

## **Peer Specialist Role For OnTrackNY**

### **OVERVIEW**

The OnTrackNY Program is an innovative treatment program. The program serves adolescents and young adults who are within two years of experiencing the onset of non-affective psychosis.

The Peer Specialist will work .50 FTE as part of an OnTrackNY team with program participants, family members, and all other team members. The Peer Specialist serves a unique role on the team. By drawing on his or her own lived experience of overcoming challenges with mental illness, the Peer Specialist can instill hope in clients and families. Walking alongside clients on their recovery journeys, the Peer Specialist is an ally, mentor, and advocate for young people as they contend with the difficulties and uncertainties of early psychosis.

The Peer Specialist uses his or her lived experience to contribute to treatment planning for each participant, keeping “youth-friendliness” at the forefront of the team’s philosophy, and facilitating the team’s development and maintenance of a culture of respect. The Peer Specialist can provide an essential framework for highlighting the potential that each client has for achieving a successful recovery trajectory.

In addition to attending team meetings, peer specialists often work directly with other team members to provide support and assistance to program participants. Under the supervision of the OnTrackNY Team Leader, they provide direct peer support services to program participants in any setting that would be helpful – at the OnTrackNY program site, in the community, or in the hospital.

### **JOB RESPONSIBILITIES**

Within the OnTrackNY team, the Peer Specialist may serve in many different capacities:

- Using his/her personal recovery story to instill hope and demonstrate goal attainment
- o Use selective self-disclosure about their lived experience with mental health problems, substance use, and other aspects of their lives.
- o Maintain a “client-focused” stance including a primary focus on the issues participants present rather than those of the Peer Specialists.
- o Talk about his or her own path to recovery to foster a sense of trust and mutuality in the Peer Specialist’s relationship with the client, inspiring clients and helping them to feel less isolated, and consider new possibilities for their futures.

- Enhancing initial outreach, engagement and retention efforts to help participants and families stay connected to the program

- o Participate in activities related to community awareness of recovery and stigma reduction

- o Participate in outreach and recruitment activities with the team, forging relationships with community providers and helping to convey the "spirit of OnTrackNY"

- o Assist in engagement and retention activities to promote optimum involvement with the team, including helping team to maintain a youth-focused, recovery-oriented approach to outreach before and after participants enroll in the program.

- Providing concrete and social supports to clients and families through case management helping to support participant's efforts towards returning to school or work

Helping individuals understand psychosis and develop and practice skills to help with illness management (individually or in groups);

- Aiding participants and families as they transition from OnTrackNY services

- Helping to shape the team's culture to one that promotes person-centered, recovery-focused, strengths-based service delivery.

## **MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

### **PEER SPECIALIST**

- State certification as a Peer Specialist, OR ability to obtain provisional certification within 6 months and standard certification within 12 months of being hired.

- It is preferable that the individuals lived experience of mental health challenges include experience with psychosis during his or her youth.

- Ideally the Peer Specialist is a young adult; however, a Peer Specialist of any age may be considered for the position, provided that he or she relates well to young people.

- As much as possible, the Peer Specialist should have an understanding of the culture of the community in which the team is based.

- The Peer Specialist should also be someone who has made good progress toward his or her own recovery.

- Demonstrated interpersonal communications skills and the ability to empathize with, relate to and effectively work with participants of mental health services **AND**
- two years of active participation in mental health self-help activities, peer support or peer advocacy programs, or participant run organizations or similar experiences or programs.
- Ability/ willingness to disclose their recovery story (where appropriate) for the purposes of empowerment
- Excellent judgment/ ability to understand boundaries when working with participants of mental health services

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