



## Survivors of Abuse Recovering (S.O.A.R.)

and Peer Counselling Service for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse in  
Hants, Kings & Annapolis Counties

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### Peer Services Committee Annual Report – 2020/21

**The Peer Services Committee is a regular standing committee of the Board, and is responsible for:**

1. Overseeing the quality of peer supporting services to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse in all areas served by S.O.A.R. in a confidential, timely and effective manner.
2. Ensuring and overseeing the quality of the peer referral activities of the Peer Mentor.
3. Overseeing and evaluating Peer Support Services.
4. Ensuring and providing support to peer supporters, for example, ensuring the confidential, monthly Peer Supporter Group meeting is providing support and education.
5. Providing information to the Education Committee about ongoing peer support and education needs.
6. Reporting to and consulting with the Board of Directors.
  - Ensuring that at least one Board member always sits on this committee.
  - Reports include proposed projects, plans, resources, support requests and updates, results and recommendations.
  - Reports afford an opportunity for the peer supporters to express their concerns and issues as they emerge and to bring forth ideas and suggestions for Board consideration.

**The Peer Services Committee (PSC)** was reinstated in February 2021 and has been meeting regularly. The Terms of Reference were revised and are available on request.

The S.O.A.R. Peer Support Training Team revised the screening, interview, scoring and evaluation criteria and protocols. Survivors applying for peer support training should be sufficiently healed to be ready to work in the community and, while being supported by the Mentor, remain with S.O.A.R. for 2 years.

In October 2020, S.O.A.R. hired a Mentor as a pilot project to support trainees taking the training that was completed in March 2021. The Mentor was so successful that S.O.A.R. wanted to maintain this position.

S.O.A.R. was awarded a Mental Health Foundation of NS grant for a Peer Mentor to support those peer supporters already trained along with the trainees in the 2<sup>nd</sup> training begun in September. With additional funding from the Department of Health and Wellness grant, S.O.A.R. hired a Mentor for the April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 term. The Mentor developed the program and training so that experienced S.O.A.R. peer supporters with leadership qualities could be trained to be mentors, thus sustaining the program. One peer supporter was trained in August, and two will be trained in November.

The number of people helped over this past year has increased with a mentor being available to answer inquiries and follow up with survivors on the waitlist. This includes:

- 17 peers wanting group services
- 36 phone inquiries about S.O.A.R.
- 20 survivors wanting to take peer support training
- 31 peers wanting a peer supporter
- 15 individuals asking for resources on sexual abuse/trauma
- 5 professional therapists wanting information
- 5 MLA's looking for information about what is available in S.O.A.R.
- CMHA asking about the peer support program
- DCS and Child Welfare wanting information about S.O.A.R.
- Peer Support Nova Scotia

A more extensive evaluation of the Peer Mentor Program will be done at the end of this term (March 31 2022).

During the summer, the PSC reassessed the boundaries of the criminal records check for peer supporters, so that S.O.A.R. could consider strong, knowledgeable people already employed in a peer support capacity but having a past non-violent criminal record. We developed and documented our risk management strategy and in the future, with a set of specific protocols, we will consider survivors with past non-violent criminal records.

In addition, the PSC developed or revised the following:

- new and/or revised policies for peer support strategies
- forms for peer supporters and peers, using the internet
- setting up Zoom and/or Google Meet for peer supporters to meet with peers
- complaints process for S.O.A.R. members and peers
- skills of committee members
- peer support documents updated and moved to online use

Currently, the Peer Support Trainers are half way through the 2<sup>nd</sup> peer support training of 2021 and will be planning for another training starting in February 2022. The training team wants to continue the practice of having two training times each year.

The PSC is also committed to addressing the waitlist and how we can help survivors on the waitlist obtain support while they wait for a peer supporter. The Mentor, after conversation and brainstorming with the PSC, will hold some online support groups to address the situation, because some of the survivors on the waitlist have been waiting for a peer supporter for some time. The first group will start on November 1, 2021 with 8-10 participants.

There is a lot of work to do in S.O.A.R. because the organization's main theme is always about providing quality peer support to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The PSC continues to work at providing a peer support service, both individual and group, to survivors.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Karen Martin, Chair**