



Peer-to-Peer Programs for College Students:

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OBJECTIVES

- Understand the perspectives and experiences of 85 students leading or participating in college peer support programs.
- Identify at least three needs that can be addressed through partnerships with or learning from existing peer support resources.
- Identify at least two ways that peer support programs can be supportive of students across different populations, including students with more stigmatized experiences.

There is growing interest in campus peer support.

- *Fill gaps in available resources*
- *Cultural understanding and responsiveness*
- *Create community and belonging*
- *Focus on broader campus life like social inclusion and academic success*

WSJ Wall Street Journal

With Therapists in Short Supply, College Students Counsel Each Other

Some colleges train undergrads to help fellow students as demand for mental-health services rises.

Feb 12, 2023



The Chronicle of Higher Education

Student-Led Programs Are Key Mental-Health Resources. But More Research Is Needed.

There is strong interest on college campuses for scaling up peer support as a mental-health resource for students. But more research is...

Nov 3, 2022



NPR

Demand for college mental health support and peer counselors is on the rise

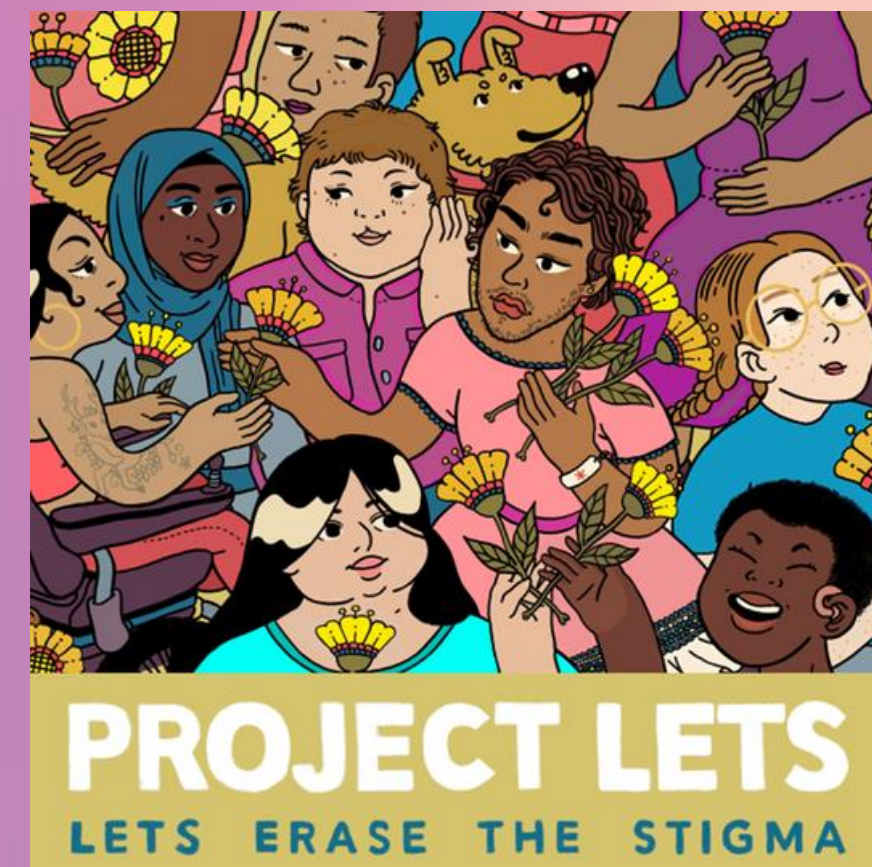
In a new survey, nearly half of college students said the pandemic has made them more likely to seek out peer counseling.

Feb 12, 2022



What is peer support?

- *Support rooted in mutuality between people with shared identity or experience*
- *Often student to student-- we are talking specifically about mental health peer support*
- *Distinct from and not a replacement for needed mental health services*
- *There are many different models*



Common pushback + concerns

What about risk and liability?

Is this safe?

Is there evidence?

Who provides the training?

What if students act like clinicians or give bad advice?

Is this just a way to avoid investing in mental health services?



Mental Health Peer Support

The mental health peer support movement in the US goes back to de-institutionalization with decades of research, resources, and training since.

The movement has been thinking about (and responding to) those questions for a long time.



1970s

The modern era of peer support as we know it has history with civil rights and de-institutionalization. Individuals leaving psychiatric institutions began supporting one another.
(Davidson, et.al, 2012)



1999

Georgia Medicaid Authority approves peer support as a reimbursable mental health service
(Velicer, 2012)



2007

CMS declares peer support an evidence-based practice
(Smith, 2017, p. 1)



1980s

Consumers began working paid and volunteer jobs in public behavioral health.
Bluebird, 2017, p. 1-3)



2001

Georgia creates first formal state certification



Today

Almost every states has certification and Medicaid payment for peer specialists, growth and interest in Medicare and Commercial Insurance



We have answers and guidance for many of the common questions in expanding peer support programs and initiatives.

