



Northwest (HHS Region 10)

**ATTC**

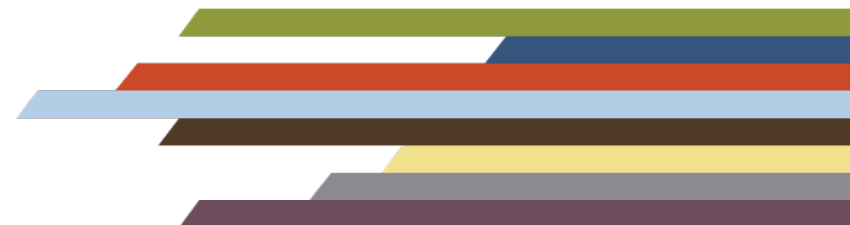
Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Northwest ATTC presents:

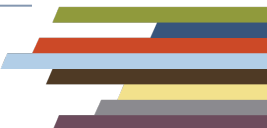
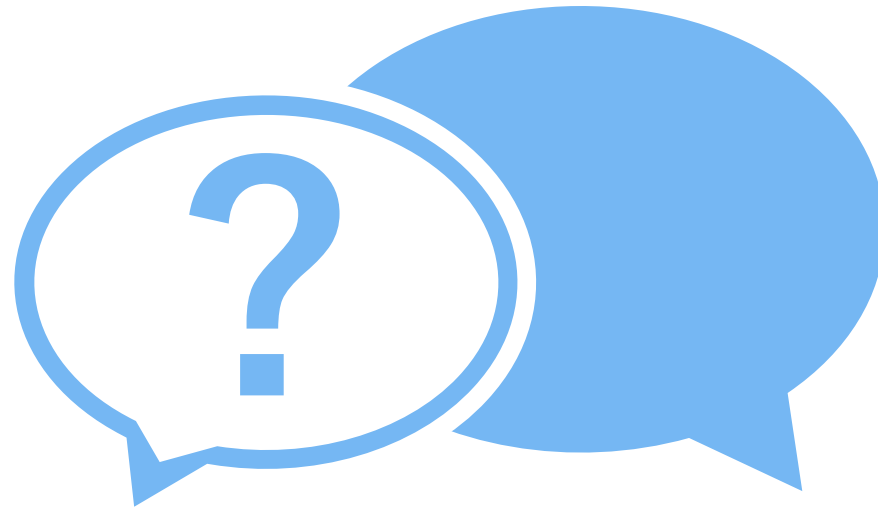
## Empowering Connections: Unveiling the Transformative Role of Peer Supports

# Thank you for joining us! The webinar will begin shortly.

- **Participants are automatically muted during this presentation**
- **Got questions?** Type them into the chat box at any time and they will be answered at the end of the presentation.
- An ADA-compliant recording of this presentation will be made available on our website at:  
<http://attcnetwork.org/northwest>



**Questions? Please type them in  
the chat box!**



# Surveys

**Look for our surveys in your inbox!**

**We greatly appreciate your feedback!**

Every survey we receive helps us improve and continue offering our programs.

It only takes **1 minute** to complete!



## Certificates of Attendance are available for live viewers!



### Viewing Groups:

Please send each individual's name and email address to [northwest@attcnetwork.org](mailto:northwest@attcnetwork.org) within 1 business day.

Your certificate will be emailed within a week to the address you registered with.



# Tribal Land Acknowledgement

In applying a lens of cultural humility to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, Northwest ATTC offers this land acknowledgement for today's event.

Our work intends to reach the addiction workforce in HHS Region 10: Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. This area rests on traditional territories of many indigenous nations, including tribal groups with whom the United States signed treaties prior to the granting of statehoods.

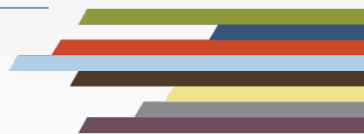
Please join us in support of efforts to affirm tribal sovereignty and in displaying respect and gratitude for our indigenous neighbors.



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The Northwest ATTC presents:

# Empowering Connections: Unveiling the Transformative Role of Peer Supports



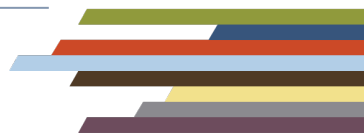
**Dr. Mo (Melissa Dittberner), PhD, CPS, PS, LMT**



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# Learning Objectives

- 1. Comprehensive Understanding:** Gain a comprehensive understanding of the role and significance of peer supports in mental health, addiction recovery, and community well-being.
- 2. Human Connection in Recovery:** Recognize the transformative power of human connection in the context of recovery, and how peer supports play a pivotal role in facilitating meaningful connections.
- 3. Practical Applications:** Understand practical applications of peer support methodologies, including effective communication, active listening, and collaboration within the peer support framework.





