



Policy Title: Screening and Selection of Peer Supporter Trainees
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Approved by: S.O.A.R. Board of Directors
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Approval Date: 9 Feb 2022
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This policy outlines the approved method of screening and selecting trainees for S.O.A.R.'s Peer Supporter Program.

S.O.A.R. works with vulnerable people and takes its responsibilities very seriously, so all applicants to the Peer Supporter training program must be screened thoroughly for appropriateness. Also, peer supporter trainees require a Criminal Records and Vulnerable Persons Check done at a local police or RCMP office.

Refer to S.O.A.R.'s Risk Management Directive (below) for information regarding criminal record checks.

### **Peer Supporter Trainee Criteria**

- 1) Trainees will attend an interview meeting with S.O.A.R. trainers. The results of the interview will be shared with the trainee and reasons why they were or were not accepted into the peer support training.
- 2) Trainees will attend all 48 hours of S.O.A.R.'s Peer Supporter training program.
- 3) Trainees will not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs (recreational or illicit) while attending S.O.A.R. training(s) or activities.
- 4) Trainees agree to a 2-year volunteer commitment with S.O.A.R. as an active peer supporter and member.
- 5) Trainees will provide individual peer support services to peer clients who have been matched with them by S.O.A.R.'s Peer Supporter Mentor.
- 6) Trainees agree to mentorship and supervision while providing peer supporter services.
- 7) Trainees will attend the Peer Supporter Group meetings, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month (no meetings in July, August and December).
- 8) Trainees will have never sexually abused another child or knowingly assisted in the sexual abuse of a child.

### **Responsibilities of Peer Supporters**

- 1) Being a peer supporter is a challenging task and no one should do it in isolation. Therefore, S.O.A.R. asks its volunteers to attend the Peer Supporter monthly meetings to stay connected and gain support and knowledge from each other and with each other.
- 2) Peer supporting can be intense and it is not unusual for new peer supporters to feel triggered during or after a session. Peer Supporters are encouraged to reach out to the S.O.A.R. Peer Supporter Mentor or one of the trainers for support if they are feeling triggered.



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- 3) All peer supporters will adhere to the Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics for peer supporters.
- 4) Peer supporters will meet as agreed with their peer clients.
- 5) Peer supporters will meet all requirements of S.O.A.R. for gathering statistics and for online submission to the Mentor/Coordinator after each session. Clients are identified by number only.



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

S.O.A.R. has taken significant steps to ensure stringent acceptance criterion and expectations are met by the applicants.

### **Risk Management for S.O.A.R**

The risk identified regarding the acceptance of persons with a criminal record are that people who have a criminal record may exhibit violence, threatening behaviours and/or create an environment of fear. This could lead to the following categories of risk to S.O.A.R

#### **Operational Risks**

- Injury and a lawsuit, damaged reputation
- Inadequate supervision of staff or volunteers.
- Inadequate record keeping

#### **Strategy:**

Accept and manage the risk. This can be done by taking prudent, practical steps to reduce the risk, e.g. selection process, training, supervision etc.

#### **Risk Policy:**

The purpose of this risk policy is to accept a wider range of members into the organization. That is, to accept people who have a criminal record from the past and have moved beyond their past to become contributing citizens in their communities.

#### **Risk Management Process:**

##### **1) Screening Criteria:**

- a) In recognition that we have a commitment to a genuinely accessible service, we recognize the heightened criminalization of traditionally marginalized peoples so having a blanket protocol that dismisses candidates for having a criminal record is inconsistent with our values and requires a more nuanced response.
- b) Any vulnerable sector search that turns up something is grounds for an applicant not being accepted regardless of mitigating circumstances or length of time since offence.
- c) Any criminal record that arises is reviewed with the individual under the following guidelines;
  - a. Unbiased and open conversation with the individual to identify background, mitigating circumstances, and potentially more appropriate roles if fall outside of guidelines.
  - b. Generally, we do not accept someone if criminal activity was within last 5 years (unless there is a significant mitigating circumstance, but this would be very unusual).
  - c. Generally, we do not accept someone if the criminal activity related to violence even beyond 5 years unless there is a significant mitigating circumstance (e.g. was 10+ years ago or during youth when there was a unique stressor in the applicant's life that has since



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been rectified such as housing insecurity or self-defence within an Intimate Partner Violence situation).

- d. Generally, we do not accept someone if the criminal activity related to fraud/abuse of trust in some form even beyond 5 years unless there is a significant mitigating circumstance.
- e. Any criminal charge related to a substance use issue beyond 5 years is reviewed to identify if the person has addressed the addiction issue.
- f. We find most times when people have a criminal record, they are aware and will raise it with us (Training/Screening Team) early in the application process. If it falls outside the guidelines (e.g. is older than 5 years but relates to violence, addiction, or fraud/abuse of trust charges), there is a conversation to identify the mitigating circumstances and what has occurred to correct this issue. Anything in this area is brought to the Peer Services Committee for discussion and unanimous decision. If there is doubt, the individual is redirected to another role or agency.

