



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

I Introduction

Peer support has been a strong and increasingly prevalent component of a behavioral health continuum of care in Massachusetts for more than 40 years, starting with the founding of peer advocacy organizations in the 1970's and peer support centers in the 1980's. Peer supporters build relationships with people with mental health and substance use conditions based on mutual hope, encouragement, connection, understanding, information and/or assistance. A summary of identified peer roles in Massachusetts is attached as Appendix A.

Unfortunately, many of the people served by mental health and substance use programming in Massachusetts struggle with access to affordable housing and maintaining their stability in housing. For this reason, peer supporters frequently support individuals who are homeless, in the process of obtaining housing through private or public payers, or struggling to maintain housing. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) sought to explore how peer supporters are navigating this very important component of a person's health and social service needs, and whether there is a need for additional support for peer supporters to perform this role.

DMH retained the services of the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH) to convene a series of dialogues across the state to ask peer supporters these questions. Below is a report on the results of that work.

II Composition of Steering Committee

Under the leadership of the State Mental Health Planning Council Housing Subcommittee and with financial support from DMH, MAMH established a Steering Committee to initiate and facilitate the conversations. The Steering Committee reflected regional and role diversity, with peer workers comprising the majority of the representation:

- Co-Chair Earl Miller, Director of Recovery for the Western Massachusetts region for DMH
- Co-Chair Jill Gichuhi, Director, COMPASS Helpline, National Alliance for Mental Illness of MA
- Jonathan Bowen-Leopold, Peer Network Advocate, DMH
- Joe Vallely, Housing Director, DMH
- Danna Mauch, President and CEO, MAMH
- Chris Zabik, Housing Coordinator, DMH Western MA Area
- Keith Scott, VP Peer Support and Self-Advocacy, Advocates
- Adrienne Cassidy, Director of Housing, Advocates
- Brenda Vezina, CEO/Executive Director, Kiva Centers
- Justin Brown, Director of Rehabilitation and Recovery, DMH Northeast Area
- Sandra Whitney-Sarles, Director, Southeast Recovery Learning Community
- Lorelai Lyons, Peer Support Coordinator, ACCS, Bay Cove Human Services
- Catherine Quinerly, Director of Recovery and Human Rights Coordinator, DMH Metro Boston
- Yuka Gordon, Director, Metro Boston Recovery Learning Community (MBRLC)
- Howard Trachtman, Executive team member, MBRLC
- Anne Whitman, Chairperson, MBRLC

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III Literature Review and Environmental Scan

Peer support is a relationship between people with similar experiences that helps people with mental health and substance use conditions served by the peer supporter role to achieve their goals – a mutually valuable exchange of hope, encouragement, connection, understanding, information and/or assistance. The Steering Committee identified several roles for peer support workers in Massachusetts who may support people in finding and maintaining, including the following roles (this list is not exhaustive):

- **(Certified) Peer Specialists:** people who support others as they find wellness. Those who go through the training provided by the Massachusetts Transformation Center become certified.
- **Peer Mentors:** people who offer support and role modeling, most often in spaces for young people.
- **Peer Bridgers:** people who support individuals as they transition out of institutional environments, like hospitals or the correctional system, and help them reconnect to the community.
- **Informal Peer Supporters:** people who informally support neighbors or others in their own community.

There is not a lot of literature on the role of peer supporters in finding and maintaining housing. There is some limited literature on the role of peer supporters as part of service teams serving individuals experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, including in Housing First team-based programs.

“Peer support staff understand how clients feel after they are housed, and what it’s like adjusting to a new home and a new community. Peers can offer practical help with basic needs and everyday living, such as finding the right grocery store or laundromat. Providing this meaningful and practical assistance with day-to-day struggles and offering effective and sustained support is the basis of a caring and trusting relationship, and hopefully serves as a model for developing other relationships.”¹

A person experiencing homelessness may perceive formal, professional help as creating a ‘professional distance’ that may pose subtle barriers to interpersonal relationship building. Formal rules of conduct, agency policies and procedures, and professional standards of ethics are essential in mental health and substance use treatment because they keep employees and persons receiving support safe. However, the barriers they pose to relationship building cannot be overcome unless their existence is acknowledged. Some peer supporters work to complement and expand the capability of service teams to provide support services. However, peer supporters are often willing and able to work with more flexibility and may be more attuned to the needs of the people being served. This can pose a source of conflict within an agency; we note some such disagreement on the appropriate role of peer supporters in the housing context in this report.

“Peers are excellent at community integration work. Peers can help clients and team members manage expectations about how much and how quickly life changes after housing and also help

¹ <https://bfzcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/WHY-WE-HIRE-PEER-SPECIALISTS-AS-STAFF-IN-HF-JULY-2018.pdf>

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clients to develop the life skills needed for successful tenancy. Peers can address needs for socialization and support during that critical period of 6-12 months after a person is housed in order to prevent them from falling out of housing.”²

There is almost no literature pertaining to training for peer supporters on housing services. One Canadian study noted that elements of peer support cited by participants include the idea that peers don’t need to be experts in local service options.^{3, 4} Despite expertise in housing service options not being a requirement for the role, some peer supporters in Massachusetts believe that it would be advantageous to their work to receive training on available housing supports.

Internet research failed to yield many examples of training programs for peer supporters to specifically support housing needs. One example training program we found comes from California, providing a 40-hour classroom training with an additional 6 months of monthly post-training implementation tracking. Training competency modules include:⁵

- Wellness and Recovery Model
- Identify and Screen Homeless Individuals
- Learn to Navigate the LA County Coordinated Entry System
- Steps to Secure Permanent Housing
- Tenant Rights/Housing Rights
- Housing Retention Services
- Ethical/Professional Boundaries
- Communication and Advocacy Skills
- Case Management Skills
- Integrated Care Interventions and Linkage
- Management of Independent Living Skills
- Managing Crisis Situations
- Dissemination of Resources

Another California-based organization was found to be hiring specifically for “Peer Housing Support Specialists” to join Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams.⁶ This person is intended to help a FACT team provide housing and related services to program partners and peer support to obtain and maintain housing and independent living. This includes providing on-going rehabilitation in the areas of daily living and money management.

² IBID.

³ <https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/how-does-peer-support-work-context-homelessness>

⁴ <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/419993/>

⁵ <http://www.cvent.com/events/peer-housing-specialist-certification-training-course-1812-r-/event-summary-3760abe0d80c4b7190ab8faa74efb90a.aspx>

⁶ <http://www.ebcrcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/FACT-Peer-Housing-Support-Specialist-29.01.16.pdf>

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In Washington State, *Trueblood* criminal justice diversion services targeted to persons with behavioral health and disability conditions employ peer supporters in locating housing and related support services. Peer support staff are integral to diversion and reentry support teams.

IV Area Dialogue Summary

In Area dialogues, Massachusetts peer supporters discussed topics using themes of: roles and the peer code of ethics; helping/supporting persons receiving support as they find housing; helping/supporting persons receiving support as they maintain housing; what trainings already exist; and any recommendations for future action. A summary of discussions highlighting shared themes and unique regional differences follows. Full thematic notes from the area dialogues is attached as Appendix B.

