After Stroke Peer Support Toolkit

MARCH OF DIMES CANADA | After Stroke

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

FOR ORGANIZATIONS

After Stroke Peer Support Toolkit For Organizations

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Maintain Group-based Peer Support

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Disclaimer

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Conflict Of Interest Declaration

The contributing members have no conflict of interest to declare.

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Introduction To Peer Support

What Is Peer Support?

Peers are people who have similar identities, beliefs, or life experiences. For people living with the impact of stroke, other stroke survivors or caregivers can be peers.

Peer support groups provide opportunities for people with similar life experiences to meet and connect. In a peer support group, people who have had similar experiences in life (e.g., had a stroke, or are caregivers) meet to provide hope, and support to each other. Peer support may involve emotional, physical, informational, or other forms of support. Having personally experienced the impact of stroke, peers can relate to each other's hopes, needs, and fears, and provide meaningful support.

To understand why peer support is valuable after stroke, let us understand what happens after a stroke.

What Is The Impact Of Stroke On Social Participation And Connectedness?

For many stroke survivors and their families, a stroke may be a traumatic, defining event where they are unexpectedly faced with new challenges. After a stroke, people may experience changes in their physical[1], emotional[2], cognitive[3] (related to thinking, reasoning, or remembering) , and social abilities [4]. The changes in their physical abilities and post-stroke fatigue[5] can impact their ability to independently perform day-to-day activities or to participate in recreational, social, or professional activities in same way they did prior to the stroke[6–8].

Many stroke survivors may experience fluctuations in their emotions, feelings of anxiety, or even depression[4,9–11] which can impact social participation[12]. An altered sense of self[13], reduced sense of confidence and wellbeing[14,15], along with a loss of independence and ability to participate in society[12,16] can impact their ability to form and maintain relationships[17,18]. Challenges with speaking or understanding due to the stroke may make communication more challenging[19,20]. It is therefore not surprising that social isolation (having few social contacts), and loneliness (lack of desired social relations) are commonly observed among stroke survivors[21–25].

Loneliness and social isolation among stroke survivors has been shown to negatively affect post-stroke recovery [22,26], worsen perceived quality of life[27], and is a risk factor for negative health outcomes (secondary stroke, heart diseases, or even death)[28]. While the exact way in which this happens is still not completely understood, it is believed to be due to a complex interaction between social isolation, loneliness, depression, and loss of independence[25]. Lack of social connectedness is also a risk factor for depression[29,30] and cognitive decline[31,32] (i.e., worsening of mental capacities). On the other hand, having social connectedness and support after a stroke has been linked with improved post-stroke recovery[23,33–35].

Caregivers and families of stroke survivors also experience the negative effect of stroke[36]. Immediately after the stroke, the caregiver and family are faced with understanding the impact of the stroke, navigating the healthcare

system, and providing care for the stroke survivor and the family[36,37]. Subsequently, they face additional responsibilities related to accessing social and community services, providing ongoing care, and experiencing changes in familial roles, and financial situations[36–38]. All of this can impact their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing and lead to social isolation and loneliness[38–40].

Peer support has been shown to be a valuable tool in supporting stroke survivors and caregivers in the long-term management of stroke by providing information, resources, and practical guidance on life after a stroke[41–47]. Below we present some ways in which peer support is known to help individuals living with the effects of stroke.

What Is The Value Of Peer Support After A Stroke?

Peer support can be valuable to stroke survivors and caregivers. For the people living with stroke or its impact, peer support can help their emotional, physical, and mental health.

Some benefits that peer support might offer to individuals impacted by a stroke are:

- Connect with people who have similar experiences & challenges
- Improve functional, social and emotional outcomes
- Manage loneliness & social isolation
- Improve motivation and confidence
- Support making your own decisions
- Learning from other's experiences
- Reduce depression and anxiety
- Expand social networks
- Renew hope & strength
- Increase socialization
- Improve resiliency

Tip: Peer support is just one part of your care. It is not a replacement for professional emotional or psychological care.

Introduction To This Toolkit

Who Can Use This Toolkit?

This resource is intended for teams within organizations that have some experience in designing and implementing programs in the community and may include teams from health systems, community services, or academic institutions. However, any team interested in starting a peer support program can benefit from understanding the steps involved.

The purpose of this resource is to guide teams within community organizations to establish or redesign peer support groups. This resource provides information, templates, and additional resources that you can use to support the design, delivery, and sustainability of a peer support group.

While this toolkit was designed for use with people who had their lives impacted by stroke, the overall structure and steps are relevant beyond this usage. March of Dimes Canada has also created a toolkit to support people with Aphasia called "Making Peer Support Groups Accessible for Individuals with Communication Difficulties".

Why Is A Toolkit Needed?

Access to peer support programs is highlighted as an important part of transition of care for persons who are impacted by stroke by the 2020 Canadian Stroke Best Practice recommendations[48]. Through internal evaluations, literature reviews and conversation with experts in the design and delivery of peer-support programs (researchers, program managers and organizational leaders), March of Dimes Canada recognized gaps in the delivery of peer-support programming in Canada.

There is variability in what is considered peer support and what activities can be included in peer support group meetings. Currently, there is no one structured approach to design and implement a peer support group for individuals impacted by stroke. Similarly, there is no guidance on how to invite members, gather resources, evaluate the program for impact, and ensure that the group continues to run for a long time.

March of Dimes Canada aims to address these gaps by developing a toolkit that provides guidance to design and deliver peer support. Having a consistent approach will also ensure the peer support group's continuity in the face of changing community, leadership, and socio-politico-economic priorities.

We hope that having an evidence-informed toolkit will increase the confidence of teams planning to implement peer support programs. Ultimately, the delivery of high impact peer support services will have positive effects on the health and wellbeing of Canadians impacted by stroke.

How Was This Toolkit Developed?

We utilized an experience and evidence-informed co-design approach to develop a toolkit prototype. Co-Design is a type of participatory approach to designing resources, programs and services[49] that are centred on the idea of "by those for whom". By involving all the relevant collaborators, co-design aims to promote developing solutions that are effective and meaningful for the people who will use them.

In this case, the co-design team consisted of individuals impacted by stroke (survivors and caregivers) who have experience with participating, mentoring and/or implementing peer support programs. The team also included researchers with expertise in peer support, stroke rehabilitation and community transitions, and individuals with experience implementing health services and programs in the community.

The prototype was further reviewed by experienced staff and group members with lived experience of stroke for value, usability, accessibility and feedback on design and packaging. The toolkit was subsequently updated to address these recommendations and feedback.

How Do I Use This Toolkit?

You can use this toolkit as a step-by-step guide to help build your peer support group. You can also use it as a toolbox where you pick and choose the information and tools that you need for your group.

> **Tip**: The steps described below are to guide you. What steps you follow will depend on your abilities and available resources. You can make changes to suit your group's needs.

Where To Start

The toolkit is divided into sections based on where you are in your journey of building a peer support group. Use the questions below to help you find the right section to start with.

Are you thinking of starting a peer support group?

Go to → **Section 1 - Before starting a peer support group**.
It discusses things to do before you start a peer support group. This includes checking the need for a new group and finding the right partners.

Are you ready to start a peer support group?

Go to → **Section 2: Build your peer support group**.
It has information about designing your peer support group, finding group members, and the resources you need to run the group.

Wondering what to do in peer support group meetings?

Go to → **Section 3: Prepare to run your peer support meetings**.
It talks about what to do in peer support group meetings, and how to prepare to run the meetings.

Do you have a peer support group and are thinking of ways to improve and grow?

Go to → **Section 4: Evaluate and Grow your peer support group**.
It talks about how to make sure your group is running well and what you can do to grow your group.

Looking for suggestions on how to manage peer support group discussions?

Go to → **Section 5: Facilitator's guide**.
It provides information that may be valuable to people who manage the peer support group discussions (helping quiet members, solving arguments, improving engagement, etc.).

Quick Overview

This roadmap describes the steps along the journey of setting up a peer support group. Your group's journey may look a little different.

START HERE

Step One:
Check for Existing Groups

Step Two:
Learn About the Community

Step Three:
Confirm the Need for a New Group

Step Six:
Gather Resources

Step Five:
Design Your Group

Step Four:
Assemble a Planning Team

Step Seven:
Recruit Group Members

Step Eight:
Find People to Manage the Group

Step Nine:
Orient Group Members

Step Eleven:
Conduct your Meetings

Step Ten:
Prepare for Meetings

Step Twelve:
Evaluate your Group

Step Thirteen:
Sustain and Grow Your Group

Legend
Before Starting A Peer Support Group ▮
Build Your Peer Support Group ▮
Run Peer Support Group Meetings ▮
Evaluate and Grow Your Group ▮

March Of Dimes Canada Is Available To Help

March of Dimes Canada welcomes the opportunity to help you build your peer support group. March of Dimes Canada is a leading national charity committed to championing equality and empowering ability for people living with disability across Canada.

Peer support groups that are affiliated with March of Dimes Canada are part of a Canada-wide peer support network and have access to:

- Support with designing, running, and growing their peer support group.
- March of Dimes Canada templates and forms.
- Support with fundraising and managing finances.
- Liability insurance coverage.
- Assistance with identification of resources and partners.
- Learning and development opportunities for facilitators and volunteers.
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate with other peer support groups.
- Updates on March of Dimes Canada's stroke-related resources and programs for group members.

For more information, please contact us at peersupport@marchofdimes.ca.

Template | Peer Support Checklist

On the next page, we have provided a template that can be used to track your process through this toolkit. Add in any details that will support your team in to build, run and evaluate your peer support group. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Peer Support Checklist

Status	Step Name	Notes	Action Items
	1. Check For Existing Groups		
	2. Learn About The Community		
	3. Confirm The Need For A New Group		
	4. Assemble A Planning Team		
	5. Design Your Group		
	6. Gather Resources		
	7. Recruit Group Members		
	8. Find People To Manage The Group		
	9. Orient Group Members		
	10. Prepare For Meetings		
	11. Conduct Your Meetings		
	12. Evaluate Your Group		
	13. Sustain And Grow Your Group		

After Stroke Peer Support Toolkit

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

Section One | Before Starting A Peer Support Group

Introduction To Section One

The first few steps before you start designing and planning the implementation of a new peer support group relate to ensuring the need for a peer support group. You are here because, either your team or organization has observed the need for a new after stroke peer support group. But before you invest the time and effort in establishing a new group, you should understand what your community needs and confirm that starting a new peer support group will address these needs.

Here are some guiding questions that your team can use to start a discussion:

- Why do you think a new peer support group is needed? What are some signs you see?
- Are there other, existing, peer-support groups?
- Have you spoken to relevant collaborators about starting a new group?
- Is your team/organization able to support the work in starting a peer support group?

The information gathered in this stage will help you understand if and what type of a new peer support group will be valuable for the community. This phase is an active period of introspection, and consultation.

`01` Step One | Check For Existing Groups

It is possible that there may already be one or more peer support groups for people living with the impacts of stroke in your community. Do a quick check in your community before you do the work to set up a new group.

First, jot down the outline of the peer support group you had in mind, so you can make comparisons. Once you have an idea of the type of group you would like to start, check in your local community if such a group already exists.

Guiding Questions

You may use the following prompts to help you develop an outline. At this point, just get your ideas on paper and check that no other group already provides these services. Don't aim for perfection; your final group will likely look different.

_____

We would like to develop a peer support group for people with/who:
Fill in information about the type of members the group will have (people who have experienced a stroke, people with loss of employment after a stroke, caregivers of people who have experienced a stroke, etc.).

_____

_____

We want to start a new group because:
Fill in information about the reasons why your team thinks a new after stroke peer support group is required. For example: We have noticed that many of our clients who attend after-stroke exercise program talk about feeling lonely after discharge. Or we visited a thriving peer support program in another city and want to offer this to our residents.

_____

_____

Our peer support group will (do/provide/support):
Fill in information about the types of support you want to offer through the peer support group. For example, our peer support group will allow stroke survivors to connect and learn from each other. It provides educational sessions where members can learn about managing life after stroke.

