.
- This may only be required in the first few meetings, or when a new member joins.



Member Introductions (1-2 minute per attendee)

- Introductions allow members to build familiarity, trust, and empathy.
- Ask members to introduce and talk about themselves. Introductions need not include details about stroke.
- Add fun questions, like their favourite movie or hobby.
- New members can feel nervous at first. Give them the time and space to engage as they want. Check-in with them after the meeting.

Icebreakers (10-15 minutes)

- Icebreakers are helpful early on, to help people know each other and feel comfortable to talk. Examples include:
 - ‘Would you rather’ questions: Give two options and have members share their opinions.
 - Ask people to share a funny or unique story.
 - Ask people to bring an item and share a story.

Review Values and Rules of Participation (10-15 minutes)

- Discuss the values and rules from the orientation booklet.
- Do this for the first few meetings to promote respectful interactions and whenever you think a reminder would be helpful.
- Continue to update your group’s values and rules. Members are likely to follow rules and values that they have been involved in creating.

Session Focus



Check-Ins (30-60 minutes)

- The first few sessions of the peer support group can be used to get to know the members better. In these cases, check-ins may be the main activity of the meetings.
- Invite members to share their goals, needs and topics to discuss.
- This will help the facilitator understand common themes, which in turn become topics for future sessions.

Topical Discussion (60 minutes)

- Facilitators can start by sharing some basic information about the topic.
- Members can then be invited to talk about their experiences related to the topic. This is a great space for members to share similar experiences, ideas, and solutions to support each other.



Health and Related Topics

- Return to life after a stroke.
- activities of daily living.
- managing pain.
- Speech and comprehension.
- Mental, emotional, and cognitive functions.
- Diet, exercise, and wellness.
- preventing and managing other diseases.
- Use and care of adaptive devices.



Personal Life

- Stress management.
- Family and other relationships.
- Social and leisure activities
- Intimacy.
- Employment and volunteering.
- Travelling after stroke.
- Spirituality and religion.
- Taxes, benefits, financial planning and insurance.
- Goal setting.
- Mindfulness and self-care.
- Stroke and caregiver advocacy.

Guest Speaker (60 minutes)

- Guest speakers can educate the group about living with stroke.
- Connect with your partners to find guest speakers.
- Save time for a question-and-answer period.
- Ideal speakers include:
 - Healthcare professionals.
 - Representatives from local or national stroke prevention and recovery associations (Heart and Stroke, March of Dimes Canada, etc.).
 - Representatives from community and government services.
 - Health and wellness specialists (meditation, exercise, etc.).
 - Financial planners and tax consultants.



Debrief And Housekeeping



Summary and Take-Aways (10 minutes)

- Summarize the points discussed, helpful tips or ideas, and activities between meetings (2 minutes of mindfulness daily).
- Remind members of the topic for the next session's discussion so they can arrive prepared.
- Confirm the date, time, and place for next meeting.

Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

- Thank members and volunteers for their participation and support.
- End the meeting on a positive note. Congratulate members on taking the time and effort to support each other.

Informal Socializing (any time)

- Invite members to stay back after the session to talk to others. This will allow members to know each other better and create relationships beyond meetings.
- Refreshments can encourage participants to stay back and provide a relaxed atmosphere for people to interact.
- Check with members for allergies, eating or swallowing difficulties.



Keeping Members Well



Grounding Exercises (5 minutes, as needed)

- Grounding exercises can help bring focus back to the present. They are helpful if members are distracted.
- Depending on the activity, they can be energizing or calming.
- Examples include:
 - Mindful minute: In silence, become present.
 - Breathing: Take three slow, deep breaths.
 - 5-4-3-2-1: List five things you see, four things you feel, three things you hear, two things you smell and one thing you taste.

Breaks (once per hour, or as needed)

- It's important to build in breaks during the session. Look for signs or boredom or tiredness to find out when to break.

Volunteer Debrief (15 minutes)

- Facilitators and volunteers should meet regularly for post-session debriefs and reflections. Discuss how the session went, challenges, successes, and any changes to be made.



Tip: Mix things up! Try a potluck, take a trip, watch a movie, or play a game. This will boost group energy and morale.

Celebrate special days like:

- April 5 - National Caregiver Day.
- June - Stroke Awareness Month (Canada).
- October 29 - World Stroke Day.
- December 3 - International Day for Persons with Disabilities.