- Roles and Code of Ethics
 - Peer supporters presented their roles, including a peer bridger who helps people transition from hospital to community; a peer housing supporter employed by an RLC who helps people who are unhoused find housing and supports people in housing; and a peer supporter in an Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) setting.
 - Many thought that **providers don't understand the peer role** well.
 - There were discussions about '**risk management**'/'**safety**' of the individual being served, and the idea that self-determination of the riskiness of your own decision making provides the same level of dignity as people who are not served. Peer supporters may play more of a role of managing clinical staff's anxiety over client choices.
 - **Cultural issues and needs** of people being served were discussed; peer supporters can support those needs.
 - A topic that came up at some but not all area meetings was **role drift**, where some peer supporters are concerned that a lack of capacity from housing coordinators may leave peer supporters in a position to be picking up the slack and taking on the role of the agency instead of a supportive role for the individual.
- Finding Housing
 - Moving into a single apartment from the streets, from a GLE, from the hospital, etc. can be lonely and scary. Peer supporters stressed their role as helping to **empower people** in their decision making process and helping them to explore all options on their own terms (not on the terms of the clinical team).
 - There can be loss associated with going from the street (or other settings) to housing – how to help people navigate the choice and their grief. Peer supporters can help especially support the choice to be unhoused. Peer supporters can also help a person explore their community of residence preferences, which is often not explored by other roles on a clinical team.
 - There can be a lot of pressure on people to accept housing that is offered; people often feel like they aren't a decision-maker. Peer supporters can help them understand their own preferences and articulate them.

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- Many peer supporters described providing **hands-on help** (helping people obtain identification, look at apartments, etc.), though some described much more passive roles (making a referral to a housing specialist).
- Affordability is a challenge cited in many of the areas.
- People’s criminal records can be a barrier in the housing search.
- One area discussed disparities and discrimination in housing, and the fact that people peer supporters tend to work with tend to have very limited choice in where they live due to discrimination.
- Maintaining Housing
 - Some peer supporters described having a very **hands-on** role, helping a person to navigating their new community finding grocery stores, etc.
 - Peer supporters can help people to **heal from the trauma** of the streets.
 - Peer supporters described helping people **develop skills and educating people**.
 - Helping people understand what is expected of them with the recertification and inspection process.
 - Educating people on their rights as tenants.
 - Peer supporters described helping to **manage expectations** both for people being housed and clinical teams.
 - Dialogues focused on the idea of **empowerment** of the individual and their choices; the peer supporter can be an advocate for the person, while a housing coordinator develops a relationship with landlords.
 - Peer supporters can help with **conflict de-escalation**.
- Trainings
 - There really **isn’t formal training** specific to supporting people who are finding and maintaining housing; **most peer supporters learn by doing**.
 - Differences/disparity between Certified Peer Specialist training and Recovery Coach training.
- Recommendations
 - There could be **inter-disciplinary team meetings/cross-training**/more coordination and collaboration between peer supporters and housing coordinators.
 - More trainings could be helpful, including Motivational Interviewing and trainings on housing resources and tenant rights.
 - Expand **contingency fund** that currently exists for ACCS for free stuff so that it is accessible to peer supporters in non-ACCS housing support roles.
 - **More diversity in the housing models** we offer is needed.
 - GLE’s for parents with kids.
 - Peer respite.

V Survey and Results

The Steering Committee conducted a pre-dialogue survey to supplement the environmental scan and provide information as to the current linkages between peer support and housing in the Commonwealth. The full survey text is attached as Appendix C to this report.

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A full PowerPoint presentation discussing the results of the survey is attached as Appendix D of this report. There were 34 responses, 50% of which were from Certified Peer Specialists (CPS), another 12% of which were peer supporters in other roles, and 16% of which were housing coordinators. 44% of respondents work for DMH, 31% work for ACCS, and 13% work for a Clubhouse or Recovery Learning Community (RLC). Key findings include:

- ACCS- and DMH-employed peer supporters tend to have a more hands-on approach, but workers from all peer roles said they did some housing support currently.
- There is some disagreement over what the scope of peer support role in housing support should be among peer supporters. Some peer supporters are worried about their role taking on a lot of the paperwork of navigating public housing programs, especially when those peer supporters feel like they have less available housing coordinators at their agency.
- Most of the supports peer supporters are currently getting to help them support persons in finding and maintaining housing are not standardized or institutional, but rather are more informal and relational. These supports tend to involve the peer supporter seeking out support networks of other peer supporters and seeking out information about the housing process from housing coordinators and others on their own time.
- There is agreement between peer supporters and housing coordinators that there should be more communication between these two roles. Peer supporters would like to know who to call when they are working with someone who needs housing, while housing coordinators believe peer supporters can be effective advocates helping the person better identify their goals/needs for housing.
- Peer supporters seek:
 - More information, which could come from training, on: tenant rights; understanding confidential information; understanding voucher systems and other subsidy programs; how leases work; how to access other benefits; connectivity between regions; and regular conversations about supporting people with housing.
 - Supports, like a platform for peer supporters to share their recovery as it pertains to housing with other peer supporters and their persons receiving support; mentoring; financial aid; a statewide database of housing that is user-friendly; more hours in the budget for housing training and work on housing; continuing education; and more specific training on supporting people in ‘tent cities’.
 - Resources for persons receiving support, like more peer-run supported living environments that include options for families; financial aid; free stuff (pillows, gift certificates, etc.); big meals together; and a group devoted to helping physically move people’s things and get furnishing, as well as understand their choices.
- Respondents agreed that there is a need for more training and discussion for employers and others on the role of peer supporters.

VI Findings and Recommendations

Some themes that emerged from the area dialogues and survey results include:

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- The role of the peer supporter as distinguished from the housing coordinator: they should be “complimentary but distinct roles.”
 - Emphasis should be on the idea that the peer supporter is doing with, not for, the person served. The housing coordinator should be doing/coordinating the paperwork, while the peer supporter promotes the person’s voice/choice in the process of filling out the paperwork and navigating the options.
 - The peer supporter should be the advocate for the person receiving services, thus balancing the housing coordinator’s relationship with the landlord.
 - The peer supporter should be supporting the things that aren’t housing, but that support housing – the other social determinants of health (transportation, financial planning and budgeting, hygiene, etc.) and “everyday needs.”
 - The peer supporter can be the one laying out the options and their consequences for the person, but helping the person choose between options impartially (where the clinical team is not impartial).
- There was consensus that there isn’t much training related to housing for peer supporters, except for informal and experience-based learning of peer supporters by doing.
- Most housing coordinators and peer supporters believe housing coordinators know very little about the peer supporter role, and they think more information/introduction to the role and how it can be helpful in the housing process would be helpful. Housing coordinators tended to see peer supporters as valuable assets to the housing process.
- There was consensus that more coordination/collaboration/mutual understanding between housing coordinators and peer supporters is desired on both sides.

During the area dialogues, the distinct topics of “finding housing” and “maintaining housing” were separated because the activities of peer supporters and housing specialists differ. However, when it comes to the role of peer support, the Steering Committee found that the peer supporter role can be a critical bridge between the two distinct topics. A person’s housing needs may not be satisfied fully by the initial housing placement, and further, people’s housing needs and desires can change over time. Therefore, they posed the question: how can DMH and partner agencies support people’s decision-making about where to live over the course of their involvement? For example, if a person has been housed but would benefit from moving, how can they be supported?