_____

_____

How To Search For Existing Groups

You can find existing group by:

- Searching the internet for 'peer support stroke group' and 'city/town/province'.
  - Also look for virtual groups that people can attend from anywhere.
- Connecting with local stroke prevention/recovery groups (March of Dimes Canada, Heart and Stroke Foundation, etc.).
- Checking for information on groups in local program guides.
- Consulting with local healthcare professionals or hospital stroke teams.

It may be useful to collect information about the goals of these groups, who they serve, and other information that may help you understand gaps and overlaps. On the next page, we have provided an example of a template you can use to collect information on existing groups and services. You may revise it to add columns for other information you find useful.

If no other group offers the service you wish to offer, proceed to the next step to confirm the need for a new peer support group.

If another peer support group exists, it is possible that the existing group does not have capacity for new members, or you could design your group to offer a different type of support. In this case, it would still be useful to confirm the need for a group in your community.

Template | Community Groups And Services Inventory

On the next page, we have provided a template that can be used to collect information about the local community. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Community Groups And Services Inventory

Group Name & Organizer	Contact Information	Group`s Goal	Population Served	Geographic Reach	Meeting Format	Strengths & Weaknesses	Other Notes

Date Completed: _____

02 Step Two | Learn About The Community

Once you have collected information about groups in your community, find out more about the people in your community who are living with the impact of stroke. This will help you design a group specific to their needs. Much of this information can be found through a web search or by connecting with your local city/town municipal offices, or local hospital or healthcare offices. Collect as much information as you can!

Use the following questions to guide you in this process:

1. How many people in your community live with the impact of stroke?
2. How many people experience a new stroke each year?
3. Where does your community seek medical and rehabilitation care?
4. What are other services (community, healthcare, or otherwise) that are designed for individuals living with the impact of a stroke?
5. Are there organizations, agencies, or teams in your community that work with or for individuals living with the impact of stroke?
6. What are existing efforts with, and by, equity-deserving groups to advocate for, and promote, support for strokes?
7. What are the transportation options in your community?
8. What resources will individuals need to attend meetings?

This information can help you understand how many individuals in your community may benefit from a new peer support group, where you can find these individuals, and which organizations and teams that can help you develop and run your peer support group. Undertaking this step can also help you identify what gaps exist in the community which may inform the design of the peer support group you develop.

Template | Local Community Information

On the next two pages, we have provided a template that can be used to collect information about the local community. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Local Community Information

Local Population	
Distribution of people by age (%)	
0-14 (children)	
15-25 (youth)	
25-64 (adults)	
65+ (seniors)	
Number of people living with stroke	
Number of new stroke cases each year	

Form Completed By: _____

Date: _____

Local Organizations Working To Support People Living With Stroke

Organization Names	Types of Services Provided (homecare, social support, peer support, exercise, respite care, etc.)	Equity-related Information	Contact Information

Form Completed By: _____

Date: _____

03 Step Three | Confirm The Need For A New Group

Setting up a new peer support group will take time and effort. You may want to make sure that this is something that people in your community need and will use. The best way to get this information is by asking people living with stroke.

A survey will also help you get information on the type of peer support groups people living with stroke in the community would benefit from. Existing groups can use this survey to understand if there are other needs in the community.

Creating And Distributing a Survey

On the next page, we have provided an example of a survey. You can modify this to add questions that you find important. You can create surveys that can be completed on the internet, over the phone, or can be printed and shared.

You can connect with places frequently visited by people living with stroke to hand out surveys (hospital stroke units, outpatient stroke rehabilitation clinics, stroke recovery/prevention organizations, and doctors' offices).

If you use online survey options (Google Forms, Survey Monkey, etc.) you can share the link to the survey in stroke groups via social media, print media, or use QR codes that people can scan to access the survey. You can choose to use more than one method to maximize the number of respondents.

Privacy and data safety: Think before asking for personal details (name, age, phone number, email ID, etc.) on surveys. It may reduce the number of people willing to respond to your survey as they may want to be anonymous. Importantly, documents having personal information would need to be stored safely and securely to avoid loss of personal or sensitive information.

Summary of privacy laws in Canada (Office of the Primary Commissioner of Canada)
(http://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/02_05_d_15/)

Understanding Survey Results

The survey results will help you understand:

- If a new peer support group is needed to adequately support people living with stroke in your community.
- What type of peer support people living with stroke would prefer and benefit from.

If the survey results tell you that a peer support group is not currently required, you can revisit this plan a few years down the line. You can also revise your plan to develop other services or supports for people living with stroke if you have noticed any gaps along the way. If the survey results indicate a need for a new peer support group, proceed to the next step.

Template | Survey

On the next page, we have provided a survey template that can be used to understand if people living with stroke feel the need for a peer support group in this community. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Understanding The Need For Peer Support For People Living With Stroke

Have you experienced a stroke? If yes, please consider filling out this survey. We want to understand if people living with stroke feel the need for a peer support group in this community.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your abilities. If you don't want to answer a question, leave it blank.

As someone who has experienced a stroke, would you like to meet and talk to other people who have had a stroke?
- ☐ Yes, it would be extremely useful.
- ☐ Yes, it would be somewhat useful.
- ☐ It would not be especially useful.
- ☐ It would not be useful at all.
- ☐ Do not know.

A peer support group allows people with similar experiences (such as stroke) to learn from each other, support each other, and feel a part of a community. Do you think such a group is needed in _____?
- ☐ Yes, it is urgently needed.
- ☐ Yes, it is needed but is not urgent.
- ☐ No, it is not needed at all.
- ☐ Do not know.

What kind of support would you like to receive from a peer support group?
- ☐ Information on managing health, living life with stroke, local resources.
- ☐ Emotional support, talking to someone who understands.
- ☐ Social support, friendships, doing things together.
- ☐ Motivation and hope.
- ☐ Other _____

**If a peer support group was started in _____,
would you attend?**
- ☐ Yes, I would attend.
- ☐ I may attend.
- ☐ No, I do not think I will attend the sessions.
- ☐ Do not know/do not wish to answer.

What type of peer support would you prefer to attend?
- ☐ A group that meets in-person.
- ☐ A group that meets virtually (phone, web conference, etc.).
- ☐ Do not know/wish to answer.

What resources would help you better attend meetings?
- ☐ Eldercare
- ☐ Childcare
- ☐ Respite
- ☐ Travel funds
- ☐ Virtual support
- ☐ Other _____

Is there anything else you want to share? _____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for filling out this survey.

If you need any information or have questions, please contact:

_____

04 Step Four | Assemble A Planning Team

While the need for a group may have been recognized by a few individuals, the design and implementation of the group will require a team of motivated individuals who will productively contribute to the design, development, and implementation of the group in the community.

Organizations with similar or complementary interests can be valuable program partners; providing support through resources, funding, or sharing knowledge related to implementation.

Having a team may make the work more manageable and fun!

Identifying Key Collaborator Groups

Start by identifying key collaborator groups who are directly (affected) or indirectly (interested in) impacted by the issue of concern, i.e., stroke. Collaborators are individuals, groups, or organizations that are interested in, can impact, or can be impacted by the outcome of a project.

> **Tip**: March of Dimes Canada can support you in starting your peer support group. For more information, please contact us at peersupport@marchofdimes.ca.

In the case of a stroke peer support group, relevant collaborator groups and partners may include:

- People with a lived experience of stroke.
    - Having people with lived experiences of stroke (stroke survivor, caregiver, family member, etc.) on the planning team is important to ensure that the group will be designed with attention to the needs, priorities and abilities of people living with a stroke.
    - There is increasing evidence that services developed in collaboration with the intended end-users are more effective, have better uptake and have a greater chance of long term continuity and success[1,2].

- Community members or local organizations with a shared interest.
    - Staff from local recreation centres, which strive to provide accessible and inclusive programming, or from local long term resident living facilities.
    - Local leaders (municipal councillors, religious leaders, elders, etc.) who are frequently involved in enhancing the wellbeing of the local community.
    - Patient or caregiver advocacy groups who champion the cause on behalf of the clients.
    - Volunteers or volunteer organizations who are involved in providing care, companionship, or assistance to stroke survivors.

- Individuals from the health system.
  - Healthcare professionals with clinical expertise or experience in the areas of peer support, stroke, mental and physical wellbeing.
  - Regional health system navigators are key points of contact as they assist individuals seeking suitable community-based services at discharge.
  - Health system and policy researchers.
  - Social workers, community health workers, etc.

- National partners.
  - Some peer support groups may be managed and/or conducted with assistance from similar groups in other parts of the country. Insights from partner organizations who have implemented a similar group can be valuable in avoiding costly mistakes.
  - You could conduct an internet search to find the contact information for local or national stroke advocacy groups, volunteer groups, and other peer support groups. You could also get in touch with your local health authority to get more information about the resources available.

Note: This group may also be best positioned to inform you about best-practices related to the design of peer support, explain complex pathways of participant referrals into the group, and identify and provide solutions to social and systemic barriers to implementation. These individuals may have access to public health data which can be used to conduct an environmental scan, link to existing resources and services and liaise between the health service system and community-based groups.

How To Find People With Lived Experience

You can try to:

- Connect with stroke networks/groups.
    - Regional stroke networks or local organizations that work with stroke populations (e.g., March of Dimes Canada, Heart and Stroke) may be able to help you connect with peers in your area.
- Use social media.
    - Connect with people on social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
- Post flyers.
    - You can post flyers in the local library, doctors' office, grocery store, community centre, or a religious/spiritual centre.
- Connect with local healthcare teams.
    - Ask your local healthcare team (family physician, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, hospital stroke team) to connect you with other people who have had a stroke.

Template | Recruitment Flyer

On the next page, we have provided a flyer you can write on and share. Remember that you should ask before you put up a flyer, even in a public space. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

PEER SUPPORT GROUP
FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH STROKE

We would like to start a peer support group so people living with stroke can meet and talk to each other.

If you or someone you know would like to join us, please contact:

_____

Assembling A Planning Team

When assembling a team, plan for now and for the future. The team would benefit from including individuals who bring different skill sets and perspectives to the table and can provide access to new networks and resources. Discuss how the different members would like to be involved and what roles and responsibilities they will assume.

Template | Planning Team Member Matrix

On the next page, we have provided a matrix template that can be used to see how potential planning team members can fill gaps. Consider adding other attributes you may want in your planning team.

Planning Team Member Matrix

Instructions: Check boxes or add details under the individual's name. At the end you will be able to review the diversity your planning team brings and areas where there may be gaps in experiences, or perspectives.

Form Completed By: _____

Lived experience of stroke						
Lived experience of marginalization/oppression						
Experience in peer support						
Experience in community program implementation						
Financial management skills						
Experience fundraising						
Community leadership						
Diverse perspective						
Health system representative						
Unique experience/expertise						
Role on the planning team						

Developing A Planning Partnership

The members of the planning team work closely over a long period of time to achieve the goal of implementing a peer support group. It is therefore important that the team is a safe and welcoming place for members to remain involved and feel valued. Developing a team charter will be helpful to ensure all the members are aligned on the scope and aim of the team, roles and responsibilities, and the principles and values guiding the project.

The project team charter will set the stage for a professional work environment, critical approach to decision making, and ensure that the project stays on track.

When the group has been set up and the sessions are running smoothly, the planning team can be transitioned to the role of advisory committee or governing board. We have provided a template for a project charter below. Fill it in with details of what your group will do, and how.

Decision Making

For work to progress when there are disagreements or differences of opinion, it is important to establish decision making methods. Majority voting, consensus, unanimity, or assigning a tiebreaker could be some of the different approaches to making decisions as a team. Include these decision-making aids in your team charter. Some teams may also require some team building activities to aid communication, resolve inter-personal differences, and build trust.