We have limited information about what is actually happening for students in campus peer support programs.

Connecting student experiences with community wisdom

Temple University Collaborative for Community Inclusion, Mental Health America, and Doors to Wellbeing (A Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Consumer Technical Assistance Center)

- 85 survey respondents with 5 hour-long interviews
- Connection to many government and peer-driven resources to fill gaps in knowledge on campuses

Recommendations

- Elevate student + lived experience leadership
- Ensure adequate + comprehensive peer support training
- Prioritize trauma-informed + human rights-focused approaches to mental health crises
- Invest in the future of college peer support + the broader mental health ecosystem

Elevate student and lived experience leadership

- Benefits to having a variety of leadership structures, *and it is always important to listen to students*
- Student-led programs addressed broader issues that impact student engagement and inclusion
 - Offering group activities (70% v 53%)
 - Resources on academic success (74% vs 48%)

Ensure adequate + comprehensive peer support training

- Training is a top concern of campus leaders: boundaries help students and those they support
- National Association of Peer Supporters + SAMHSA have guidelines for peer supporters

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PEER SUPPORTERS' NATIONAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR PEER SUPPORTERS		
1. Voluntary	5. Respectful	9. Equally shared power
2. Hopeful	6. Facilitate change	10. Strengths-focused
3. Open-minded	7. Honest and direct	11. Transparent
4. Empathetic	8. Mutual and reciprocal	12. Person-driven

Ensure adequate + comprehensive peer support training

- Most students believe they have adequate training in peer support, but want more training on many topics that impact them and those they support including,
 - Navigating community resources
 - Practicing cultural humility
 - Understanding specific experiences like psychosis or eating disorders



Prioritize trauma-informed and human rights-focused approaches to mental health crises

- Liability and legal risk come up repeatedly
- Students can help prevent crises, like WRAP training, and want tools to respond to crisis
- Maintain students' rights: disability accommodations, psychiatric advance directives, leaves of absence

Invest in the future of peer support + broader mental health ecosystem

- Invest funding into peer programs
- Connect with the broader movement
- Collaborate with workforce initiatives to drive more students into mental health careers



Introduction to Psychosis and Mental Health on Campus

- Prevalence of psychosis in the U.S. ranges from 0.25% and 0.64%, though one report by NAMI recorded 6% of college respondents with schizophrenia as a primary diagnosis
- According to NAMI, the average age of onset of psychosis is 24
- Similarly, reported by NAMI, 64% of students surveyed dropped out of college due to mental health reasons
- 47% of adults living with schizophrenia drop out of college
- 73% reported a mental health crisis while in college, with 35% of those respondents' colleges being unaware of their mental health crisis

Introduction to Psychosis and Mental Health on Campus

- "More than 45% of those who stopped attending college because of mental health related reasons did not receive accommodations. Additionally, 50% of them did not access mental health services and supports."
- Fear of stigma was a top reason for not accessing accommodations, and stigma was the top reason for not accessing services
- 42% of respondents listed peer support as critical to their success in college

https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Survey-Reports/College-Students-Speak_A-Survey-Report-on-Mental-H

Case Study: Students With Psychosis

- [sws.ngo](https://www.swsngo.org) – "Students With Psychosis is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that empowers student leaders and advocates worldwide through community building and collaboration."
- 160+ hours monthly of virtual programming (peer support, creative meetings, live chats on Discord, etc.)
- Working on expanding in-person programming, outreach, and hubs (NYC, Boston, Austin, San Francisco, South Korea, New Zealand, etc.)



Case Study: Students With Psychosis

- Student, advocate, and faculty memberships are free – accessibility is important
- Paid options for family/friends, creatives, and mental health professionals – Fall 2023
- Many opportunities to get involved:
 - Internship program
 - Advocacy network
 - Community groups
 - Brand ambassadors
 - Event curator



Case Study: Students With Psychosis

- Lived experience perspective in leadership positions – 100% lived experience executive board
- Meeting times are developed to accommodate for international members
- Mental health comes first for everyone at SWP, including those in leadership positions
- Community groups include BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and co-morbidity groups



Case Study: Students With Psychosis

"Students With Psychosis aims to expand mental health/brain health advocacy at the college level to ensure psychosis representation, including a global perspective. Too often is psychosis left out of the mental health/brain health conversation on college campuses, and our narrative is also often limited, excluding intersectional community members."





Stay in touch!

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