Based on the themes that came from the area dialogues and survey results, the Steering Committee made the following recommendations related to **finding and maintaining housing**:

1. **Provide more resources for peer supporters**: Classic housing system challenges are big barriers to housing. These include the problem of documentation of “homelessness” for the purpose of qualifying for Emergency Shelter or other state and federal housing programs. Peer supporters might have this experience themselves, and understand options for the long period of time it takes to go from unhoused to housed. Peer supporters are uniquely situated to help people navigate this extended period of uncertainty.
 - **Expanding access to the contingency fund** (and change the terminology to “**flexible funding**”) to non-ACCS and non-PACT programs like RLCs to provide free stuff like pillows. Prioritize not leaving people alone in an apartment without support.

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2. Peer supporters should help people determine what they want out of housing, and advocate for it: Peer supporters are well situated to help people decide between types of housing, and what meets their needs/desires (group homes vs single-occupancy apartments, for example).
3. Teach Housing First principles: All of those involved in the process of finding and maintaining housing need to have a better understanding of Housing First as a model and what it means for services/leases/etc.

Dialogue among participants across the Commonwealth made clear that finding and maintaining housing is a challenge system-wide, not only for peer supporters, and that it is under-funded and under-staffed across the board. While peer supporters are very likely to come across persons receiving services who are unhoused or have challenges maintaining housing, the peer support role ought to be promoting the person's own choice and decision-making process. The support role is strained when there aren't enough housing coordinators, or enough housing resources to help everyone who needs housing obtain and maintain it. The support role is compromised, however, when provider agencies ask peer supporters to play roles in the lives of those they support that are more clinical or that are promoting the interests of an agency or landlord.

For this reason, the Steering Committee has recommended the following related to the various **roles played in supporting people living with mental health and substance use conditions:**

1. Helping employers/provider entities to better understand the peer role and better support peer support workers by:
 - **Balancing power dynamics** between service providers and prioritizing relationships with the person served.
 - **Providing resources** that are critical to the success of peer supporters and to the success of the people served, like things that are critical to newly housed individuals (pillows, personal hygiene items, etc.).
 - Thinking more critically about the different supports that are needed for the different provider entity types that employ peer supporters, based on the differences in how those entities interact with persons served. ACCS providers have housing coordinators and peer supporters, and explicitly work with persons served to find and maintain housing. Recovery Learning Communities and Clubhouses have a less linear but not less important role to play in supporting people's housing search and tenancy. How can DMH support RLCs and Clubhouses? How can RLCs and Clubhouses better support peer supporters and people seeking/maintaining housing?
2. Expanding the number/type of peer supporter positions/roles that support housing and recruit a peer supporter workforce that has more lived experience with being unhoused:
 - **More funding for peer supporter roles** that help people more explicitly with housing, including more peer bridger and informal peer supporter roles, would help provide critical resources to people struggling with finding and maintaining housing. Additional funding should address existing regional variation in the availability of peer bridgers.
 - Peer supporter recruitment should **incorporate living unhoused into the idea of peer support**. We should explicitly recruit more people who have lived experience with "life-interrupting challenges" into the peer workforce.

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3. Increasing communication, coordination, and mutual understanding between housing coordinators and peer supporters by:
 - Developing **interdisciplinary teams** supported by DMH across the state to rectify the lack of knowledge on many sides.
 - Role of risk tolerance – peer supporters can help support the dignity of risk. Harm reduction. This could be a place to explore biases.
 - Broad view of “interdisciplinary” – peer bridgers/hospital peers/housing coordinators/etc.
 - Incorporating homelessness into the idea of peer support – we need peers who have been homeless. Incorporating peer workers who have been homeless into advisory roles.
 - Peer support workers should have an opportunity to meet with the housing coordinators.
 - Helping housing coordinators better work with peer supporters and better understand the peer support resources that exist. Housing coordinators are under intense pressure from DMH to house people quickly, which in turn increases the pressure on people served to make decisions about their lives quickly. Since the peer role in housing is viewed as helping people to explore their options and make decisions that are right for them, the pressure for rapid decision-making on something as central to a person’s life as where they will live increases the intensity of the need for the peer role. More coordination between peer supporters, housing coordinators, and persons served would help in this decision-making process, but requires more billable time for both housing coordinators and peer supporters to accomplish.
 - If there were more housing coordinator time available, it was recommended that they become more familiar with the work of Recovery Learning Communities.
 - Helping peer supporters learn more about housing coordinator’s roles, including helping them understand:
 - How often housing coordinators meet/communicate with persons receiving support before/after submitting applications.
 - How long housing coordinators follow up with persons receiving support after getting apartments/group homes.
 - If housing coordinators are not doing the jobs they are supposed to do, what should/could peer supporters do?
4. Better circulate housing resources: There is a good amount of **training/material that exists for peer supporters**, but some peer supporters might not want it or don’t know where it is located. DMH and provider entities should more widely circulate these, included as Appendix E.
 - Independent Living Center trainings – Boston Center for Independent Living offers these trainings twice a month. Peer supporters should be made more aware of resources like this for peer-led/non-traditional supports.
5. There is potential for peer-to-peer and agency-to-consumer wisdom sharing through informal peer roles, direct-to-consumer training, group sessions and workshops on how to be a good tenant or how to be assertive with your housing coordinator, etc.



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APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF PEER AND OTHER ROLES RELATED TO HOUSING

People You May Encounter When Supporting Someone Around Housing

position	what they do	how they help with housing	training	where to find them	who can access
(Certified) Peer Specialists	<p>(Certified) Peer Specialists are people who support others as they find wellness.</p> <p>This support may be one on one or within a group.</p> <p>Peer Specialists may also help the people they support with self-advocacy.</p>	<p>How Peer Specialists support people with finding housing can vary greatly, from region to region and across environments they work in.</p> <p>Peer Specialists most often support people with the emotional aspects of finding or keeping housing. For example, they may offer someone support around the frustration of a housing search.</p> <p>Peer Specialists may also help people with self-advocacy around housing, for example, helping someone articulate preferences for where they want to live.</p> <p>In some cases, Peer Specialists work more hands-on with the person they support. This may include helping them fill out paperwork.</p>	<p>Massachusetts Certified Peer Specialist Training or another peer specialist certification program</p> <p>maybe additional training around group facilitation, recovery planning, trauma-informed peer support, and other topics</p>	<p>in Recovery Learning Communities</p> <p>in peer respites and other peer-based crisis alternatives</p> <p>as team members in Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS)</p> <p>as team members in Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT)</p> <p>in DMH-operated inpatient units in state hospitals and community mental health centers</p> <p>in some other inpatient psychiatric units</p> <p>as team members in Emergency Services Programs (ESPs)</p> <p>within other community behavioral health services, including day and partial programs</p> <p>sometimes in non-behavioral health environments like homeless shelters, elder serving agencies, and the correctional system</p>	<p>for RLCs - anyone</p> <p>for other places - people who participate in that program</p>