Template | Team Charter Example

On the next page, we have provided a charter template that can be used to track the inductions, purpose, terms of references, and reporting/updates. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Team Charter Example

Introduction	Why is this group being built?
Purpose	What the group will do and hopes to achieve.
Terms of Reference	- Names of the team members, their skills and experiences, and the roles and responsibilities. - Details of work plan (timelines, meeting details, deadlines). - Primary means of communication (email, virtual meetings, hybrid, in-person, etc.). - Core values that will guide the process (respect, confidentiality, do no harm, empathy, equity, etc.). - Information on how decisions will be made, and disputes will be resolved (voting, majority, tiebreaker). - The term for roles and responsibilities. The team must decide the number of years for which the team members will hold their positions and circumstances under which new individuals will be invited to the team. - Succession planning. What happens if someone leaves the team?
Reporting and Updates	

Additional Resources

Resource Name	Description	Link
Methods for Making Group Decisions (University of Waterloo)	An overview of the different ways a group can make decisions, including examples and pros and cons.	https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/catalogs/tip-sheets/group-decision-making
Team Charter Guidelines (Government of Canada)	Provides best practices and tips on how to create an effective team charter for your team.	https://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/tools/jobaids/virtual-team-charter-eng.aspx
Engage Collaborators (Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health)	A short overview to help you understand what collaborators are and worksheet files.	https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/evaluation/planning/building-an-evaluation-plan/engage-collaborators
Promoting Participation Among Diverse Groups (Community Toolbox)	An overview of how to reach and support people from diverse groups so they can fully engage with your group.	https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/encouraging-involvement/diverse-partcipation/main

After Stroke Peer Support Toolkit

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

Section Two | Build Your Peer Support Group

Introduction to Section Two

At this stage, you have confirmed that the community will benefit from a peer support group and have assembled a team of individuals to guide the process to design and set up the group. The next stage is designing the peer support group.

Some guiding questions for this phase could include:

- What type of group would best serve our clients?
- What are the resources available to set up and run this peer support group?
- Which community individuals or teams would be valuable partners for setting up and running this group?
- How do we find members to attend the peer support group meetings?
- How can we ensure participation from communities with greatest barriers to inclusion?

05 Step Five | Design Your Group

At this point, you have confirmed the need for a peer support group in your community. You have also gathered a team of motivated individuals to lead the design and implementation of the peer support group. You are now ready to start planning what your peer support group will look like.

When you are planning your group, prioritize reducing barriers and the full participation of equity-deserving groups including Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC), 2SLGBTQA+, migrant, and geographically remote communities. This is a cornerstone of successful engagement.

Use the following questions to help you design your group.

> 💡 **Tip**: You may not have all the answers right away. That is OK! You will be able to figure out a final design as you go along. Your group design may also change as your group's needs change.

Who Can Join This Group?

This question will help you describe your typical group member. Think about common experiences, conditions, or beliefs the members will share so that they can be considered peers.

You can have a broad eligibility, for example, anyone who has had a stroke can be a member. It can also be specific, for example, a group for young mothers who have experienced a stroke. Age, gender, length of time after stroke, employment status, goals, language – any factor can be used to define your group. Having this shared experience will allow members to trust and support each other.

What Type Of Support Will Members Receive?

Think about what the members will talk about and do during the meetings. Will the group mainly share information on how to live with a stroke? Will the group mainly meet to motivate each other, share fears and feelings? Or will the group meet to socialize, do activities, and reduce a sense of loneliness. Or will the group include all the above?

Typically, peer support groups may offer one or more of the following:

- Informational support (health management, clinical, navigating transitions, resources, problem solving, taxes, etc.).
- Affirmational support (motivation, coaching, adapting to changes in abilities, goal setting).
- Emotional support (befriending, listening, sharing of experiences).
- Social support (collaborating, communication, activity based, accompaniment).
- Physical support (transportation, service based).
- Peer support activities may be combined with exercise, meditation, speech therapy, which may require the involvement of trained professionals.

Will Your Group Meet In-Person, Online, or Both?

When discussing this question think about what a person living with stroke would prefer? There are advantages and disadvantages to both.

Meeting in person (face-to-face) may be better for creating friendships, have more natural interactions, and help with socialization. But it also means finding the right space to meet, and ensuring members can manage the travel (cost, time, assistance, accessible transit).

Meeting virtually can allow people to join the group from anywhere. Members may need devices to connect to the meeting, and help/training to use the technology (chat functions, muting, raising hands, etc.).

The group members will also need access to a device with a camera, microphone and speaker, and license for a web-conferencing platform which may come at a cost. Virtual groups can also allow anonymity or privacy for people who are not comfortable meeting others.

Although there is no clear answer at present, some studies suggest virtual interactions are less effective than in-person interactions in reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, people may find the convenience of virtual peer support appealing especially if they face challenges in joining an in-person group.

Social media platforms may also be used for peer support, although its impact on isolation, loneliness, health, and wellbeing after a stroke is not yet understood.

> **Note**: Some groups of people have to deal with social, personal, or economic barriers to accessing resources and services, thus negatively impacting their recovery, health, and wellbeing. Consider these factors when designing your group so that more people can participate and benefit from your peer support group.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Social Determinants of Health (WHO)	Social determinants of health are the non-medical factors that influence health.	https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health
Equity Impact Review Tool (UW Medicine)	The Equity Impact Review (EIR) is an essential tool that can clarify opportunities.	https://equity.uwmedicine.org/equity-impact-review-tool/
Wheel of Power and Privilege (University of Wisconsin-Madison)	A website and graphic that represents the wheel of privilege and power.	https://kb.wisc.edu/instructional-resources/page.php?id=119380

Where Will The Group Meet?

If your group would like to meet in person, you would need to find a space to accommodate your group. The space should be central, private, and have enough space to fit your group. To welcome members who may have difficulty walking, climbing stairs, opening doors, or following signs, the space should also be accessible (all or any portion of the space can be used by individuals with disabilities).

At the start, groups with only a few members may meet at recreation centres, libraries, or local cafes, and then grow into larger spaces as the group expands.

How Many Members Will The Group Have?

Usually, groups start with a few members and grow into larger groups as the word spreads. As the group becomes bigger you can rethink how and where to meet.

Smaller groups (2-12 people) → Members can know each other better.
Larger groups (12+ people) → Members can bring in a variety of experiences and viewpoints. You will need a larger space, incur higher costs, and require more volunteers.

When Will Your Group Meet?

Holding meetings at the same day of the week, time and in the same place can reduce confusion. Most groups meet 1-2 times a month.

How often you meet will depend on:

- How often you have access to the resources needed to run the meetings (space, volunteers, etc.).
- How long each meeting will run (several short meetings versus fewer long meetings).
- Costs (supply costs may be higher if you meet often).
- Members' preferences and abilities (availability of transportation or assistance, employment, other responsibilities).

How Long Will Each Meeting Last?

Meetings can last anywhere between 1-2 hours. Very long meetings (more than 2 hours) can become tiring, and members can lose focus and interest. Short meetings (less than an hour) may pose challenges like insufficient time for all members to have a turn, or to have a fulsome discussion on certain topics.

The length of the meeting may also be influenced by members availabilities, travel times, and meeting location/timing. Try out different lengths and ask the group members what works best for them.

Will There Be A Cost To Participate?

Find a balance between covering costs and what members can afford. Free/low-cost groups allow people with financial challenges to join. But it may become difficult to manage group costs over time.   Some groups have a small set fee, ask member to contribute what they can, split expenses, or have members donate food and drink. Other groups may raise money through gifts, donations, fundraising, or local grants.

Who Will Provide Support And Guide Discussions?

In its truest form, in a peer support group, members of the group provide support to each other.

Groups can work in a few different ways:

1) Having a facilitator to manage discussions.
Some groups choose to identify an individual to guide discussions, encourage participation, and manage disagreements. Groups can have one or more facilitators (also called moderators, or guides). It may be helpful if the facilitator themselves has experienced the impact of a stroke.

2) Group discussions are managed between members.
Some groups can choose not to have a facilitator and manage discussions by themselves. In such cases, groups would need to establish some rules – taking turns to speak, managing disagreements, and keeping discussions on track.

3) Having a trained professional as a facilitator.
Some peer support groups have trained professionals (therapist, social worker, etc.) performing this role. In this case, the group is not peer-led and may have some costs.

Choose what works best for your group.

> **Tip**: All facilitators should undergo training to prepare for the role. Section 5 of the toolkit has more information about the role of a facilitator and managing common peer support group challenges.

Template | Peer Support Group Design

On the next page, we have provided a table with additional information. Your choices may depend on what resources you have or can make available. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Peer Support Group Design

Group Name: _____

Date: _____

Individuals Involved: _____

Topic	Your Team's Decision
Who can join this group?	
What type of support will members receive?	
Will your group meet in-person, online, or both ways?	
Where will the group meet?	
How many members will the group have?	
When will your group meet?	
Who will provide support and guide discussions?	
Will there be a cost to participating?	

Some Things To Keep In Mind

Some groups may be casual and informal when they start out. As the group grows, it is important to have policies and procedures in place which explain how the group is run. Ideally, these policies and procedures should be built together with the group members and organizational partners.

You will need to think about:

- A group constitution or charter.
    - A document that outlines how the group will run, core values, roles, and responsibilities, etc. Having a constitution or charter will ensure the group meets legal and safety requirements.
- Emergency planning.
    - What to do in case of a fire or health emergency.
- Information storage and safety plans.
    - This is important so that member information (names and contact information) does not fall into the wrong hands. (Briefly discussed in Section 3.)
- Liability insurance.
    - Groups should protect themselves and reduce risk to members and volunteers.
- Financial accounts and reporting plans.
    - Need for a registered bank account to manage expenses and funds. Templates for maintaining financial records, and reporting to national revenue agency, etc.

Tip: You may not have these in place at the start. That is okay! You can work on these as your group grows.

Feasibility, Acceptability, Equity, And Affordability

This is not a separate step in the process of developing peer support groups but things that you should consider when making decisions for your group. Discuss with your team if your plan is doable, acceptable, equitable, and affordable.

Template | Feasibility Worksheet

On the next page, we have provided a worksheet activity which may reveal potential challenges along the way. You can then adapt your plan or figure out solutions to fix these challenges. Modify this page as needed to collect the information you find important.

Feasibility Worksheet

Group Name: _____

Date: _____

	Ask Yourself	Reflections
Feasibility	How doable is your plan within the context of your community and available resources? Can you recruit enough members and manage timelines?	
Acceptability	Are the group's design, goals content and methods acceptable to your community, team, partner organizations and group members?	
Equity	Is there anything about the way the group is designed/run that will exclude or unintentionally harm equity-deserving groups (location, language, timing, representation, etc.)?	
Affordability	Is the group designed to be affordable? How can you reduce barriers that impact members?	

Resource: Health Equity (Public Health Ontario)
https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Health-Topics/Health-Equity

If you have answered 'NO' to any of the questions above, you should:

- Reassess your team's/organization's ability to successfully design and implement a peer support group.
- Identify solutions to the challenges that may emerge as a result of your approach or identify alternative approaches that may avoid these challenges.

Prioritizing Challenges

In most cases, groups will be faced with several drivers and barriers. Some of these will significantly influence the implementation, while others less so. The planning team may not have the resources to utilize every challenge.

The best approach is to identify critical challenges that must be addressed for peer support group implementation to proceed. Other, less urgent barriers can be addressed in the future.

Developing Tailored Solutions

Below we have presented a few examples of strategies to address potential challenges.

Safety And Liability Concerns

The Issue: Planning team members, potential partners or volunteers may view peer support groups to be "risky" as it involves non-professionals discussing strategies to manage health. Concerns about safety, liability, or unintentional consequences can deter organizations from implementing or supporting the group. Volunteers may have concerns over their responsibility for another individual's health and wellbeing.

Mitigate Risk By: Developing a detailed work plan that outlines the scope of support and the roles and responsibilities of each partner and volunteer may help minimize concerns. Strategies that enhance quality of the service itself such as screening, and training of volunteers may improve trust in the group. Some peer groups are covered for liability within the insurance of the host organization.

Other groups may require participants to sign waivers declaring that they understand the nature and scope of the support being provided and that all health decisions must be made in consultation with a professional.

Lack of Implementation Infrastructure

The Issue: Planning team may face difficulty finding resources that can be consistently used to deliver peer support. Meeting rooms, accessible facilities, equipment, convenient time slots, and adequate staffing can impair group implementation.

For web-based services, technical support might be an additional requirement. Inviting guest lecturers or conducting a workshop might require additional funds or resources for materials, marketing, and catering.

Mitigate Risk By: Consider connecting with local volunteer organizations, or stroke organizations to ask if their members may be interested in volunteering for the group. Connect with community centres (recreation facilities, religious places, schools, etc.) to support the group by providing a space to meet. Local diners, stores or other establishments may show support by providing refreshments or sponsor events.

