

## **What is a peer supporter for survivors of sexual abuse?**

Someone who understands the struggles of other survivors because they have experienced childhood sexual abuse in their own life. Someone who has a desire to assist others in their healing process and through training has acquired the skills and information to enable them to offer support at a peer level.

S.O.A.R. peer supporters are available to provide support services to adult survivors of all genders. Usually women support women and men support men, but if you have a preference for a supporter of another gender we have some peer supporters qualified to do this.

## **How can peer support help?**

Your peer supporter will offer confidentiality, a good listening ear and a non-judgmental approach.

Through their training and their personal experiences, your peer supporter can understand your difficulties and can provide empathy, guidance, support, and also access to resources such as reading materials, and techniques to help you through stressful times.

Peer supporters are not mental health professionals or therapists and cannot give any medical or psychological advice.

## **How often/how long do we meet?**

You and your peer supporter will decide how often you will meet.

Usually, the agreement is to meet for six sessions of one hour once every week or two.

This can be renewed after six sessions as you and your peer supporter review your progress and your goals.

## **Where do peer supporters and those seeking our services meet?**

There are many safe locations throughout the province for peer support, including offices in hospitals, health centers, mental health clinics, churches, and family resource centers.

Sessions can take place in these safe, S.O.A.R.-approved locations, or by phone, by Zoom or by Google Meet.

## **What will happen if I don't like my peer supporter?**

Occasionally survivors and their peer supporters are not a good match. We encourage you to discuss this with your peer supporter and try to work it out.

However, we realize this is not always possible.

If this happens you can contact the S.O.A.R. coordinator by phone or email to request another peer supporter.

## **What are the effects of abuse?**

Though different for everyone, research has shown that there may be several long-term effects from the experience of childhood sexual abuse that can impact on the quality of life of the adult survivor.

Among these are:

- symptoms of post-traumatic stress
- flashbacks
- feelings of guilt and shame
- problems with self esteem
- health problems
- depression
- substance abuse
- issues of trust or intimacy in relationships
- re-victimization

## **How do I obtain a peer supporter?**

Confidential peer support is available to all adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

A survivor can make a self-referral or refer with the help of a doctor, therapist, clergy, family member or friend, etc.

**902-679-7337** or **1-877-679-SOAR (7627)**  
email [info@survivorsofabuserecovering.ca](mailto:info@survivorsofabuserecovering.ca)  
or message us on [facebook.com/soar.ns/](https://www.facebook.com/soar.ns/)

## To have S.O.A.R. speak to your group or for more information:

S.O.A.R.  
P.O. Box 105, Kentville, N.S. B4N 3V9  
www.survivorsofabuserrecovering.ca  
info@survivorsofabuserrecovering.ca  
S.O.A.R. Voicemail 902-679-7337  
or 1-877-679-7627 (toll free)

## What training is provided for members of S.O.A.R.?

All of our peer supporters, themselves survivors, are fully screened and all complete a 16-session training program. The training emphasizes supportive listening skills and includes:

- communication skills
- confidentiality
- crisis management
- responding to flashbacks
- post traumatic stress
- resources available in the community
- gender awareness

Peer supporters then become members of S.O.A.R. where ongoing education and training is provided through annual workshops, retreats and training seminars.

Training in group facilitation and Train the Trainer is also available to S.O.A.R. peer supporters, thus enabling S.O.A.R. to deliver peer supporter training, and offer peer-led survivor support groups.

## How long has S.O.A.R. been in existence?

S.O.A.R. started in December, 1993.

S.O.A.R. evolved from the vision of two Mental Health therapists, after they identified a clear need for peer support services for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

They trained, inspired and supported a small group of female survivors to form S.O.A.R.

There is a current membership of about 45 that includes approximately 15-20 adult peer supporter volunteers.

Services are currently available in Nova Scotia. S.O.A.R.'s mandate covers the whole province and new chapters will start up as interest evolves.

## How is S.O.A.R. funded?

S.O.A.R. does not charge for any of its peer support or support group services.

S.O.A.R. is a volunteer-driven, charitable society. S.O.A.R is funded by grants from several foundations and government departments, as well as by donations from diverse organizations, businesses and individuals. To see who has funded S.O.A.R. please see our website.

Tax deductible donations can be made at our website or mailed to us.

## Peer Support for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse



## What is S.O.A.R. ?

S.O.A.R., based in Nova Scotia, is a volunteer-driven, community-based charitable society. Its two objectives are:

- to provide peer support services (one-to-one and support groups) to all genders of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.
- to provide education and insight into survivor issues to the public through workshops, seminars and presentations to community groups and organizations.

Services are available province wide.