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<p>Peer Mentors</p>	<p>Peer Mentors are people who offer support and role modeling.</p> <p>They are often young people supporting other young people.</p>	<p>Peer Mentors most often support people with the emotional aspects of finding or keeping housing, and with self-advocacy around housing.</p>	<p>Gathering Inspiring Future Talent (GIFT) training or the Massachusetts Certified Peer Specialist Training</p> <p>maybe additional training around group facilitation, recovery planning, trauma-informed peer support, and other topics</p>	<p>in young adult centers in early psychosis programs in other programs that support young people</p>	<p>generally for young people people who participate in that program</p>
<p>Peer Bridgers</p>	<p>Peer Bridgers support people as they transition out of institutional environments, like hospitals or the correctional system, and help them reconnect to the community.</p>	<p>Peer Bridgers most often support people with the emotional aspects of finding or keeping housing, and with self-advocacy around housing.</p> <p>They also help connect people to community resources that can help them with housing.</p>	<p>Certified Peer Specialist Training or another peer specialist certification program</p> <p>maybe additional training around group facilitation, recovery planning, trauma-informed peer support, and other topics</p>	<p>based in Recovery Learning Communities</p>	<p>people who are identified by DMH or who self identify and meet program criteria</p>
<p>Housing Specialists</p>	<p>Housing Specialists help people with finding and keeping housing, support other team staff with housing-related tasks, and manage housing</p>	<p>Housing Specialists help people with all aspects of finding housing, including looking for openings, filling out paperwork, and meeting with landlords.</p> <p>Housing Specialists also help</p>		<p>as team members in Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) as team members in Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT)</p>	<p>people who participate in that program</p>

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	contracts and subsidies.	people with keeping housing, including helping the person understand their housing-related responsibilities, and working with landlords and ACCS/PACT team members around challenges.			
DMH Area Housing Coordinators	Provides oversight and management of DMH housing resources including Rental Subsidy Program, Set-Aside, Facilities Consolidation Fund, ch.689, along other state and federal housing programs. Collaborate and assist providers, housing developers, Local Housing Authorities and municipalities.	Track Area housing resources in collaboration with service providers. Consult on all matters related to housing subsidies and housing development. Seek out partnerships that serve to expand available housing opportunities.		Assigned to DMH Area offices.	Available to assist DMH staff, service providers, not-for-profit and for-profit housing agencies and municipalities.
Recovery Coaches	Recovery Coaches guide, mentor, and support people who are in substance use recovery. They are usually (but not always) people	Recovery Coaches most often support people with the emotional aspects of finding or keeping housing, and the impact this has on the person's recovery.	Recovery Coach Academy or the Peer Recovery Support Specialist program	in DPH peer recovery centers in substance use urgency care programs in emergency rooms as team members in Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS)	in PRCs - anyone for other places - people who participate in that program



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	who are in recovery themselves			within other community behavioral health services	
Behavioral Health Community Partners	<p>A behavioral health community partner (BHCP) organizes care and facilitates communication across medical, behavioral health, and long-term services.</p> <p>They also help people navigate systems and connect with community resources.</p>	<p>Connect people to resources for finding or keeping housing. Can help with applications.</p>	<p>generally bachelor-level staff with a background in social work or human services</p>	<p>BHCP teams are based within behavioral health provider organizations</p>	<p>people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) with a MassHealth MCO or ACO or DMH ACCS 2) have a mental health or substance use disorder diagnosis 3) meet the criteria for the program
Long Term Supports Community Partner	<p>A Long Term Supports Community Partners (LTSCP) organizes care and facilitates communication across medical, behavioral health, and long-term services.</p> <p>They also help people navigate systems and connect with community resources.</p>	<p>Connect people to resources for finding or keeping housing. Can help with applications.</p>	<p>generally bachelor-level staff with a background in social work or human services</p>	<p>BHCP teams are based within independent living centers, elder service agencies, behavioral health provider organizations, and other organizations providing care to people with disabilities</p>	<p>people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) with a MassHealth MCO or ACO or DMH ACCS 2) have a primary disability that is not a mental health or substance use disorder diagnosis



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					(though that could be secondary) 3) meet the criteria for the program
Community Support Programs	<p>CSPs provide short-term, flexible services and support for people who are. CSPs often support people who are currently or recently hospitalized, to help support the transition back to the community.</p> <p>CSPs help people connect to community resources that can support their wellness. This can include mental health treatment, peer support, transportation, public benefits, housing, and food resources.</p>	Connect people to resources for finding or keeping housing. Can help with applications.	generally bachelor-level staff with a background in social work or human services	CSP teams are based within behavioral health provider organizations	<p>people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) with a MassHealth (including OneCare) 2) have a mental health or substance use disorder diagnosis 3) at risk for being hospitalized for mental health symptoms or substance use issues <p>CSPs serve people with MassHealth, including OneCare. Some CSPs also support people with Medicare as their only insurance. CSP</p>



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					workers are generally bachelor-level staff with a background in social work.
Community Support Programs for People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness	CSPECHs provides support to people who have a mental health or substance use diagnosis and who are experiencing chronic homelessness.	They help people connect to community resources that can support their wellness and better enable them to maintain long-term housing. This can include mental health treatment, peer support, transportation, public benefits, housing, and food resources.	generally bachelor-level staff with a background in social work or human services	CSPECH teams are based within behavioral health provider organizations, shelters, and organizations that support people who are homeless	people: 1) with a MassHealth (including OneCare) 2) have a mental health or substance use disorder diagnosis 3) experiencing chronic homelessness (as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development). 4) people who participate in a Housing First program or are eligible to participate



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Housing-Related Organizations		
Places That Can Help With Housing (find or keep)	Places That Can Offer Housing	Resolving Issues with Housing
<p>Local Independent Living Center</p> <p>Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are run by and for people with disabilities. They help people explore options and supports for living independently, and often help people with finding housing.</p> <p>ILCs can tell people about housing options, show them how to search for housing, help them fill out housing applications, and help them ask for housing accommodations. Many ILCs offer free workshops about housing, which can be a good place to start with your search.</p>	<p>Local Housing Authority (LHA)</p> <p>There are 240+ LHAs in Massachusetts. LHAs manage and operate housing assistance programs. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state aided public housing for families • state aided public housing for elders and people with disabilities • federal public housing • Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program • Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program • Alternative Housing Voucher Program • potentially other federal housing vouchers • “special needs” housing (referral via DMH or DDS) 	<p>Housing Courts</p> <p>The Housing Court is a Trial Court Department that has jurisdiction over civil and criminal actions, including equitable relief, which involve the health, safety, or welfare of the occupants or owners of residential housing.</p> <p>This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary process (eviction) cases • small claims cases • consumer protection cases • civil actions involving health, safety, or welfare of the occupants or owners of residential housing, including cases with personal injury, property damage, breach of contract, and discrimination claims • appeals of local zoning board decisions that affect residential housing • appeals of tickets issued by state and local code enforcement agencies and