When resources are limited, the group may not be able to accommodate additional participants. Consider adapting the group design to a graduated group, where participants can move on to other groups as they achieve certain goals, making space for new members.

Funding

The Issue: Unavailability of secure funding is a commonly seen challenge to starting and running community groups. It directly impacts the ability to find resources required to run the group.

Mitigate Risk By: The planning team/organization must identify more than one source of funding towards the group. Solely relying on donations may affect group continuity if donor priorities change.

Groups should consider fundraising (galas, peer-to-peer fundraising, auctions, crowdsourcing), partnering with not-for-profit organizations, or using a cost-recovery model (session/group fees, membership, pay-as-you-go, or participant donation) to support group activities. Your organization may have limitations about what you can/cannot do to raise funds. Make sure your plans are aligned with your organizational rules.

Poor Recruitment Or Awareness of Group

The Issue: Participant recruitment is a commonly stated barrier to group implementation and continuity. Poor participant recruitment can be a result of poor awareness of the presence of peer support groups, ineffective referral/recruitment pathways, competing groups, or due to challenges faced by members that makes it difficult for them to participate.

Mitigate Risk By: Improving group awareness in the community by establishing partnerships with local organizations and services that are commonly accessed by stroke survivors or caregivers. This includes local hospitals with stroke units, family physicians, community health teams', rehabilitation hospitals and clinics, as well as local stroke organizations.

Promoting value and impact of peer support through webinars, presentations during rounds, or other informal methods can create awareness among hospital staff and local healthcare professionals. Having leaflets in consulting rooms in out-patient clinics so patients could ask their healthcare professional about it. You may need to obtain permission from the office/ hospital to do this. Including personal stories and testimonials in flyers/ promotional material can also create a lasting impact.

Developing networks requires time and effort. Often it requires the dedicated effort of individual(s) in an outreach role who take the effort to increase knowledge and awareness of the group among the healthcare providers in the community.

If you set up a formal referral process, ensure that the process is not tedious – healthcare professionals may be burdened by detailed paperwork or recalling eligibility criteria. Devise strategies that can make the process quick and easy – a pamphlet with a catchy tagline/image, or a monthly check in with the office to identify potential clients could reduce the work required.

Identify mutually beneficial partnerships. Partnering with other organizations or groups that serve people impacted by stroke or those with complementary interests can create opportunities for collaboration and encourage referral to each other's services. Nurture partnerships by providing updates and reports, evidence of impact, and engaging with them through the various stages of planning, implementation, and sustainability.

Poor Enrollment Or Attendance

The Issue: Members may face challenges that may make it difficult for them to attend the group. This may result in poor enrollment or attendance, which will have an impact on the continuity and growth of the peer support group.

These challenges could include:

- Group or associated costs.
  - People impacted by stroke (stroke survivors, and family members) may experience financial constraints due to loss or change of employment, taking time off work, cost of care/services, etc. High costs associated with attending group meetings may impact willingness to participate.
- Transportation, weather, and location.
  - Accessing groups can prove to be challenging when transportation options are limited. Inability to drive, dependency on a family member or transportation service and cost of local transportation options may affect the decision to enroll in groups. These challenges are further exacerbated by the distance of the groups from their home and by inclement weather conditions.
- Accessibility challenges.
  - If the location of the group meeting is not accessible by public transportation, or does not have accessible features (parking, ramps, automatic doors, wide stalls in washrooms, etc.), people with disabilities may find it difficult to attend the group.

Mitigate Risk By: Reflecting on group design elements that can be adapted to accommodate needs and challenges faced by participants. Switching to a virtual, hybrid or asynchronous medium (social media, email) can help some individuals who have challenges with accessibility, transportation, or timing, and may also help reduce costs.

Some organizations have their own or partner with volunteer transportation services that can drive participants to groups. Resolving the barrier of transportation can improve the recruitment and retention of members. Finding a location that is central, private and accessible may encourage people to attend the group meetings. Subsidies, low-cost or free groups are likely to allow more individuals to participate irrespective of their socio-economic statuses.

When designing solutions or alternative approaches, you should consider what would work best for your group, within your community, given the resources available. Propose a balanced solution that resolves the challenges as best possible, while still ensuring value, affordability, acceptability, feasibility, and equity.

06 Step Six | Gather Resources

Once you have a general idea of the peer support group design, you can start preparing to set-it up in the community. Start by making a list of all the things you will need to run the peer support group. You will also need to plan how and where to find these resources.

What Resources Do You Need?

The resources you need may be different depending on if you are meeting in-person or virtually. You also need to have a phone number and an email address that people can use to reach you for more information or updates.
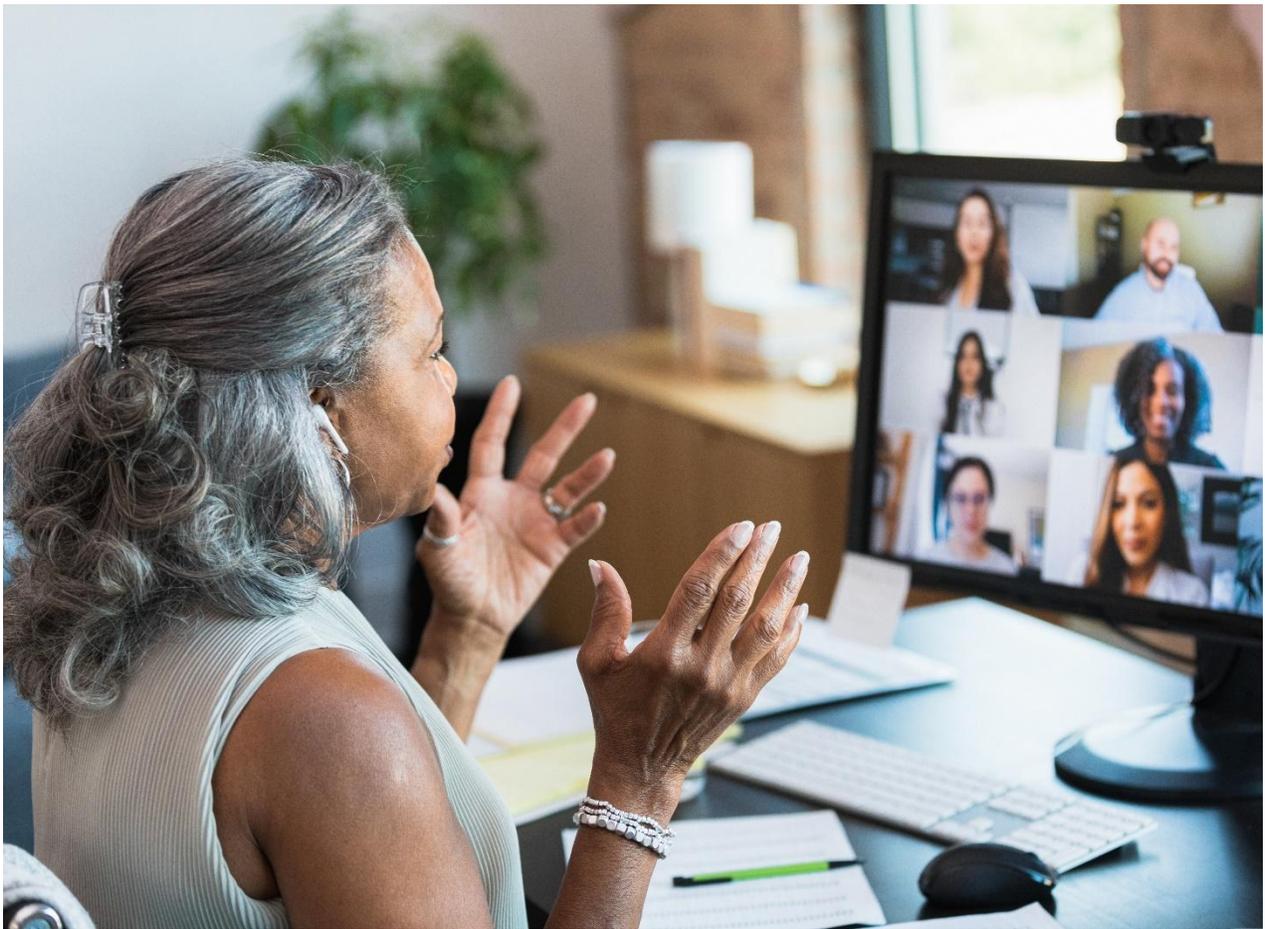
In-Person Meetings Resource List

- Accessible and private meeting space.
- Materials (chairs, tables, pens, paper, name labels).
- Agenda, attendance sheet, incident reports.
- Member and emergency contacts list.
- Facilitators to guide the discussion.
- Volunteers to assist members, room set-up, attendance, etc.
- Refreshments (check for dietary restrictions and eating difficulties).
- Wi-fi password.
- Parking spots.

Virtual Meetings Resource List

- Web-conferencing platform account.
- Secure internet connection.
- Phone/computer/laptop/tablet.
- Agenda, attendance sheet, incident report.
- Member list, emergency contact list.
- Facilitators to guide the discussion.
- Volunteers to monitor chat, take attendance, assist members with technology, etc.

Template | Meeting Agenda

It's always a good idea to plan out your meetings beforehand. Creating and sharing an agenda for the meetings 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. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Meeting Agenda

Group Name: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Meeting Time: _____

Facilitated By: _____

Venue: _____

Agenda Item	Description	Time Allotted

Template | Meeting And Attendance Log

Tracking attendance, meeting topics, dates and other important details can help you see trends and predict future needs. This also helps with evaluation. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Meeting And Attendance Log

Group Name: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Meeting Start and End Time: _____

Meeting Location: _____

Attendance Taken By: _____

Facilitator	
Volunteers	
Attendees	
Topics Discussed	
Notes for Next Meeting	
Debrief Notes	

Template | Member And Emergency Contact List

In case of emergency, it's important to have easy access to members and their emergency contact information. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Member And Emergency Contact List

Group Name: _____

Last Updated: _____

Member Name	Contact Information	Emergency Contact	Other Safety Information

Template | Incident Report

If incidents occur during meetings, it is important to track what happened, who was involved and what steps were taken. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Incident Report

Report Details

Report Completed By	
Date and Time	

Incident Details

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

Find Resources In The Community

Your organization may have some of the resources you need for the group. In some cases, you may need to purchase resources you need.

You can also find community partners (individuals, organizations, and businesses) to support your group.

> **Community Partners**: Local organizations or people that support your group by offering resources (meeting space, refreshments, materials, technology) or services (transportation, volunteers, guest lecturers).

Potential community partners are:

- Organizations involved in stroke prevention/ recovery/life after stroke.
- Libraries, community, recreation, and religious centres.
- Local community leaders from diverse groups.
- Local businesses.
- Municipal offices.
- Transport service agencies.

Cost Considerations

Cost of running a peer support group is often a critical determinant of whether a group can be implemented and successfully run for a long time. The planning team should consider both immediate, short-term, and long-term costs of group delivery when assessing for feasibility.

When running a peer support group, you may face costs related to:

- Technological resources (web-conferencing services, high-speed internet, technology support, making material AODA compliant, etc.) may be required for a web-based or hybrid-peer support group.
- For an in-person peer support group, costs may include chairs, tables, refreshments, journals, notepads, printing costs, space rentals, heating/utility, modifications to make the room accessible, etc.
- Marketing and outreach costs (printing, designing, travel, etc.).
- Purchasing liability insurance.
- Invitation of healthcare professionals, consultants, experts, or guest speakers may involve fees in addition to cost of room rental, refreshments, and material for distribution.
- Costs related to training facilitators and volunteers. *
- Costs related to paid staff to facilitate and manage the group. *

> **Note**: For * items, involvement of a paid staff or a trained facilitator may be choices your planning team makes. Not all groups have a trained or paid facilitator to lead their group.

Considering Participant Costs

Even a 'free' group will involve costs to the participant. Parking fees, transportation costs (adapted transport, taxi, fuel), taking time off work, hiring an alternative caregiver/childcare may pose challenges to participation and uptake.

Raising Funds To Support Costs

Given this is an organizational initiative, your organization may be covering the costs of implementing and delivering this group. However, the organization may also require the peer support group to raise funds to support its activities.

