



Peer Support for Transition-Aged Youth

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Transition-aged youth includes youth in foster care, youth who have been through the justice system, and youth who have a mental health diagnosis as well as other youth who have unique needs that are often unmet. At this crucial stage in development, transition-aged youth peer support programs allow young people to work with trained specialists, in their own age group, who have similar experiences. This provides them with both the benefits of best practices and the connection with someone they relate to.

What Defines Transition-Aged Youth?

- ◇ The term represents young people between the ages of 16 and 25. (Varies among states, agencies, and counties.)
- ◇ Transition-aged youth do not fit within the children or adult system of care.
- ◇ They are a unique demographic that requires customized services and supports to meet their needs.

US Dept. of Health and Human Services. (2019, August 12). Peers. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/peers>

What Do Peer Specialists Do?

Peer specialists offer encouragement, practical assistance, guidance, and understanding to support recovery. Peer support workers walk alongside people in recovery, offering individualized supports and demonstrating that recovery is possible. They share their own lived experience of moving from hopelessness to hope. Peer support workers offer different types of support such as

- Emotional (Empathy and camaraderie)
- Informational (Connections to information and referrals to community resources that support wellness and health)
- Instrumental (Concrete supports such as housing or employment)

Benefits of Peer Support

- ◇ Increased social functioning
- ◇ Decreased hospitalization
- ◇ Increased empowerment and hope
- ◇ Decreased self-stigma
- ◇ Increased community engagement
- ◇ Increased quality of life and life satisfaction
- ◇ Increased engagement and activation in treatment
- ◇ Reduced use of inpatient services