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		the state fire marshal's office
<p>local Housing Consumer Education Center</p> <p>Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) are programs that help people make informed decisions about their housing situation. HCECs are co-located at Regional Housing Authorities.</p> <p>HCECs provide housing search assistance, budget counseling, utility assistance, information about housing rights, help accessing rental assistance programs, and more.</p>	<p>Regional Housing Authority (RHA)</p> <p>There are 9 RHAs in Massachusetts. RHAs are regional non-profit organizations who manage and operate housing assistance programs. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program ● Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program ● Alternative Housing Voucher Program ● potentially other federal housing vouchers ● homelessness prevention supports ● other housing opportunities 	<p>Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)</p> <p>TPP is a homelessness prevention program. TPP works with tenants, including families with children with disabilities, facing eviction as a result of behavior related to a disability.</p>
<p>local Community Action Program</p> <p>Community Action Programs (CAPs) are organizations that help people and families gain self-sufficiency. They address the causes of poverty through programs that fight unemployment, inadequate housing, poor nutrition, and lack of educational opportunity.</p> <p>Many (but not all) CAPs can help someone with a housing search.</p>	<p>Mass Housing</p> <p>MassHousing is an independent, quasi-public agency that supports housing for people with low and moderate incomes. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● homebuyer/owner loans ● housing for people with low or moderate income ● workforce housing 	<p>Lawyer of the Day and Legal Aide?</p>
<p>Mass 2-1-1</p>	<p>Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)</p> <p>DHCD provides affordable housing options, financial</p>	<p>Approved Programs for Alternative Dispute Resolution Services??</p>



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

<p>Mass 2-1-1 is an information and referral service operated by the Department of Public Health and local United Way chapters. They specialize in helping people find resources to meet basic needs, including homeless shelters.</p>	<p>assistance, and other support to Massachusetts communities. They oversee some housing assistance programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HomeBASE and RAFT ● Emergency Assistance for homeless families and pregnant women 	
<p><u>If the person is already getting support from...</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) team ● a Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) team ● a Community Support Program (CSP) ● a Recovery Learning Community (RLC) ● a Behavioral Health Community Partner ● a Long Term Supports Community Partner ● a housing shelter ● their therapist or case/care manager 	<p><u>Other sources of housing...</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● DTA offices to connect with a DHCD worker (for families with children/teens) ● transitional housing programs through housing shelters ● some YMCAs (Greater Boston and North Shore) 	



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

APPENDIX B: AREA DIALOGUE THEMATIC NOTES

# Attendees	Western Area	Central Area	Northeast Area	Southeast Area	Metro Boston
# Attendees	7	13	26 ⁷	9	19

ROLES AND CODE OF ETHICS

Western	Central	Northeast	Southeast	Metro Boston
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unique role: peer housing supporter at RLC: shopping, transportation, legal, re-cert, getting an ID, supplies, housing court. - Can't fix every problem; most important is the person doesn't feel alone. - Providers don't understand the peer role – telling person they are late on rent is working for the provider, not the person. Most important thing is being there for person, not agency. - Letting people fail, but providing them information to make informed decision. - A housing coordinator said they always ask the peer if the person knows the peer is talking to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer bridger: Touring apartments for people, taking photos, exploring conflicts from the past, exploring support systems. A lot of pressure to take whatever DMH offers at hospital discharge; support person's decision making process – explore all options, even if some aren't the ones the 'system' is promoting. - Helping people feel confident managing their budget (multi-year process). - 'Risk management'/'safety': the dignity of risk is the right to choose where to live and whether to be housed; peers help clinical staff manage their worries about person; peers can help person understand options and consequences; 'safety' is a straw man: everybody lives with risk, but most people don't lose housing for risks. - Navigate with, not for. 	<p>Important role of peer supporters is to ensure cultural issues and needs are being addressed.</p>	<p>Role drift, and the line between emotional support for people finding housing and actually having the expertise in housing resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer role presentation: has experience being unhoused, and is hands-on with helping clients with housing. - Role drift: from peer support to doing administrative tasks involved in the housing search; this may be a direct result of limiting the number of housing coordinators hired.

⁷ The Northeast Area had the largest turnout thanks to leadership buy-in; the Area Director personally invited and recruited attendees.

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

FINDING HOUSING

Western	Central	Northeast	Southeast	MB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help person find housing coordinator and start pulling together paperwork in preparation (ID, birth certificate) - Affordability. - Shelter challenges: transportation; chaotic environment. - Respite helps people transition without sleeping on the street. - Unique to area: people siloed in communities due to transportation, affordability. - Having big, well-known org. helps a lot with landlords (CHD can get people into housing without meeting the landlord). - Disparities/discrimination: Springfield very segregated; persons afford to live in non-white areas, lack access to grocery stores; criminal histories and kicked out of places like Union Station; peers are overwhelmingly white. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss associated with finding housing (small apartment; losing sound of birds in the park for example). - A lot of people involved in finding housing; frustrating for all when it doesn't go well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordability. - Criminal records exclude people from subsidies. - Help people amplify their preferences for housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing specialist role is key. - Personal experience helped more than CPS. - Justice involvement makes this hard. - Honor choice to live homeless, help clinical team understand that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to support choice on location preference: where does the person want to live? How to support moving communities ?

MAINTAINING HOUSING

Western	Central	Northeast	Southeast	Metro Boston
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Navigating a community: where to get groceries, how to get around, where is spiritual center? - Healing from the trauma of the streets is arduous and finding community to help with that. - Recertification: staying with people through the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help develop skills (cleaning). - Managing lease violations. - Managing people's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes the peer is the only person who really listens or believes them. - Help people feel empowered that they can meet their own practical needs (transportation, budgeting, keeping appointments, etc.). - Housing coordinator said they develop strong connections to landlords— peer can balance that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources are slim in SE. - Support people in exploring options given the choices and consequences laid out by the system – transparency with the person and advocacy with the landlord/others. - De-escalation with roommates, staff conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspection is really stressful - This is hard at the RLC because people might stop coming once they



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

<p>can make them feel more comfortable/empowered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing expectations. - Housing coordinator said that people are much more successful at maintaining tenancy when they have a peer supporter. - Landlords/others can assume it's all about substance use. 	<p>preferences vs reality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educating people on their rights as tenants (what a 14-day notice to quit means). 	<p>through strong relationship with person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moving from GLE to apt. can be lonely. - Peer support is helpful but can also make it harder for a person to feel like it is their own home. - These are the things peer supporters do that aren't 'housing' but are key to housing success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help hands-on with cleaning, laundry, nutrition. Hard to go hands-on when not part of ACCS. - ACCS can't keep relationships after discharge; RLC/RCC has more flexibility. 	<p>get housing, but they might end up homeless months later.</p>
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TRAININGS

Western	CE	NE	SE	Metro Boston
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disparity between recovery coach and CPS training run by the Kiva Center. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consensus that there really isn't training. - Many in the peer field learn by doing when it comes to housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Western	Central	NE	SE	Metro Boston
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional trainings can't hurt. - How to get ID. - Motivational interviewing training. - Maybe there is a use for more inter-disciplinary team meetings, maybe even include person? - Contingency fund for peer-led organizations needed (RLCs) 	<p>Need more diversity in the housing models we offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Idea for GLE for families was raised – has 3 moms who could benefit because family shelters don't do MH support. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing coordinator /peer conflict can be mitigated through good peer supervision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desire for training on the type of housing available. - Desire for training on how to support people in transition. - Maybe don't need training, need a better process for referring people for housing. - Better process for peers/housing specialists to work together, understand each other/roles; cross training. - Difference between what people leaving hospitals get (financial counseling) vs people leaving shelters (get nothing).