There are a few ways to raise funds to support group activities:

- Fees.
    - Some groups opt to include a small, reasonable fee at registration or per meeting. Note: Some people may experience loss of employment or other financial challenges after a stroke.
- Donations or gifts of service.
    - Members can be encouraged to donate whatever they can each meeting. Approaching local businesses, or individuals to donate (cash or in kind) can also help.
    - Volunteer organizations may offer to support peer support group members with transportation, assistance, or respite care.
- Fundraising drives.
    - Community fundraisers and auctions can help raise money.
- Apply for funding/grants.
    - Look for funding opportunities through local governments, not-for-profit/philanthropic agencies, stroke prevention and recovery organizations.

Tracking And Fundraising

Ensure that the group has a system in place to track and record expenses and incomes. It would be invaluable to have a team member with experience in donor relationships, fundraising or working with not-for-profit organizations to guide the development of the financial model. As discussed later in this toolkit, you can assign this responsibility to one or more individuals.

Fundraising activities require some preparatory work. You would need to develop some material that will explain the group and why is it important to the community. A detailed budget will need to be developed outlining the cost of the various elements of the group and why money is being raised. Brochures, information sheets or a more detailed business case will be very helpful for this.

Writing A Business Case

A business case is not only important for fundraising but may also be an important element of group expansion, outreach and marketing. Many standard business case templates can be found on the internet, or your organization may already have a template that you can use.

Key elements of a business case include:

- An executive summary.
    - An overview of the issue being addressed along with the nature and the size of the issue and evidence for the need of the group (market analysis).
    - Description of the proposed solution(s) – why and how it will help address the issue.
- The approach to implement the group.
    - Resources required, where they can be found, and costs.
    - Marketing plans.
    - Anticipated challenges and mitigating strategies.
    - Examples of success of similar initiatives in other contexts and reasons for likelihood of success in the current context.
- Outline of the budget and anticipate benefits.
- The type and extent of support requested.
- Expected returns and timelines of reporting.

When developing a business case consider startup costs, direct and indirect costs and to whom the costs (and cost recovery) would apply.

> **Note**: In Canada, there are rules about charitable giving. You may need to register as a charitable institution to offer receipts for donations or use the charitable number of an organizational partner.

07 Step Seven | Recruit Group Members

Now that you have designed your group and have started gathering the necessary resources, you can shift your attention to finding people who will participate in the peer support group meetings. It is important to spread the word about your peer support group in the community so that more people with stroke know about it.

How To Let More People Know About Your Group

Here are some ways to promote it:

- Local and social media.
    - Advertise in your local newspapers, magazines, and recreation guides.
    - Share real life stories and talk about the group on the radio or local news.
    - Post about your group on stroke-group pages of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Use bright images and catchy phrases to grab attention.
- Awareness drives.
    - Participate in a walkathon, community event, parade, or other community. Hand out flyers and talk to the public.
- Word-of-mouth.
    - Ask your team members, clients, and local partners to share information with other potential members.
- Targeted promotion.
    - Connect with local healthcare and related organizations (stroke unit, outpatient waiting rooms, doctor's offices, stroke recovery associations, etc.) to:
        - Post flyers.
        - Request staff to hand out flyers to patients/families who are being discharged.
        - Offer to visit people at the time of discharge from the stroke unit to share information about the group.

- Direct referral.
  - Some groups work through direct referrals from local healthcare offices. You may need to develop a referral form that you can share with healthcare professionals so they can refer suitable clients to your group. However, since personal and health information will be shared, you would need to have a well-built plan for securely sending, receiving, storing, and using this information and considerations for liability.

In your communications, flyers, posts, include dates when people can start reaching out to you. You can also state a tentative date when you expect the group to start meeting.

The time and effort spent building partnerships with relevant local organizations and individuals in the earlier phases will be valuable here. Ensure you foster the relationships you build by connecting with them regularly, updating them about the group, and appreciating their contributions.

Template | Recruitment Flyer

On the next page, we have an example of a flyer about stroke peer support groups. Remember that you should ask before you put up a flyer, even in a public space. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

DO YOU WANT TO CONNECT WITH OTHER PEOPLE WHO ARE LIVING WITH STROKE?
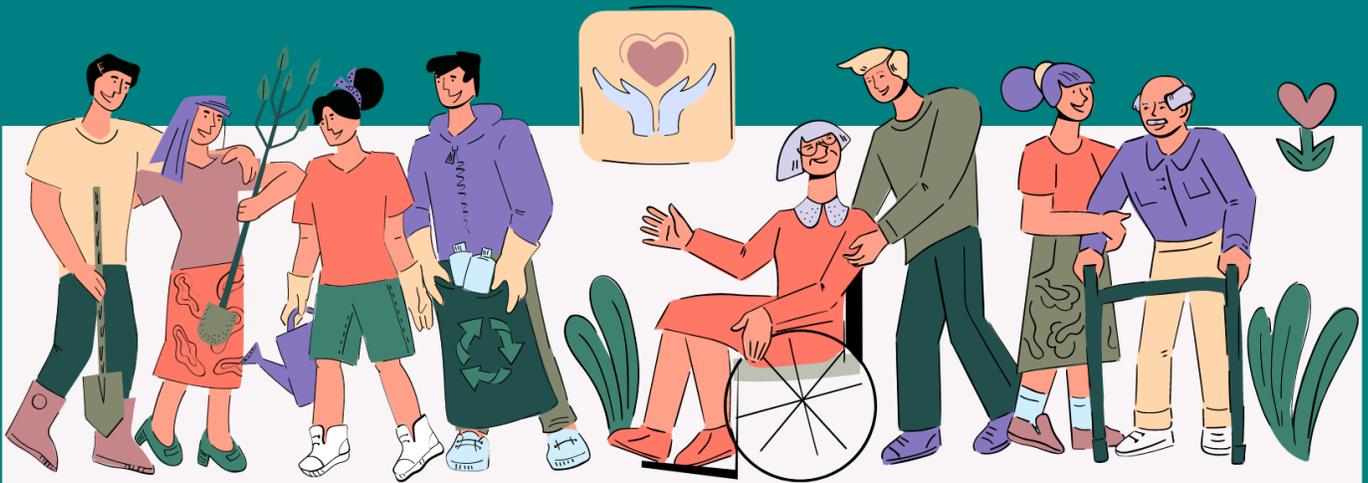
Join our peer support group to meet other stroke survivors and talk about live after stroke.

If you or someone you know would like to join us or have any questions, please contact:

08 Step Eight | Find People To Manage The Group

There is a lot of work involved in running a peer support group. In addition to the work required to have peer support meetings there are many administrative tasks. For a newly started group, members of the planning team may volunteer to fill these roles until group members understand more about these roles. For groups that have been running for some time, the responsibilities can be passed on to group members. Roles may be held for a specific term or on rotation.

It is best for the group to decide on roles and responsibilities together and invite individuals to volunteer rather than assign them roles.

Remember: The people you choose for these roles should be dependable and be able to work with other people. Ensure that all volunteers understand and respect the privacy of the group members and the confidentiality of the discussions they attend.

What Are The Tasks Involved In Running A Peer Support Group?

There are many tasks involved in running a peer support group. Some of these are related to the meetings while others are related to managing day-to-day administration.

Here are some examples of tasks involved in running a peer support group:

- Orienting members and keeping track of their participation.
- Planning and preparing for the group meetings.
- Tracking group activities (attendance, topics of discussions, distributing surveys, etc.).
- Assisting members during meetings.
- Managing peer support group discussions.
- Managing resources.
- Promotion and marketing.
- Evaluating the group's impact.
- Managing and reporting finances, etc.

Sharing The Load

Groups can decide to split these tasks between a few roles. Some core roles include a facilitator (to guide discussions), a group representative (to orient members), a secretary (to track group activities), a treasurer (to manage and report on finances), and meeting volunteers (to help with member assistance, room setup, etc.).

Who Can Hold These Roles?

Anyone who has the skills, the time, and an interest can take on these roles. For some roles (e.g., group representative), it can be helpful if the person has a similar lived experience as the group. New members may find it easier to talk to someone who knows what they are going through and can share their own journey after stroke. Members are often eager to help as it makes them feel empowered. Your organizational partner can help with some tasks (financial reporting, activity planning and tracking, evaluations, promotion and marketing, etc.).

Other roles involving technical assistance, managing funds, setting up meetings or maintaining records do not require having a lived experience. These roles may be filled by individuals outside of the group (students, retired professionals, spouses of members, family, friends, etc.).

> **Note**: Some groups (or partners) may require police clearance or other checks for non-members.

Having A Facilitator To Guide Discussions

The facilitator role requires someone who can engage members, manage difficult conversations, and keep discussions on track.

As discussed earlier, there are four ways groups may proceed:

- No facilitator.
    - Some groups may decide to manage their discussions between themselves. In such cases, the group should have rules for respectful discussions and managing disagreements.
    - See Section 5 for some suggestions on having effective discussions and managing challenges.
- Members as facilitators.
    - One or more experienced group members may volunteer to guide discussions.
- Non-members as facilitators.
    - In some cases, people with lived experience who have attended and led other peer support groups may become facilitators. They can use their previous experience with peer support, and their lived experience to guide the group discussions.
- Trained professional as a facilitator.
    - In some groups the facilitator role is done by a trained professional (counsellor, social worker, or a mental health professional). There may be a cost involved. It also means that the group discussion may not be purely "peer-led".

> **Tip**: Refer to Section 5 to read more about the role of a facilitator and how to manage common situations that arise in peer support group meetings.

Finding Volunteers

Volunteers can help with managing some of the day-to-day tasks involved in running the group. If you are looking for volunteers with a shared lived experience of stroke reach out to your group members or to the places where you promote your group (local healthcare clinics or hospitals). Connect with other peer support groups to find if any experienced members are willing to help.

If you are looking for volunteers without lived experiences, connect with:

- Local volunteer organizations.
- Your organizational or local partners.
- Spouses, families, or friends of members.
- Students at local colleges, and universities.

Tip: Some roles may require training and preparation. Your organization, partners, or local/national volunteer agencies, and Peer Support Canada (https://peersupportcanada.ca/) may have training programs you can access.

Template | Tasks Involved In Running A Peer Support Group

On the next two pages, we have a table with common tasks and a place to track who will handle what. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Tasks Involved In Running A Peer Support Group

Task	Assigned to
Welcoming and orienting members. • Welcome new members. • Share information about the group and meetings. • Answer their questions.	
Meeting preparations. • Ensure everything is ready for meeting (space, material, emergency contacts, etc.). • Remind members of date, time, and other information. • Assist with room setup and clean up.	
Support members. • Help members arrive at the meeting place. • Provide technical assistance during virtual meetings. • Help with name tags, finding the washroom, etc.	
Group tracking. • Take attendance. • Note and share important resources or links. • Hand-out and collect surveys.	
Guide and facilitate discussions during meetings. • Guide discussions. • Engage members.	

Track members' information. • Maintain a list of members and attendance. • Maintain a list of emergency contacts. • Secure and confidential storage of records.	
Managing relationships with local and organizational partners. • Develop new and maintain relationships with partners. • Discuss the needs of the group. • Share updates.	
Manage resources. • Find other sources of support in the community. • Plan ways to find or raise funds for the program	
Track group finances. • Tracking fees, donations, expenses, etc. • Maintain a budget. • Tax reporting.	
Expand and promote the program. • Connect with more people living with stroke in the community. • Plan special events, celebrations, fundraisers, etc.	

