

*Stronger Together:
Building a Sustainable Peer Support Program*



Emergency Health Services – Alberta

Jenelle Tizzard

Wellness Facilitator Central Zone
Emergency Health Services – Alberta



Rhys Clark

Wellness Facilitator Calgary Zone
Emergency Health Services – Alberta



AGENDA

- EVOLUTION OF PEER SUPPORT
- KEYS TO OUR SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESS
- TIPS & TAKEAWAYS
- QUESTIONS



Peer Support:
Who's heard of this term?

Who is looking to:

1. Create a peer support program?
2. Change or expand an existing program?





What is Peer Support

- Voluntary, non-judgmental, self-determination, hopeful & empathetic, confidential support for staff within the organization regardless of designation or role
- Provided by trained peers throughout the province
- *From the frontlines for the frontlines, supporting each other when it matters most*



Evolution of Peer Support

Prior to 2020

- Limited mental health supports, and practices were individualized by zone
- No funding
- No standardized training
- No clinical oversight
- Limited or no resources
- Externally sourced training

Current

- Standardized Provincial program
- Support for work, organizational and personal stress
- Funded positions, clinical psychological oversight and trained volunteer peer support members
- Extensive access to internal programs and external mental health partnerships
- Psychological First Aid (PFA)

How we Prepare and Sustain Our Volunteer Peer Support Team

Onboarding

- Natural Allies Suicide Prevention for EMS prior to onboarding
- 20 hours of Peer Support Program Training
- Review Peer Support Principles and Guidelines, and Mentorship Manual (3-month mentorship)

Annual Training

- 12 hours
- Initiatives are ever evolving, not linear; based on staff feedback, research, and clinical oversight
- Compensated as per collective bargaining agreement

Mental Health Supports From A Peer Support Lens

Proactive

Building Resilience

- EMS Natural Allies Suicide Prevention
- Wellness Webinars
- Newsletters
- Website