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

and others like they have for ACS).	- Peer respite.			- There is a need for peer supporters to know more about what housing specialists do and vice versa.
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Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

APPENDIX C: PRE-DIALOGUE SURVEY

Section 1 of 4

Role of Peers in Housing Pre-Meeting Survey

This survey will inform a conversation on the role of peers in housing. You can fill out this survey whether or not you are attending the meeting. The information you provide is still helpful to us if you cannot attend!

What is your role?

- Certified Peer Specialist
- Certified Recovery Coach
- Peer Bridger
- Housing Coordinator
- Other...

What type of agency do you work for?

- DMH
- ACCS
- RLC
- Clubhouse
- PACT
- Other...

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

Section 2 of 4

Your Role



These questions are designed to provide information about your role specifically as it relates to housing.

How would you describe your role, as it relates to housing?

Long answer text

What supports do you get to help you with your role, as it relates to housing?

Long answer text

Have you received training for your role?

- Yes, I have received training specific to helping my clients find/maintain housing.
- Yes, I have received other training not specific to housing.
- No, I have not received training in my role.

Please describe the training you have received.

Long answer text

What are some best practices you have learned in this role, as they relate to housing?

Long answer text

What do you think would be helpful in this role, as it relates to helping clients obtain/retain housing?

Long answer text

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

Section 3 of 4

Your Agency



These questions are intended to tell us more about your agency's organizational capacity and supports for helping clients find housing.

Do you receive supervision?

- Yes: co-supervision
- Yes: peer-based supervision
- Yes: non-peer-based supervision
- No

Are there supports for you and your clients in seeking housing/maintaining housing that your agency provides? What are these supports?

Long answer text

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

Section 4 of 4

How Can the System Improve?



These questions are about how we can improve supports for clients in finding housing, and help peer supporters better assist clients.

What should the role of a peer supporter be in finding and maintaining housing?

Long answer text

What should the role of a client be in finding and maintaining housing?

Long answer text

Is there a need for additional training for peer supporters on housing resources?

Yes

No

Explain.

Long answer text

Is there a need for additional training/discussions for employers on the role of peer supporters?

Yes

No

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

Explain.

Long answer text

Is there a need for additional training for peer supporters on the role of a peer supporter in finding/maintaining housing?

Yes

No

Explain.

Long answer text

What additional resources can be provided to peer supporters to assist clients with finding/maintaining housing?

Long answer text

What's missing from the existing peer support networks around the state?

Long answer text

Do you have other thoughts on improving the role of peer supporters in finding and maintaining housing for clients?

Long answer text



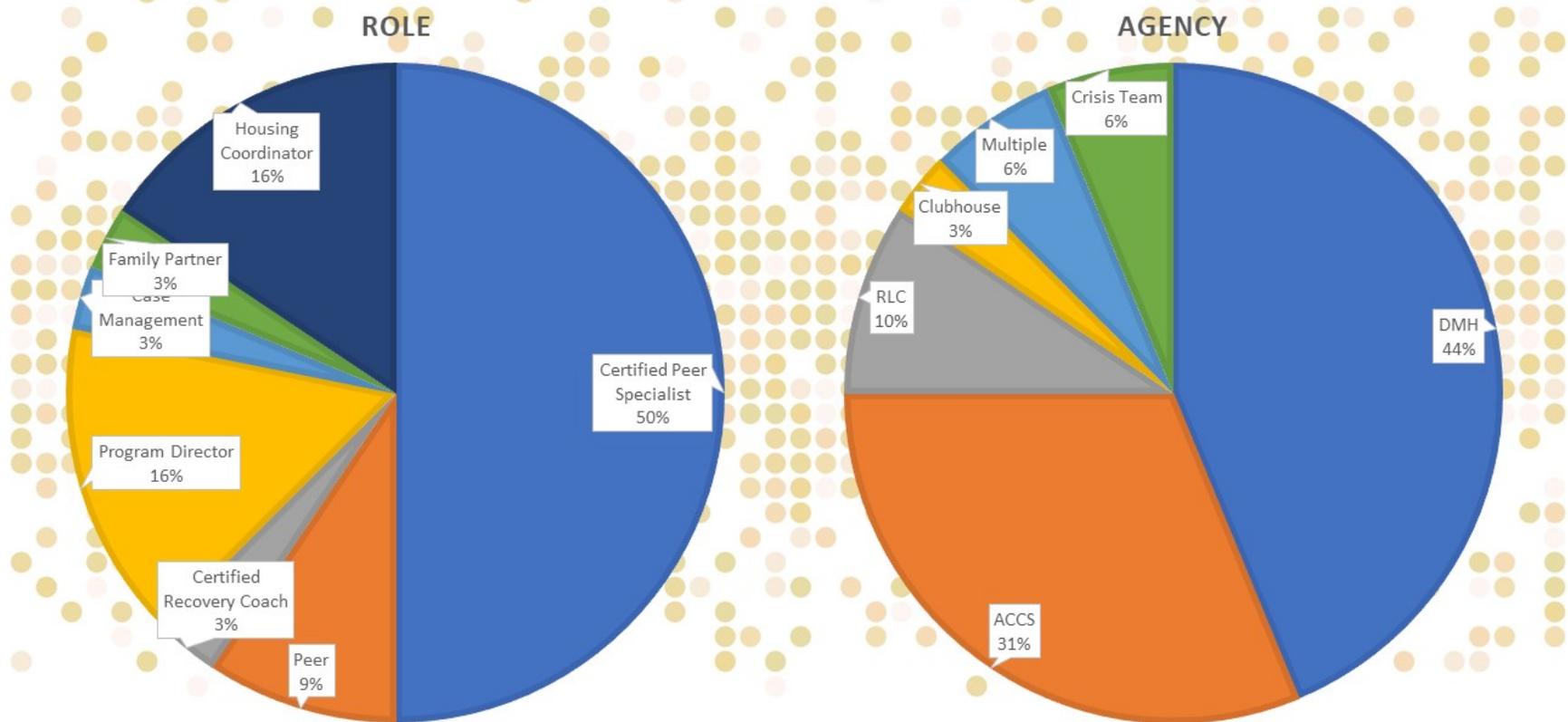
Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

APPENDIX D: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS FROM SURVEY



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHO RESPONDED



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE, AS IT RELATES TO HOUSING?

Peer Specialists Said:

- **ACCS: GENERALLY HANDS-ON**
 - Talk about **trauma** related to housing.
 - Support them in **contacting housing specialists** and attend appointments.
 - Practice searching for apartments.
 - Go to prospective apartments, help them fill out forms, etc.
 - Making a house a home (cleaning; using appliances, helping determine how they would like to live; furnishing; practicing T routes; etc.).
 - Advocacy and peer support in the housing search process.
 - “Usually on the periphery of discussions with housing specialists.”
- **RLC: LESS FREQUENT**
 - “Occasional support to community members around housing.”
 - “Supporting individuals by providing resources, paperwork, or general support if they are experiencing homelessness.”
- **DMH: GENERALLY HANDS-ON, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON HOUSING COORDINATORS’ ROLE**
 - “Mostly the housing placement happens here through social workers.” – 2 responses mentioned this
 - “It is part of our code of ethics.”
 - “I have helped people explore housing options online.”
 - “Advocate.”
- **Crisis Team: N/A**
 - “Does not really apply to my job.”