Other Resources

Resource Name	Description	Link
Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities (Government of Canada)	An overview of the types of social determinants and how it affects different marginalized people.	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html
Social Determinants of Health (World Health Organization)	Learn about the social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health.	https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health
Let's Talk Health Equity (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health)	A 6-page document outlining what health equity is and how to integrate it into your work.	https://nccdh.ca/images/uploads/Lets_Talk_Health_Equity_English.pdf
Business Case (Department of Veterans Affairs)	An overview of the questions that a business plan should cover.	https://www.publichealth.va.gov/docs/employeehealth/11-Business-Case.pdf

Business Case Template (Government of Canada)	A template for producing a business case.	https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/information-technology-project-management/project-management/business-case-template.html
Planning and Writing an Annual Budget (Community Toolbox)	A step-by-step overview of how to create an annual budget, including examples.	https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/finances/managing-finances/annual-budget/main
Apply to Become a Registered Charity (Government of Canada)	Links to the four steps to take if you would like to register as a charity in Canada.	https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/registering-charitable-qualified-donee-status/apply-become-registered-charity.html
Operating a Registered Charity: (Government of Canada)	Links to various topics to support running a charity organization in Canada.	https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/operating-a-registered-charity.html
Community Partnership Resource Guide (Health Quality Ontario)	A 23-page document designed to help teams establish effective partnerships with other organizations	https://www.hqontario.ca/portals/0/Documents/qi/qi-rg-community-partnerships-1012-en.pdf

Building and Sustaining Relationships (Community Toolbox)	Outlines an 11-step process to build and sustain relationships.	https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-functions/build-sustain-relationships/main
Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships (Community Toolbox)	Provides guidance for creating a partnership among different organizations to address a common goal.	https://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-coalitions-and-partnerships
Building Clinic Community Partnerships to Support Chronic Disease Control and Prevention (Diabetes Initiative)	An 18-page framework which outlines essential partnership characteristics and how to build capacity.	http://diabetesnpo.im.wustl.edu/documents/Tools_combined_FINAL5108.pdf

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Section Three | Run Peer Support Group Meetings

Introduction To Section Three

Once you have designed what your group looks like and how it will be managed, the next few steps are to plan what happens during the peer support group meetings. Having a plan for the activities to do during the meetings will allow you to start the meetings with a purpose and stimulate engagement among members.

Some guiding questions for this phase could include:

- How will you invite and orient new members?
- How should you prepare for a meeting?
- What should we do during our meetings?
- How should we allocate time during the meetings?
- What mechanisms will you put in place to increase the safety of members?

09 Step Nine | Orient Group Members

As a result of the work you have done to promote the group, interested individuals will begin reaching out to you. People may have more questions about the group or may be interested in joining the group.

Having one individual as a constant point-of-contact (usually the group representative) can help people develop comfort and trust. Invite interested individuals to understand the group well before deciding to participate – you can use an informed consent form for this. When an individual decides to participate, you can invite them to share some information about themselves. If possible, develop a booklet or document that outlines the information about the group, so members can have it handy.

> **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 the template on the following page or treat it 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 the template on the following page or treat it 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	**Peer Support Group Volunteer**
Name: _____	Name: _____
Signature: _____	Signature: _____
Date: _____	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 the template on the following page or treat it 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 understand more about how the group runs. 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 wellbeing.

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:

✓ **Do's**	🚫 **Don'ts**
• 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.	• 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.

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:

_____

---

10 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 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

Knowing what needs to be completed in the month, week and day before an event can help prepare you for success. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

In-Person Meeting Readiness Checklist

☐ Is the meeting space booked?

☐ Are the meeting materials ready? (Chair, 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

If incidents occur during meetings, it is important to track what happened, who was involved and what steps were taken. You can use the template on the following page or treat it 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 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.) 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 instead of using one member's personal email.
  - 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.

What To Do During 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 over time. 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, 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.

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SECTION **4** **Evaluate and Grow Your Group**

Section Four | Evaluate And Grow Your Group

Introduction To Section Four

All programs and services should include some type of review or evaluation that can help the organizers understand if things are going well. This includes gathering information about members' experiences as well as how well the group is being managed. This section provides more information on how you can review your groups' activities, and check-in with your members to identify positive or negative changes, and areas for improvement.

12 Step Twelve | Evaluate Your Group

Setting up a peer support group is only half of the goal. The other half is making sure that it is truly helping the group members and the community. Evaluating your group will help you understand what you are doing right and where you can improve.

There are two kinds of evaluations that groups should do:

- Process evaluation to understand if the group is running as planned.
- Outcomes evaluation to understand if group members are benefitting from participation in the group.

Tip: While listed at the end of this toolkit, evaluation is not a separate phase. You collect information on a regular basis and use it to understand if any changes are needed.

Process Evaluation

A simple process evaluation examines how a program is being implemented. This includes tracking and monitoring all activities related to delivering peer support, policies and procedures that were developed, and the uptake of the services. The following questions are at the centre of a process evaluation.

- Were all planned program activities accomplished as planned?
- What changes were made and why?
- Were the necessary resources available?
- What challenges were faced during implementation? What steps were taken to resolve these challenges?
- Has the targeted clientele responded to the implementation of the peer support services as expected? Consider the number and types of clients reached, satisfaction with the service, waitlists, withdrawals etc.
- What internal or external factors have impacted the implementation and delivery of peer support?

The Process

Along with your group, identify which of these questions you should focus on, and why these elements are important. Find out the key indicators in each case (i.e. what you should be looking at, and how you will collect relevant information). Compare what was done to what was planned and why changes were made, if any.

Tracking activities, decisions, challenges, resources, funding, client satisfaction, etc. will give you valuable information for conducting process evaluations.

For new groups, engage in process evaluations soon after starting and in six months time to help identify and resolve challenges. Later, an annual process evaluation will be enough.

Template | Process Evaluation Worksheets

Below are a few templates that you can use or modify as necessary to record and monitor program related activities. We have also provided some examples of tracking sheets you can use. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Process Evaluation Worksheet

Group Name: _____

Evaluation Date: _____

People Involved: _____

Process Evaluation Questions	Considerations or Indicators	Data Collection and Evaluation Methods	Timelines
How closely did implementation follow the original plan?			
What changes were made to the implementation plan? Why?			
Were necessary resources available?			
What challenges were encountered during implementation? How were they resolved?			
How have the targeted clientele responded to the peer support services?			

Process Evaluation Questions	Considerations or Indicators	Data Collection and Evaluation Methods	Timelines
Are the program users satisfied?			
What internal factors influenced implementation/delivery of peer support?			
What external factors influenced implementation/ delivery of peer support?			
What was the staff's (including volunteers) perception of the program?			
Other			

	Item	**Details**
Resource	Spaces used for meetings	
	Meeting refreshments	
	Other materials	
	Number of volunteers involved	
	Volunteer titles and names	
	Reason and number of volunteer withdrawals	
Meeting Tracking	Number of sessions	
	Number of guest speakers	
	Number of special events	
	Type of special events	
	Donations received	
	In-kind received	
	Grants received	

	Funds raised (sources)	
Partner Tracking	Organizational partner	
	Contribution of organizational partner	
	Local partners	
	Contribution of local partners	
Program Promotion	Current methods of promotion	
	Methods that are working well	
	Methods not working well	
Membership Tracking	Total number of members	
	Average attendance	
	Reason and number of member withdrawals	
	Number of people on waitlist	

Member Satisfaction Survey

We would like to understand your experiences with the peer support group and if there are things we can do better. Please take a few minutes to give us some feedback. Your answers will be shared anonymously.

How long have you been a part of this peer support group? _____

_____

On average, how many sessions do you attend in a month? _____

_____

What do you like about this peer support group? _____

_____

What do you not like about this peer support group? _____

_____

What can we improve? _____

_____

Do you have any feedback for the facilitators, and other volunteers who help run this group? _____

_____

What other topics should we cover during our meetings? _____

_____

Overall, are you satisfied with this peer support group?

- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied

Outcomes Evaluation

An outcome (impact) evaluation is used to understand the effects of participating in a peer support group on its members. The results will tell you what is working well, if something needs to change, and if members are benefitting from participation in the peer support groups. It might also be valuable when applying for funds, grants or receiving donations.

The best way to find out the impact or effect of the group on members is to ask them. You could use a survey or a feedback form (or even have an informal conversation) about the difference the group has made in their lives.

> **Tip**: Anonymous surveys (where names are not required) will help you get honest answers.

The Process

Evaluations should be conducted regularly (every 6 or 12 months) to maintain the quality of support members receive.

Peer support groups are usually designed to reduce loneliness and social isolation, improve motivation, provide hope, reduce depression, improve confidence, and empower people. There are many tools available to capture this information. Your teams can choose what are the key benefits they believe the group will offer and develop a survey or feedback form to check with your clients. Some example questions have been included in the sample feedback survey below.

Template | Member Outcomes Survey

The survey below can be used to collect feedback from members of your peer support group. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Member Outcomes Survey

We would like to know if participating in the peer support group has been helpful for you. Please take a few minutes to give us some feedback. Think about your participation in the peer support group. For each of the following statements, choose the option that best reflects how you feel presently. Where possible, feel free to share examples, details, and other notes that will help us understand more about your experience participating in the group.

As a result of participating in the peer support group...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Details
I have made new connections.						
I feel like I have a community.						
I feel seen and heard.						
I feel like I have support.						
I feel less alone.						
I have hope for the future.						
I am less depressed.						
I can engage in activities that interest me.						

As a result of participating in the peer support group...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Details
I am motivated to do things.						
I am less anxious about what is to come.						
I can manage my worries.						
I am more confident.						
I feel empowered to take care of myself.						
I feel like I have something to offer to others.						
I have access to information and resources that I otherwise would not.						
My overall wellbeing has improved.						

Do you have any general comments? _____

_____

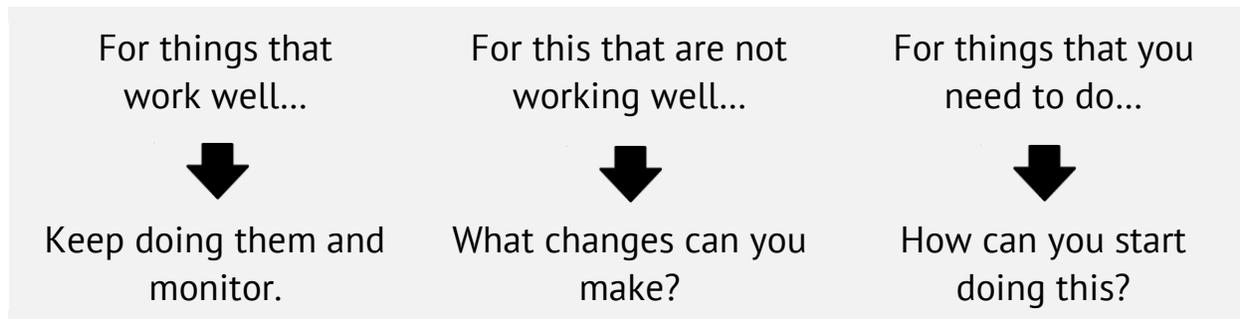**Date Completed**: _____

Redesigning Your Group Based On Feedback

Use the help of volunteers, or organizational partner to help you summarize the results of your process and impact evaluations.

As you go through the results, identify what seems to be working well (lots of positive comments), what is not working well (suggestions for improvement and changes), and what else you can do.

For things that work well...	For this that are not working well...	For things that you need to do...
⬇	⬇	⬇
Keep doing them and monitor.	What changes can you make?	How can you start doing this?

Thus, slowly the group adapts to the needs and preferences of its members, providing the support they need and value.

13 # Step Thirteen | Sustain And Grow Your Group

Over time, the group will run like a well-oiled machine. It is a valuable part of the community, and members rely on it to improve their lives. The group has strong relationships with local and organizational partners, and has figured out how to find new members, or raise funds.

At this time the focus will shift to making sure that the peer support group continues to run smoothly. This way new stroke survivors can access its services. This is known as program sustainability.

For a group to be sustainable, it must:

- Continue to provide health benefits to members.
- Change to meet the needs of the clients and partners.
- Be able to find and use resources it needs to run smoothly.

Template | Sustainability Checklist

Groups that sustain over time have a few common features. We have presented them as questions (see template below) so you can check how your group is doing. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Sustainability Checklist

As you answer these questions, think of how the group is doing now.