Reactive

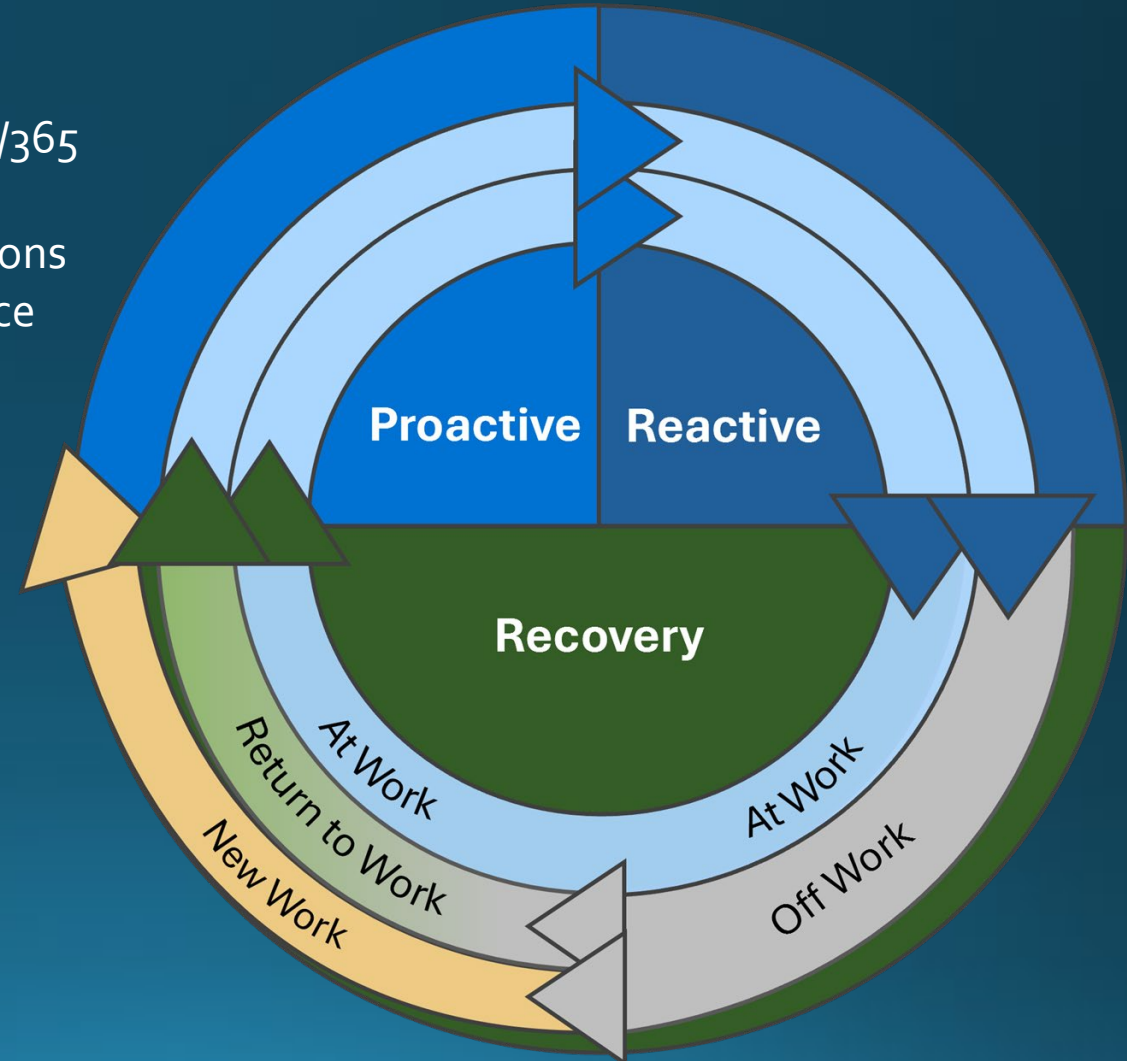
Immediate Assistance

- Provincial Phone Line 24/7/365
- 1:1 Sessions
- Workplace Response Sessions
- Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