Housing Coordinators Said:

“Finding housing for persons served.”

Program Directors Said:

Oversee programs including effort to secure housing and oversight of subsidies

Recovery Coaches Said:

“Get regular inquiries of people needing help [with housing]; send an email with many housing contacts.”

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHAT SUPPORTS DO YOU GET TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR ROLE?

Peer Specialists Said:

Most supports appear to come from peers and are not standardized/institutional.

- ACCS
 - Supervision
 - Meet as a peer support team; can ask teammates
 - Housing specialists
- RLC
 - "I use other peers and their knowledge to build up more on knowledge base."
 - "None."
- DMH
 - "Housing work is done primarily by housing coordinators."
 - "I work with a multidisciplinary treatment team which has a social worker who locates housing for/with people I support."
 - "None other than asking for help from site office staff."
 - "I have not received much help as it relates to housing in my role."
 - "Clubhouse, RLC, case managers, respite, family and friends."
- Crisis Team
 - "None."
 - Peers from the recovery community.

Housing Coordinators Said:

- Technical support, resources and shared learning from DMH and area housing coordinators in same role
- Coordination with providers, site office staff, and DMH central office
- Supervisor

Program Directors Said:

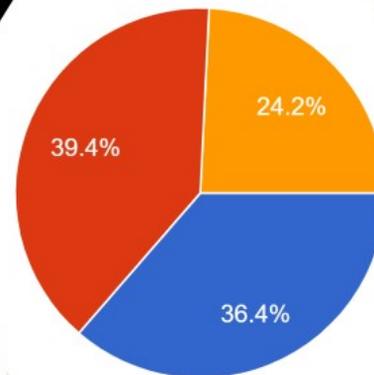
Collaboration with DMH and HAs.

Recovery Coaches Said:

Executive team meeting, if issues arise.

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

HAVE YOU RECEIVED
TRAINING FOR YOUR
ROLE?



- Yes, I have received training specific to helping my clients find/maintain housing.

These appear to be primarily interpersonal and informal.

- An ACCS quality management person said there have been dedicated cross-trainings from housing specialists on how to support people in obtaining housing.
- DMH employee says "housing issues provided by HUD, DHCD, and community orgs."
- "I have had one DMH housing training which was great but left me with more questions than answers."
- "Housing Subsidy Training."

- Yes, I have received other training not specific to housing.

- Ongoing training
- WRAP
- WHAM
- Cultural humility
- Peer Support
- Recovery Coaching
- Group Facilitation
- Motivational interviewing
- DMH housing training by Joe Valley
- MHFA
- Alternative to suicide
- NAMI connections
- Forensic peer support
- Peer bridging
- Trauma informed care

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHAT ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES YOU HAVE LEARNED IN THIS ROLE?

Peer Specialists Said:

- “Emphasize role clarity – make it clear who is responsible for what aspects of housing work.”
- Availability of space in newly developed modern buildings is sometimes overlooked by peers searching for housing.
- Treat the individual as a whole person when looking for housing.
- “**Housing is a big deal for people**; as part of my role I find that people often want to work on it. **Letting them take the lead and being transparent** about what I know (and don’t know) often builds a stronger connection.”
- Effective **listening and goal setting**.
- “Not to overload with information and to provide specific contacts and content to let the individual arrive at a decision themselves.”

Housing Coordinators Said:

“Listening to the person we are trying to assist to understand their needs and motivation.”

A **Clubhouse** person said
“other members can be role models and share what has worked for them.”

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE HELPFUL IN THIS ROLE?

Peer Specialists Said:

There is agreement between peer specialists and housing coordinators that there should be more communication between the roles.

- Not causing role drift.
- Clear line of communication between peer supporters/housing specialists.
- “I would like to be more knowledgeable about housing in general and know where to refer people for various kinds of help.” **Knowing who to call and how to apply for housing.** Knowing what lists are available (3 responses).
- **More training** (3 responses), including:
 - Tenant rights
 - Understanding confidential information and how to get things completed without breaking that trust bond
 - Understanding voucher systems and other subsidy programs.
 - The ins and outs of leases, renting, employment, affordable housing, benefits, and how to apply.

Housing Coordinators Said:

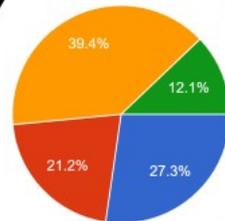
- Less bureaucratic barriers in dealing with state and federal housing resources.
- More involvement from other staff who work directly with the clients like peer supporters.

A **family partner** said more knowledge about reasonable accommodations that can be made for an individual and psycho-education/skills training for family members and community members including landlords.

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

**DO YOU
RECEIVE
SUPERVISION?**

- Yes: co-supervision
- Yes: peer-based supervision
- Yes: non-peer-based supervision
- No



Are there supports for you and your clients that your agency provides?

Peer specialists:

- Support groups
- “Few but there are housing specialists and directors.”
- Housing coordinators (6 responses)
- “Not really.” (4 responses)
- Case management.

Housing coordinators:

- DMH has its own subsidy program and funds the ACCS program.

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHAT SHOULD THE ROLE OF A PEER SUPPORTER BE IN FINDING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING?

Peer Specialists Said:

There is disagreement over the scope of the peer role in housing support.

- Whatever the person served would like.
- Technical assistance, guidance and moral support.
- Limited to providing peer support and advocacy to the person searching to obtain and maintain housing. The housing search itself should be done in partnership with the person served and an assigned housing specialist (3 responses).
 - “They should not be looking for housing as that is a clinical role. Our role is to support the persons voice to be heard and work with the providers to listen and honor the wishes of the person.”
- Emotional and technical support in coordination with housing specialists.
- Housing search, landlord meetings, teaching tenancy skills, provide support.
- “Advocacy should be a priority; specifically for those who are justice-involved or re-entering from a correctional facility, state hospital, detox, or respite.”

Housing Coordinators Said:

- “Not sure.”
- Explaining responsibilities, working with the client in calling landlords, viewing apartments.
- “I think they could assist with keeping the individual being housed engaged and mitigate some of the difficulty in required documentation.”

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHAT SHOULD THE ROLE OF A CLIENT BE IN FINDING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING?

You can't tell the difference between Housing Coordinators and Peer Specialists in their responses to this question.

Peer Specialists Said:

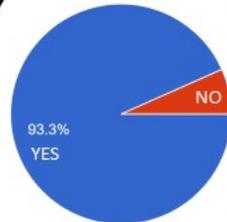
- “I think people feel so limited that there is little reason for them to engage in the process and they wait for whatever comes their way. I think mostly they would benefit from taking time to reflect on what it is they really want and then advocating for their most important needs.”
- “Front and center if possible.” (2 responses)

Housing Coordinators said
“Actively participate... ‘choose, get, keep.’”

A Recovery Coach said
“Ideally proactive, following through on suggestions of peer supporter.”