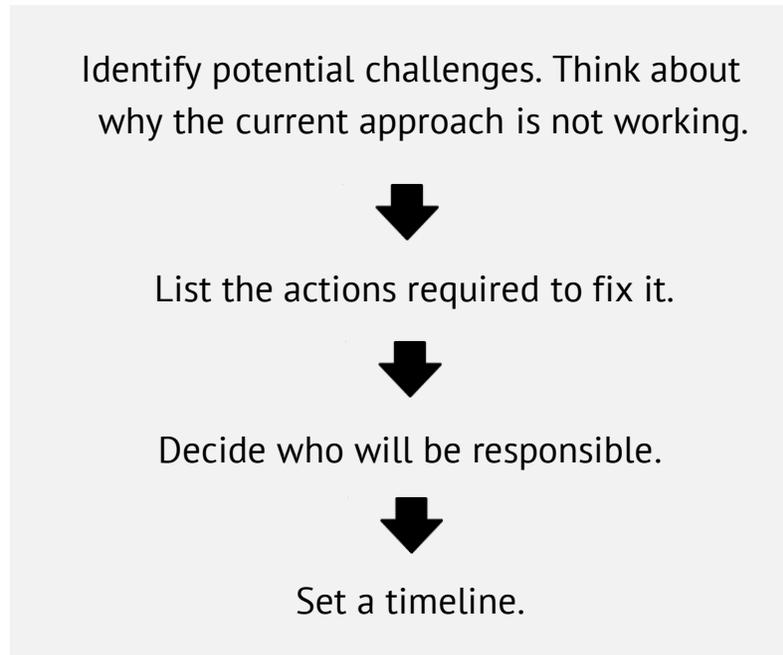|	Yes	Sometimes	No
Is there a match between what the community needs and what the group offers?			
Does the group have the support and active involvement of local partners?			
Does the group have a positive impact on participants and the community?			
Is the group regularly evaluated?			
Has the group changed based on the results of the evaluation?			
Is the group being promoted/advertised in the community?			
Are sufficient funds available to manage group costs?			
Does the group have access to the resources it needs?			

If you have answered **sometimes or no** to any of these questions, they might be areas where you may have challenges going forward.

Addressing Challenges

Once you have found potential challenges, you can create a plan on how to address them. You can also include areas that are working well in your sustainability planning. This will ensure that they continue to work well.

The approach would be:

Identify potential challenges. Think about why the current approach is not working.

⬇

List the actions required to fix it.

⬇

Decide who will be responsible.

⬇

Set a timeline.

Template | Sustainability Planning Worksheet

Building on the questions above, fill out this form to help you understand if you are likely to have any challenges soon or in the future. If you find problems, you can discuss solutions with your partners. You can use the template on the following page or treat it as inspiration to create your own.

Tip: Have regular discussions about what issues the group is facing and how it can be resolved.

Sustainability Planning Worksheet

	Potential challenges	Issue with current approach	Potential solutions	Actions to fix it
Match between community need and group benefits				
Active involvement and support of local partners				
Positive group impact				
Regular evaluation				
Changes to group in response to evaluations				
Group promotion				
Availability of resources				

In-Depth Evaluation

If you are looking to do an in-depth sustainability evaluation you can use tools like The Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (https://www.sustaintool.org/psat).

If Challenges Cannot Be Resolved

Sometimes, it may not be possible to fix some problems. For example, group attendance is poor, and no new members are joining. Or there are no trained, experienced, and dedicated team members to run the group.

If you have tried different solutions and nothing is working, it may be necessary to terminate the program and inform your members about other groups they can join.

Grow Your Group

Once the group has been running for a while, the team can discuss opportunities and ways to grow the group.

Here are some ways the group can grow:

- Conduct an evaluation to find areas where the group can do better.
- Redesign the group to make it more formal and structured. Establish a governance structure, design policies and procedures, register your group as a not-for-profit group, etc.
- Join a network of peer support groups so you can learn from each other.
- Expand the services of your group by inviting more members, specific groups (caregivers, younger people living with stroke, etc.) or offering virtual and in-person groups.
- Expand your partnerships.

Tip: This is the exciting part! The group is doing great work and now can have even more positive impact on the community.

After Stroke Peer Support Toolkit

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

MARCH OF DIMES CANADA | After Stroke
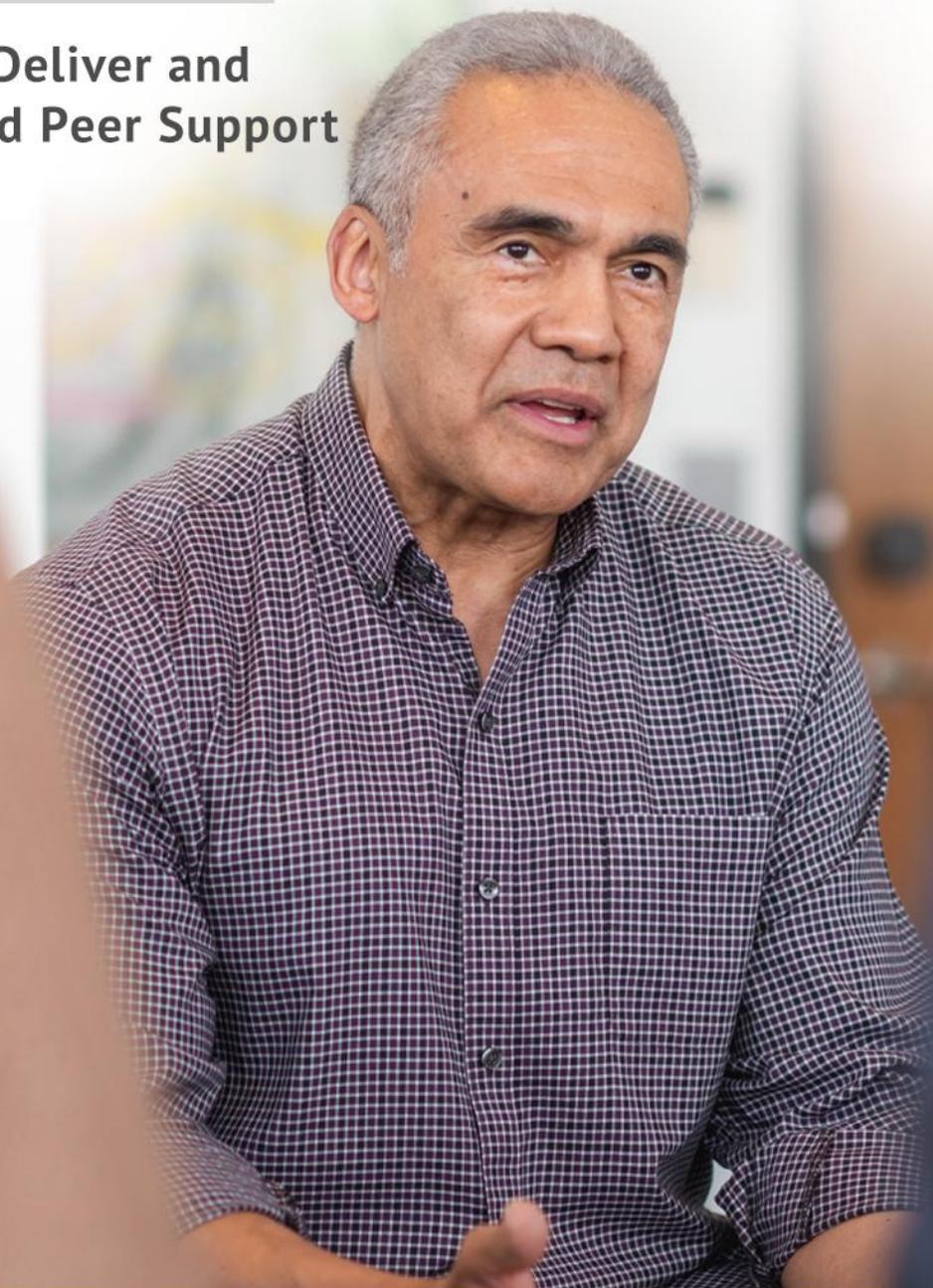
Facilitator's Guide

Section Five | Facilitator's Guide

Introduction To Section Five

At this stage, you have confirmed that the community will benefit from the peer support group and have assembled a team of individuals to guide the process to design and set up the group. The next stage is designing the peer support group.

Some guiding questions for your team **could include:**

- What type of a group would best serve our clients?
- What are the resources available to set up and run this peer support group?
- Which community individuals or teams would be valuable partners for setting up and running this group?
- How do we find members to attend the peer support group meetings?

Using The Facilitator's Guide

This section includes information on how to guide peer support group discussions and manage common challenges.

It includes:

- Information on preparing for the role of a peer group facilitator.
- Tips to improve participation, deal with arguments and sensitive issues.
- Guidance for helping members with communication challenges.
- Resources on living with stroke, and peer support.

What Is The Role Of A Facilitator?

A facilitator is the member of the peer support group responsible for:

- Creating a safe and welcoming space where members feel comfortable to share.
- Inspiring discussion by asking clarifying and follow-up questions.
- Keeping discussions on track.
- Encouraging members to help and support each other.
- Modeling good group behaviour.
- Managing difficult members and conversations.

> **Tip**: A facilitator is a guide, not a leader. Everyone in the group is equal. One or more persons can take on this role, or a group can rotate the role among the members.

What Skills Should A Facilitator Have?

To effectively guide a discussion, a facilitator should be:

- A guide who supports group members.
  - Warm, empathetic, unbiased, and a good listener.
  - Should not impose their opinions on members.
  - May share own story where relevant to support discussions.
- Must be confident and assertive to keep discussions on track.
  - Accountable and dependable.
- Understand the value and importance of their role.
  - Dependable and consistent in their involvement (constant turnover can lead to low trust and poor group dynamics).

How To Prepare To Be A Facilitator?

Training is important to prepare any facilitator for their role. Check if your partner organizations have their own or preferred peer support training course. They may also know other peer support facilitator training programs. Volunteers can also seek out accredited training or certification courses.

You should have some basic understanding in three areas:

- Understanding what happens after a stroke.
- Peer support.
- Reflective learning.

Understanding What Happens After A Stroke

The following resources can help you get a basic understanding of what happens when someone experiences a stroke.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Effects of Stroke (American Stroke Association)	An 11-page resource about the effects of stroke.	https://www.stroke.org/en/about-stroke/effects-of-stroke
Effects of Stroke (Stroke Association UK)	A 10-page resource on emotional changes, memory, neuroplasticity, relationships and more after stroke.	https://www.stroke.org.uk/effects-of-stroke
Getting on With the Rest of your Life After Stroke (Canadian Stroke Network)	A 36-page resource that covers goal setting, exercise, blood pressure, stress and more. Also includes activities to help with brain health.	https://www.strokebestpractices.ca/-/media/1-stroke-best-practices/mood-cognition-and-fatigue/getting-on-with-the-rest-of-your-life-after-stroke.ashx

What Is Peer Support?

A facilitator should know and understand the value of peer support, how it works, and what peer support looks like. These resources can help you understand more about peer support.

Resource Name	Description	Link
6 Ways Peer Support Can Improve your Health (Heart and Stroke Canada)	A list of six reasons that peer support is a useful tool.	https://www.heartandstroke.ca/articles/6-ways-peer-support-can-improve-your-health
Value of Peer Support (NESTA UK)	A case study about Steve, a peer support group leader since 2016.	https://www.nesta.org.uk/case-study/stroke-association-peer-support/
Code of Conduct (Peer Support Canada)	A one-page list of 'I will' statements that facilitators should agree to.	https://peersupportcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Peer_Support_Code_of_Conduct-ENG.pdf
Values, Principles and Ethics of Peer Support (Canadian Mental Health Association)	An overview of the core beliefs that peer support is based on.	https://cmhawwselfhelp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Values-principles-and-ethics-of-peer-support-v180926.pdf

What Is Reflective Learning?

Some meetings might not go as well as you planned, and others might go well. Once the session is done, think about what you did or would like to do differently.

Some simple questions can help with reflective practice:

- How did today's session go?
- What could have been better?
- What should we do next time?

Resource Name	Description	Link
Reflective Practice (Campus Mental Health)	Reflective journal questions and reading about reflective practice.	https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/campus-peer-support/supervision-support/reflective-practice/

How Do I Keep Discussions On Topic?

When the discussion steers away from the topic at hand, the easiest way to redirect is to point out that conversation is getting off-topic. Use gentle but firm language when communicating this. If there is time after the meeting for casual conversation, members can discuss it then. Creating a public 'parking lot' where off-topic ideas are listed can be helpful, so members can remember their important but off-topic items for the end of the meeting or future sessions.

A useful phrase is: "This is not within the topic for our meeting today. Let's write it down and come back to it in another session or discuss after the meeting."