## 2) **Application & Screening:**

- a) Each applicant must undergo a Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Check.
- b) If the applicant has a positive result from the “Criminal Record Check”, they will be interviewed to assess if it constitutes a denial of acceptance as listed in the Screening Criteria above.
- c) Any applicant who has a positive “Vulnerable Sector Check” will not be accepted.
- d) Each applicant is required to complete an application form asking basic questions regarding their goals and level of personal healing.
- e) Each applicant is sent criteria for acceptance and a list of expectations for S.O.A.R. peer supporters.
- f) Each applicant undergoes a 45-minute interview inquiring about their past, recovery process, number and quality of their supports, current life style and stressors, involvement with the law, etc.
- g) Each applicant must provide a reference from a reputable source – a source who has had significant dealings with the candidate and has a position of authority.

## 3) **Record Keeping:**

- a) An interview form is completed by each Trainer and contains written comments under the various topics described above.
- b) Each interview form is scored separately by each trainer.
- c) Only those who score 80% or above are accepted to take the training to be a peer supporter.
- d) Following the completion of the interview and scoring, the interviewers discuss the applicant’s eligibility to take the peer support training.
- e) Copies of the interviews are kept and stored in a secure place.



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#### 4) **Peer Support Training:**

- a) Each trainee is expected to attend ALL the training sessions.
- b) Each trainee is evaluated after they begin training and after each session based on the following headings: attendance, red flags, participation and trainer comments.
- c) Each trainee completes a questionnaire following each of the three modules, providing feedback to the trainers related to their progress as peer supporters.
- d) Every session includes the involvement of the peer mentor so that the expectation that close contact with the peer mentor is established during the training period.
- e) Each trainee provides feedback to the trainers about the training program after each module is completed.
- f) The trainees work closely together throughout the training period and flag their concerns (if any) to the trainers.

#### 5) **Completion of Training:**

- a) Each trainee is interviewed (45 minutes) following completion of the 48-hour peer support training program to assess for ability to be a peer supporter, and
- b) Each trainee is assessed for ability to report to and be regularly supervised by the peer mentor.
- c) Peer supporters are expected to attend monthly peer supporter meetings. This is an expectation that is now being strongly encouraged before they are accepted into the training program, during the training program and upon completion of the training program. If they don't attend, they are contacted by the Peer mentor.

#### 6) **Peer Mentoring:**

- a) Each peer supporter has regular supervision and support from the peer mentor.
- b) The peer mentor reports to the Peer Services Committee.
- c) The peer mentor meets bi-monthly with two members of the Peer Services Committee for supervision, support, guidance and to address any concerns with the Peer Mentorship Program.
- d) The peer mentor contacts the peer clients for feedback regarding their peer support experiences following each 6-session interval, or more frequently if there is a need, and when the peer supporting service ends.
- e) The peer mentor sends an evaluation form to the peer client upon completion of the peer support service for written feedback regarding their experience of being supported by a peer supporter.
- f) S.O.A.R. builds peer mentorship capacity and sustainability within the organization by offering training peer mentor and coaching peer supporters who show and want leadership roles in the S.O.A.R. organization.



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**7) Peer Supporting:**

- a) Each peer supporter is expected to attend monthly peer supporter meetings. See above re: not attending.
- b) Each peer supporter maintains a log of the peer sessions as a peer supporter and submits the log to the peer mentor.
- c) Each peer supporter may use a specific online platform which is approved by S.O.A.R. to meet with their peer client.
- d) Each peer supporter may meet their peer survivor(s) at S.O.A.R.- approved peer support locations, online or by telephone.
- e) Every peer survivor/client is provided with an evaluation form that is mailed directly to the Peer Mentor.

**8) Other Considerations**

- a) This policy will be evaluated and updated on a bi-yearly basis (or more frequently if needed) by the Peer Services Committee and a report sent to the S.O.A.R. board by the Peer Services Committee chairperson.
- b) The liability insurance fully covers S.O.A.R. and does not indicate any issues or concerns that would affect insuring S.O.A.R. with the inclusion of peer supporters who have a criminal record if the above policies and practices are followed.
- c) "Peer Trainer" policies are in place in the S.O.A.R. organization.
- d) Certification and decertification policies exist within S.O.A.R. regarding S.O.A.R members who have breached the peer support roles, ethics and responsibilities.

Due diligence to the above processes will mitigate any risks for the S.O.A.R. organization and to the peer clients related to accepting applicant(s) with a criminal record.