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

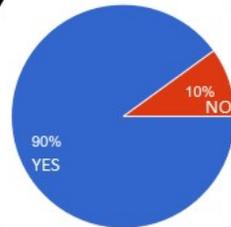
IS THERE A NEED FOR
ADDITIONAL TRAINING
FOR PEER SUPPORTERS ON
HOUSING RESOURCES?



- **Why:**
 - “Most of us have no idea what to do when someone says ‘get me housing.’”
 - “I think that all processes such as housing, SSI/SSDI, food stamps, identification and the like should be simple enough that everyone can access basic necessities without regard to their background. I think that right now many of these systems are so busy and convoluted that it would help for us to understand the system that is in place to the best of our ability so that we can try and support the people who are struggling with this.”
 - “Often feel that people request housing support that is beyond my knowledge. I once took a training on Vocational Peer Support which gave me concrete information on supporting people going to work, and I would like to see something similar to that. Additional knowledge gives us more tools to offer to people and can give us more confidence in advocacy.”
 - A Housing Specialist said “any and all training that is offered should include peer supporters.”
- **Why not:**
 - “Likely further the already existing problems of role clarity that exist within this specialist position... fears over the co-potation of the peer role.”
- **Content/design:**
 - Advocacy in housing related resources and housing options available.
 - Housing first training; tenants rights.
 - Disagreement over whether it should be credentialed.
 - A Program Director said “I’m not sure what peer supporters do so I can’t answer the question.” This might indicate a need to get to a mutual understanding of peer roles in housing prior to curriculum design.
- **Idea for direct-to-consumer training:**
 - One respondent suggested doing groups at the RLCs and Clubhouses on the following topics:
 - ‘Finding housing: where to look’
 - ‘Filling out housing application and lease’
 - ‘Maintaining housing: cleanliness, rules, conflict resolution’
 - ‘Support within housing and independent living: who are your supports and food resources’

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

IS THERE A NEED FOR
ADDITIONAL
TRAINING/DISCUSSIONS FOR
EMPLOYERS ON THE ROLE OF
PEER SUPPORTERS?



Peer specialists

- YES
 - “Many ACCS programs don’t know how to utilize peer supporter and/or have asked them to violate code of ethics.”
 - “The whole world needs this!”
 - More role clarity
 - “Often employers overestimate their understanding of peer role.”
 - “Unless you have strong peer specialists that feel confident in their role then the employer probably knows very little... they need supervision from a CPS in order to grow in their position and give ongoing education on what their role is.”
 - “Discussion around our ethics as peer specialists, discussion on a trauma-informed approach.”
- NO
 - “Speaking only for my employer, we already have systems for these trainings and discussions on the role of peer supporters in place”

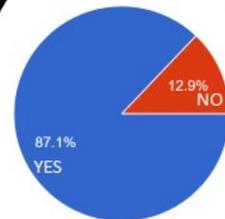
Family partner: “I find that there is a real disconnect with clinical team members and peer roles. Even after a number of attempts at advocating the importance of the role in mental healthcare. There is a lack of inclusion within the team. There is an even larger lack of incorporation of family support and understanding why family support is important.”

Program Director: “We are regularly training and re-training our ACCS teams.”

Housing Coordinator: “Peer support needs to be incorporated across more levels of care.”

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

IS THERE A NEED FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR PEER SUPPORTERS ON THE ROLE OF A PEER SUPPORTER IN FINDING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING?



Peer specialists:

- YES
 - “Some person served may ask for things a peer supporter cannot do.”
 - “Determining how peers can help obtain and/or maintain housing should be a priority... there is room for peer support across all roles without stepping on the toes of others roles.”
 - “Never hurts to increase your knowledge.”
- NO:
 - Would only create role drift and increase the potential for compromising the integrity of that role.

Program Director: “Currently this is not part of their role.”

Housing coordinator: “Everyone needs more housing training not just peers.”

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES CAN BE PROVIDED TO PEER SUPPORTERS TO ASSIST CLIENTS WITH FINDING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING?

- **Information:**
 - Knowledge of new affordable housing stock that is obtained by lottery.
 - Online training modules.
 - Conference and workshops.
 - Housing resource handbook for peer supporters and clients.
 - Literature.
 - Lists of recovery-friendly housing (not group or sober living).
- **Support for peer supporters:**
 - A platform for peers to share our recovery as it pertains to housing with each other and people we support.
 - Mentoring.
 - Financial aid.
- **Resources for clients:**
 - Peer-run GLEs and GLEs for families – more peer run supported living environments that include options for families.
 - Financial aid.
 - Free stuff – pillows, gift certificates, etc.

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

WHAT'S MISSING FROM THE EXISTING PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS ACROSS THE STATE?

- Sense of community and support among peer supporters:
 - RLCs used to come together but that stopped happening. Connectivity between regions.
 - Regular conversations about supporting people with housing.
 - Peer support should be consistently throughout the continuum of care.
 - Awareness and support of our roles within systems/ACCS and other agencies that include peer specialists.
- Specific supports for peer supporters:
 - Statewide database of housing that is user friendly.
 - More hours in the budget for housing training and work on housing.
 - Financial aid.
 - Continuing education, especially for changes made to the CPS curriculum and more access to IPS training.
 - Certification for family partners.
 - More specific training on supporting individuals living in “tent cities”.
- Specific supports for clients:
 - Big meals together.
 - Free help for homeless folks.
 - Group devoted to helping physically move peoples things and get furnishing and understand their choices.

Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

OTHER THOUGHTS?

- Access to transportation.
- Skills building with training so as there is a CPS for older adults, there can be one for housing specialist.
- Networking with other peer specialists is very important.



Role of Peer Supporters in Housing Report

APPENDIX E: RESOURCES ON FINDING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING

Local Independent Living Center

Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are run by and for people with disabilities. They help people explore options and supports for living independently, and often help people with finding housing. ILCs can tell people about housing options, show them how to search for housing, help them fill out housing applications, and help them ask for housing accommodations. Many ILCs offer free workshops about housing, which can be a good place to start with a search.

Massachusetts Independent Living Centers
www.masilc.org/findacenter

A Place of My Own

This guide can help people think through what their housing needs are.

A Place of My Own
www.autismhousingpathways.org/presentations/

Housing Search Guide for People with Disabilities

This guide has information on the most common types of housing for people with disabilities – especially those with limited income.

Housing Search Guide for People with Disabilities
<https://www.chapa.org/housing-courses-/housing-search-guide-for-people-with-disabilities-in-massachusetts>

Keep Your Housing Handbook

This guide has information about the right to ask for accommodations in housing, and some sample letters for requests. It also has some helpful information about how to be a good tenant and neighbor.

Keep Your Housing Handbook
<https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/70681/ocn707398152.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

The Consumer's Guide to Fair Housing

This guide has easy-to-understand information about people's rights under the Fair Housing Act.

Consumer's Guide to Fair Housing
https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC_7452.PDF

Western Massachusetts Recovery Learning Community

The Western Mass RLC has been offering peer-to-peer supports in a variety of ways since 2007. More recently, they discovered just how powerful peer support can be in the world of housing and homelessness. The RLC created a peer housing supporter role to help people find and maintain housing.

<http://www.westernmassrlc.org/housing-supports>