What Should I Do If I'm Worried About A Member's Wellness?

Your approach will depend on the type of crisis you experience:

- If there are red flags or concerning behaviour.
    - Speak to the member privately and recommend that they get in touch with their local healthcare professional. Share any appropriate resources you may have.
- If there is a medical emergency.
    - Call the local emergency service followed by the member's emergency contact. Complete an incident report.

How Do I Manage Disruptive Members?

If you have members who frequently speak over other members, interrupt, or side-track the discussion, the facilitator can step in. To avoid putting the member in an uncomfortable position, talk to them one-on-one.

Remind them to wait for their turn or raise their hand. Let them know that others need some time to talk too. You can also use tricks like "the person with the blue stick speaks", provide notepads to jot down thoughts and ideas while waiting for their turn, or saving time to highlight one member each session to give them time to share their thoughts.

How Do I Manage Discussions About Sensitive Topics?

When guiding a peer support group, even the best facilitators encounter challenges. Here are some suggestions on how to prepare for and/or respond. Some group members will find certain topics emotional or sensitive. If you think that a topic may make some members upset, gently inform members ahead of time. Members may then choose not to attend or come mentally prepared. Reach out to these members separately to see if they need any assistance. You could also discuss with your groups on what topics they would like to avoid.

If a sensitive topic is brought up unexpectedly, the facilitator can call for a break. During this time, privately ask affected members if they would like to step out. The facilitator can also ask the group to move the topic to a future meeting. Remind members to feel free to step away at anytime if the discussions are making them uncomfortable.

> **Tip**: Do not avoid topics that may be uncomfortable. As hard as they may be, some conversations are especially important. For many members, this group may be the only place they can talk about their fears and concerns openly. Approach these topics with empathy and sensitivity.

How Do I Manage Conflict And Arguments?

Sometimes members may start arguing with no signs of coming to an agreement. Try to calm the situation and remind the group that members do not need to agree with each other and that everyone can have their own opinion or idea. If there is tension, try a grounding or breathing exercise to change the energy of the meeting. If helpful, review the core values and rules of peer support and remind participants to have a respectful discussion.

How Can I Support Members With Communication Disorders (Like Aphasia)?

After a stroke, people may experience challenges with communication (like aphasia), and may have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding what other people say. This does not mean that they are less intelligent!

Help them feel respected.
- Make eye contact and use an adult tone of voice.
- Speak to them directly, naturally, and kindly. Don't shout.
- If you need to speak on their behalf, ask them if it's okay first.
- Acknowledge their frustration and be patient.
- Say supportive phrases, like "I know you know".

Help them understand you.
- Bring markers and paper or a portable whiteboard.
- Speak clearly and slowly. Pause frequently and use short sentences.
- Write large key words and draw or point to things.
- Use your hands and face to show what you mean.
- Focus on one topic at a time.
- Let them see your lips.

Help them communicate.
- Ask yes and no questions, one at a time.
- Give them time to answer.
- Don't complete their sentences (unless asked).
- Give them choices to point to (yes, no, I don't' know, etc.).
- See if their face or actions are saying something.
- If they say the wrong word, imagine what they may be trying to say.

Double-check.
- Check what you think they have told you. Say it again or sum it up.
- Ask if they have more to tell you, before moving on.
- Sometimes, ask "Should we take a break? Can we try again later?"

Tip: Learning how to support people with aphasia in conversation is like learning a new language; it takes practice! We strongly encourage facilitators to take extra training.

March of Dimes Canada has also created a toolkit called: 'Making Peer Support Groups Accessible for Individuals with Communication Difficulties'. This resource is intended to provide information, tools and strategies for peer support group staff, volunteers and members to support members who may have communication difficulties.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Does Your Family Member Have Aphasia?" (Aphasia Institute)	The above suggestions are adapted from this resource.	https://www.aphasia.ca/family-and-friends-of-people-with-aphasia/family-sca
Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (Aphasia Institute)	A series of communication techniques to encourage conversation when working with someone with aphasia.	https://www.aphasia.ca/communication-tools-communicative-access-sca/
Aphasia - What a Difference Some Help Makes (Dyscover)	A 5-minute video demo of supportive communication strategies.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWVoqM9jmEM
Accessible Information Guidelines (Stroke Association UK)	A 32-page resource on how to make information accessible for people with aphasia.	https://www.stroke.org.uk/sites/default/files/accessible_information_guidelines.pdf1_.pdf
Making Space for Everyone (Social Planning and Research Council of BC)	A toolkit on how to be more accessible to people with mobility, visibility, hearing and cognitive concerns.	https://www.sparc.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/makingspaceforeveryonebookletweb.pdf

How Can I Improve Member Engagement?

As a facilitator you can improve member engagement by:

- Asking questions to let your members know you are actively listening.
    - Use open ended questions like "Can you tell us more about…".
    - Use techniques like 'person holding the ball speaks' to bring attention to the speaker.
    - Ask members to face the speaker.
- Minimizing distractions.
    - Make sure people can see each other without needing to move.
    - Provide comfortable seating in a safe and private space.
- Allocating plenty of time for discussions, questions, and answers.
- Adding movement.
    - Include safe and fun physical activities, like seated ball throwing, feet tapping, drum circles, etc.
    - Music and body movements cause the release of endorphins.
- Discussing different topics.
    - Do not limit meetings to only stroke related topics. Include time for general topics about life, recent movies or books, hobbies, travels/adventures, etc.

How Can I Get Participants To Trust Me?

As a facilitator you can gain the trust of members by:

- Asking appropriate questions – let members know you are listening and interested.
- Remaining calm and neutral but empathetic and understanding.
- Sharing your own experiences (selectively and with intention).
- Being patient, objective and fair.
- Staying committed and consistent – remain involved and committed to support the members. Sometimes developing trust just needs time.

How Can I Improve Involvement And Attendance?

You can improve involvement and attendance by:

- Making it easier for them to attend.
  - Ask members what you can do to encourage attendance.
  - Regularly check if the meeting time and place works
  - Have a virtual meeting option if the weather is bad, if transportation is challenging, etc.
  - Offer reminder phone calls.
  - Make wellness check phone calls if members miss a few sessions.
- Involving members in decisions about peer support.
  - Encourage members to provide feedback about the group.
  - Discuss ways to improve how the group runs.
  - Involve members in discussing future topics, guest lectures, events, etc.
- Mixing things up.
  - Occasionally, have meetings where you do not discuss stroke or challenges.
  - Watch a movie or a play, play games, visit a gallery or museum.
  - Have a potluck, bingo night, go for a hike, etc.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Make Buildings and Spaces Accessible (AODA)	A webpage with details on how to make spaces more inviting and accessible.	https://www.aoda.ca/make-buildings-and-spaces-accessible/

How Can I Support Members To Speak Up And Become Advocates For Themselves?

Advocacy involves using your voice, words, actions, and choices to raise awareness or share information about causes that matter to you. When people with lived experience share their thoughts and experiences, it has the potential for greater impact and farther reach. Anyone who is willing to speak about their own needs, or the needs of someone else, and is passionate about making a difference can become stroke advocate.

Advocacy includes all acts- big or small- that help to raise and spread awareness of stroke, life after stroke, prevention, recovery, etc. This can be- connecting the local health authorities or local officials to request improved community support for people living with the impact of stroke becoming a part of the local stroke association, sitting on committees that discuss services/resources for people living with stroke, participating in fundraisers, making social media posts, etc.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Self-Advocacy Toolkit (March of Dimes Canada)	A toolkit that allows individuals living with disabilities and their families to develop skills to advocate for themselves and others. It provides information and resources on advocacy, navigating systems, and developing personal and interpersonal skills to become an effective advocate.	https://www.marchofdimes.ca/en-ca/aboutus/govtrelations/dan/Pages/Self-Advocacy-Toolkit.aspx

How Can I Prepare For Virtual Meetings?

If you decide to host virtual meetings you will need to prepare for different challenges and opportunities:

- Technical Issues.
    - Be prepared for technical issues (poor connectivity, bandwidth issues, device issues, etc.).
    - If needed teach members how to use chat, reactions, raise hands, enter, and exit breakout rooms.
    - Have a volunteer watch the chat and help members.
- Use Virtual Features.
    - Offer members an option to remain anonymous by turning off their video or using a pseudonym.
    - Ask members to raise hands when they want to speak.
    - Encourage the use of chat. That way other members can share thoughts without interrupting the person speaking.
- Security and Safety.
    - Request that participants attend the meeting through a secure and private internet connection.
    - Use waiting room or passcode features. The meeting link should be private and not shared with anyone else.
    - Reserve a session to talk about online safety.
    - Do not give participants permission to share screen freely.
- Increased Structure.
    - Virtual groups may need more structure to ensure that members get a turn to speak, discussions stay on-topic and stay engaged.
    - Include breaks to give facilitators a chance to debrief and discuss.
- Emergency Planning.
    - Have a plan to manage crises and/or emergencies.
    - Keep a record of member contact information, and emergency contacts so you can send help if necessary.
    - Prepare an action plan for supporting members who are experiencing distress or need help.

How Can I Help Members Connect With Each Other Online?

You can help member connect with each other online by:

- Reviewing values and group rules.
    - Remind members about confidentiality and respect.
- Spending more time getting to know each other.
    - Prepare introduction questions that aren't stroke related.
    - Try fun questions like your favourite cookie, place to travel, and recently watched movies.
- Including team building and bonding activities.
    - Use polling or reactions to get a sense of likes and dislikes.
    - Do a show-and-tell of a unique object in their home.
    - Encourage members to turn on their videos (if comfortable).
- Retaining some informality.
    - Invite people to bring their lunch, dinner, or drinks to the session.
    - Include breaks during and after the session for conversations.
    - Share fun information, or interesting stories during breaks.

Resource Name	Description	Link
Step-by-Step Guide to a Zoom Meeting (Seniors Guide)	A two-page, step by step guide to help you attend a Zoom meeting.	https://cdn.seniorsguide.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/02123145/SeniorsGuide-stepbystepguidetoZoom-english0620.pdf
Remote and Online Peer Support (National Survivor User Network)	A 19-page resource about virtual peer support, written during Covid-19.	https://www.nsun.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Remote_and_Online_Peer_Support_Resource.pdf

Other Helpful Resources

These are additional resources for you to refer to or share with your group.

Resource Name	Description	Link
After Stroke Program (March of Dimes Canada)	Skill redevelopment, peer support, movement and communication support.	https://www.afterstroke.ca/
Your Stroke Journey (Heart and Stroke Canada)	A 120-page resource that covers all parts of your stroke journey from understanding what happened, the first weeks, and moving forward into your new normal.	https://www.heartandstroke.ca/-/media/pdf-files/canada/your-stroke-journey/en-your-stroke-journey-v20.ashx
Guide for Stroke Recovery (Toronto Stroke Networks)	What to expect, managing changes, improving your overall health, and reducing your risk of another stroke.	https://www.strokerecovery.guide/
Stroke Recovery (National Health Service UK)	Understanding difficulties after stroke, including swallowing, driving, paralysis, mental health and more.	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/recovery/
Life After Stroke (American Stroke Association)	A 36-page resource about how to adapt to life after a stroke, including diagnosis, early treatment, and rehabilitation.	https://www.stroke.org/-/media/Stroke-Files/life-after-stroke/Life-After-Stroke-Guide_7819.pdf

Resource Name	Description	Link
Peer Supporter Competencies (Peer Support Canada)	A two-page list of competencies for peer support facilitators.	https://peersupportcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Peer_Supporter_Competencies-ENG.pdf
Guidelines for Practice and Training of Peer Support (Mental Health Commission of Canada)	A 54-page toolkit that covers the guidelines for peer support and suggestions for training.	https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Guidelines-for-the-Practice-and-Training-of-Peer-Support.pdf
Planning Accessible Events (Accessibility Services Canada)	A booklet with low-cost and no-cost things you can do to make your event more inclusive to people who live with disabilities.	https://accessibilitycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Planning-Accessible-Events-May-2016.pdf
Making Space for Everyone (Social Planning and Research Council of BC)	A booklet on how to be more accessible to individuals with specific mobility, visibility, hearing, and cognitive concerns.	https://www.sparc.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/makingspaceforeveryonebookletweb.pdf

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