# Peer Support

## What is Peer Support?

- Peer support is a unique form of assistance where individuals with lived experiences offer empathy, understanding, and practical guidance.
- Peer support is offered by a peer support specialist, which is someone with lived experience who has been trained to help others along their path, whether it's with addiction, mental health needs, physical health, grief, or whatever stressor you're experiencing.
- Peer specialists can have a variety of titles and credentials, such as Certified Recovery Specialist, Certified Peer Support Specialist, Certified Family Recovery Specialist, Recovery Coach and more. Regardless of the title, they're offering the same thing - support only someone else who's been where you are and where you're going.





# Validation

## Research has found...

- Peer support can significantly improve mental health and addiction outcomes.
- Studies have consistently demonstrated that individuals who engage in peer support experience lower rates of relapse, greater treatment adherence, and improved overall well-being.
- Best practice: paired with pharmacotherapy.





# The Value of Lived Experience

- Nonjudgmental
- Gives hope and inspiration
- Deepest understanding
- Walk hand-in-hand
- Lived experience can look like anything in recovery - addiction, mental health - anybody who's walked that walk to support other people. \
- Lived experience is wonderful because it accelerates rapport building. (Veterans, LGBTQIA, addiction, MH, suicide, DV...)



# Collaboration With Formal Services

## Peer support as a supplement to other services

- Peer support should complement, not replace, professional interventions. It's crucial to ensure that individuals have access to both peer support networks and evidence-based treatments
- Take their story and expound on professional services
  - Treatment goals, the PS helps between appointments to work on those goals
  - Can help with resources, navigating processes, help getting ID, transportation, etc.
  - Day-to-day social things as well as recovery
- Additional support



# Who Benefits From Peer Support?

## The person with MH/addiction

- Anywhere addiction and MH is highly prevalent: homeless shelters, recovery homes, jails, PO offices, any sort of gov't service, social services, etc.
- Wherever people are having difficulties getting their needs met.
- Anyone who needs someone to help them walk through a struggle they're currently going through
- Feels isolated, feels they have no one else in their corner
- Someone spiraling out of control
- Maybe feels like they're at rock bottom
- Somebody who has no one else or doesn't have anyone they can trust to reach out to for help.





# Who Benefits From Peer Support?

## The person who loves someone with MH/addiction

- Value is that it's a type of struggle that people don't talk about, don't understand
- Not many places to reach out to
- Rapport with someone who has been there, has navigated that
- Have that connection, exchange ideas, ways to not enable
- Having someone in their corner
- Nonjudgmental - you don't talk about the loved one and their issues to others - have a place to have that discussion.



# What do Peer Supports actually do?

- Support the Individual's Chosen Pathway
  - Recovery is different for everyone – PS support the person's autonomy
  - Sometimes remission/return to use or a decline in mental wellbeing can be part of the pathway
  - PS can be there all along the path to navigate and even nudge them to take the next steps or connect them to the right resource when they're ready
- Acceptance of Disinterest in Treatment
  - Role of PS can be someone to shake it out - use the mentor approach to ask questions, what role does alcohol play in your life? What part of that is society? What part of that helps you function in society? Any impact on your family?
  - Having the tough conversations in that nonjudgmental peer-to-peer space
  - Anonymity - don't have to have your car in front of the treatment center
- NOT a Sponsor
  - Sponsors don't have training PS have
  - Sponsors are great - keep them
  - Peers are just a different form of support - tools for advocacy
- Gaps in Support That PS Can Fill
  - Until PS became a tool that people could use, there really wasn't anything other than a sponsor
  - Connect you to spaces you need
  - Supports can often be siloed, and a peer can connect across support systems, programs, etc.





# Building A Community of Support

## Connection is key

- At its core, peer support is about shared experiences—knowing that you're not alone in your struggles and finding strength in community.
- It's creating a social network, a space to not isolate themselves
  - Someone they have in their corner
  - Even if it's only 1 person, they're going to make a connection to others through the connection to services, resources, etc.





# Hindrances to Peer Support Services

- Reimbursement
- Certification
- Quality Insurance
- Supervision
- Lack of appreciating/understanding the value
- Lack of independent work
- Lack of knowledge/research in the field







# Benefits to Online PS Service Delivery

- Reaching rural areas
- Privacy
- Connecting based on shared lived experience, not caseload assignment
- Flexibility
- Client empowerment



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# Thank you for your time!



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