Recovery

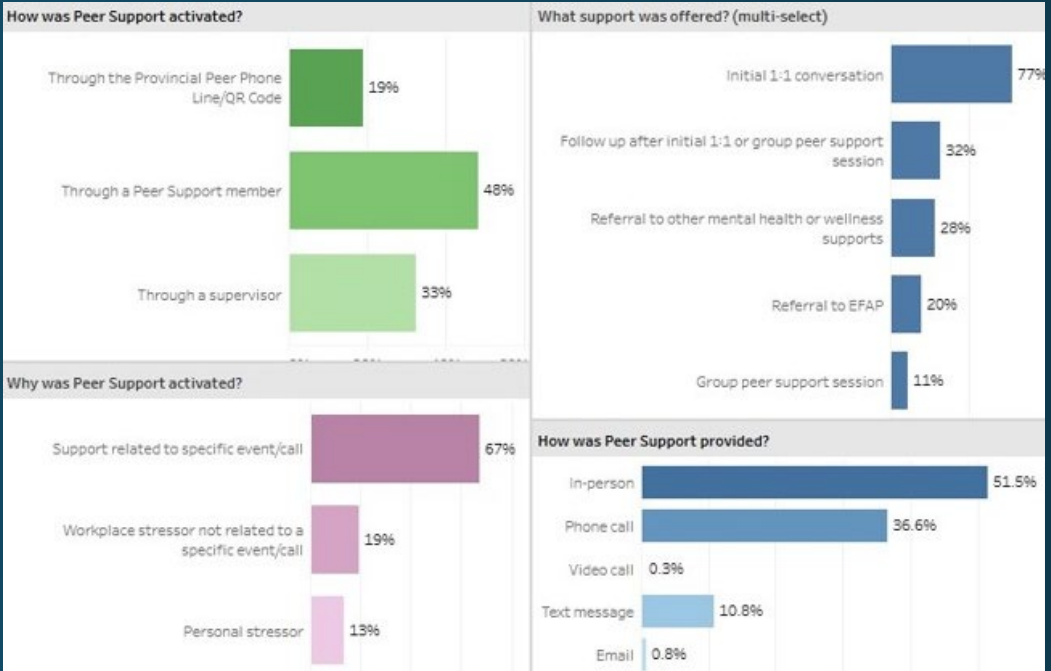
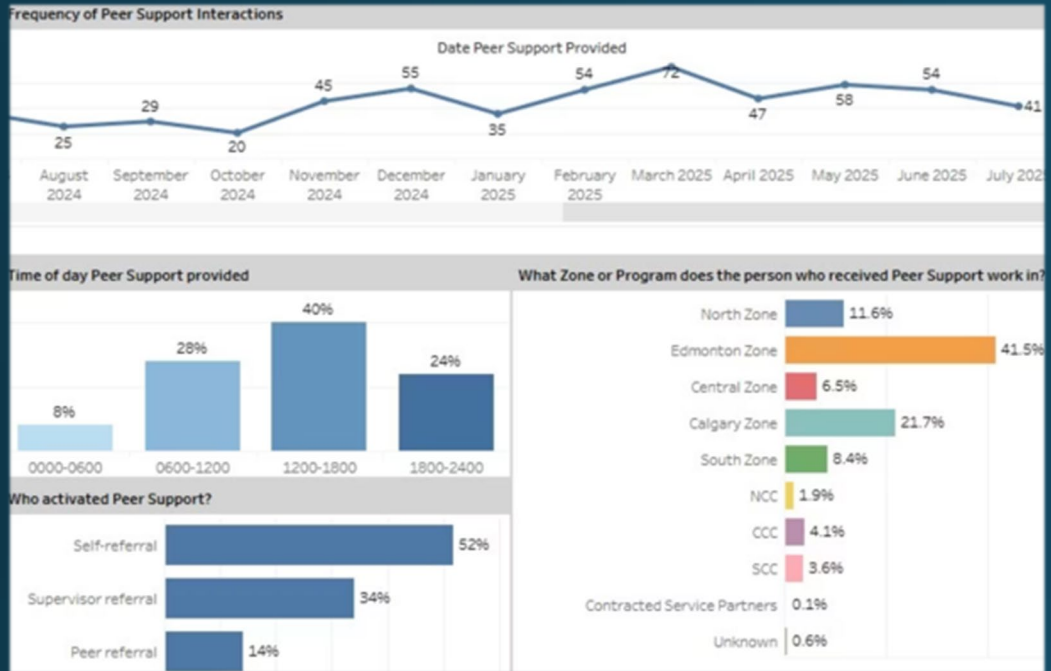
At Work, Off Work & Return to Work

- Leader Support
- Maintain connection with staff
- Return to Work (RTW) orientation



Workplace Response Session

- Psychologist lead, psychoeducational support session
- Voluntary and confidential
- Activated when 3 or more staff are impacted by an event
- 48 – 72 hours post event
- Not an operational debrief



Data Collection

TIPS & TAKEAWAYS



Start Small

Build foundation before expanding – quality over quantity



Choose the Right People

Select trusted, empathetic team members with credibility.
Help from scars not wounds.



Prioritize Confidentiality

Trust is everything – establish clear protocols



Be Genuine & Open

Authenticity builds connection and lasting impact.
Stay open to change



Stay Connected

Other Peer Support programs.
To the staff you are supporting.

FAQ



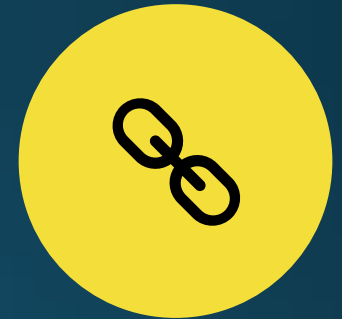
WHY DON'T YOU
AUTOMATICALLY DEPLOY
WHEN A "BAD CALL" OCCURS?



WHAT IS THE BIGGEST
CHALLENGE THE TEAM FACES?



WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST
SUCCESS?



DO YOUR PSYCHOLOGISTS
PROVIDE ON-ONE THERAPY?



Emergency Health Services – Alberta

Thank You

Jenelle Tizzard

Rhys Clark

EMSPeerSupport.Admin@emergencyhealthservices.ca