Recovery LIVE!

Providing Digital Peer Recovery Support Services

Moderator: Devin Reaves, BRSS TACS Subject Matter Expert

Speakers:
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William Stauffer, Pennsylvania Recovery Organization Alliance
Ryan Markley, Open Sky Community Services
Robert Ashford, Unity Recovery

April 9, 2020 | 2:00–3:30 p.m. ET
Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale
Technical Assistance Center Strategy

This presentation was supported by contract number HHSS2832012000351/HHSS28342002T from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The views, opinions, and content of this presentation are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of SAMHSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
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Digital Peer Support: Definition, History, and Effectiveness

Karen L. Fortuna, PhD, LISW
Assistant Professor, Dartmouth College

Research support provided by the National Institute of Mental Health (K01 MH117496), Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (NCT03966872), and the NARSAD Young Investigator Grant from the Brain and Behavior Foundation (#26800).
Digital peer support is live or automated peer support services delivered through technology media.

History of Digital Peer Support

2005 First peer-reviewed published article on digital support for mental health challenges (US)
2008 First peer-reviewed published article for substance use challenges (Norway; US)
2012 Digital peer support for mental health challenges expands to Australia
2015 Digital peer support for substance use challenges expands to Australia
2016 Digital peer support expands to Europe (Italy and Denmark [mental health]; Russia [substance use])
2017 Digital peer support expands to Asia (Japan)
2018 First older adult digital peer support program (PeerTECH)
2018 Digital peer support for substance use challenges expands to United Kingdom
2020 Rapid use of digital peer support globally


Peer Support Specialists Are Developing Technology!

Peer Support Specialists Developed a Certification!

Digital Peer Support Certification

- What is Digital Peer Support?
- Digital Communication Skills
  - Technology Literacy and Usage Skills
  - Digital Peer Support Technologies
- Organizational Policies and Ethical Issues
  - Privacy and Confidentiality
- Monitoring Digital Peer Support
- How to Address A Digital Crisis
- How to Hire, Train, and Supervise Digital Peer Support Specialists

Website: [http://digitalpeersupport.org](http://digitalpeersupport.org)
What We Know about Digital Peer Support

- No geographical or time limitations
- Engages service users in digital mental health outside of clinical environments
- Expands the reach of peer support services
- Increases the impact of peer support without additional in-person sessions
- Can access hard-to-reach groups: Rural residents, home-bound adults, older adults, people with mobility issues or who are deaf or hard of hearing
Is Digital Peer Support Effective?

Digital peer support studies have established support for the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary effectiveness regarding mental health challenges:

- Enhancing hope, quality of life, empowerment, social support, and recovery
- Enhancing functioning
- Reducing mental health symptoms
- Engaging in services

Digital peer support studies have established support for the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary effectiveness regarding substance use challenges:

- Reductions in risky substance use
- High levels of satisfaction and perceived benefit
- Engagement in services

Ways to Deliver Digital Peer Support

- Peer-to-peer networks; for example, informal gatherings like Facebook groups
- Peer-delivered programs supported with technology; for example, trained peer support specialists who use smartphone apps, text messaging, or videoconferences to offer peer support
- Telephone or videos; for example, synchronous technology and asynchronous technology
Role of Peer Support Specialists in the Digital Era
Privacy, Confidentiality, and Informed Consent

William Stauffer, LSW, CCS, CADC
Executive Director, Pennsylvania Recovery Organization Alliance (PRO–A)
The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

Overview of Privacy Considerations

HIPAA enacted to:
- improve efficiency
- eliminate wastage
- combat fraud
- ensure information can be tied to an individual
- allow data to be identified as protected and kept confidential

HIPAA stipulated:
- allowable uses and disclosures
- restrict access to information
- the right to obtain health data, check for errors, and exchange information
- set standards to protect health data

Federal Drug & Alcohol Regulations

Regulations (42 CFR Part 2):

- restrict the disclosure of information
- apply to federally assisted substance use disorder “programs”
- require patient consent
- prohibit redisclosure under a number of circumstances

Strong privacy protections reduce risks of discrimination and ensure a safe recovery environment
Easing of HIPAA rules during COVID–19 crisis
COVID–19 crisis considered an emergency under 42 CFR Part 2 rules
Recent changes to drug and alcohol confidentiality within the CARES Act
State privacy laws and regulations need to be considered
Engaging persons remotely:

- **Informed consent**: Nature of care, benefits, and risks of services offered
- **Defined roles and responsibilities**: What we can and cannot do as part of care
- **Establishing boundaries**: Setting limits and discussing ethics related to care
- **Crisis planning**: Reviewing contingencies, establishing resources to engage and when and how to engage resources in a crisis
Ethical Considerations in a Digital Care Environment

To provide care in an ethically transparent manner, we should:

- Do no harm
- Be accountable
- Be transparent
- Facilitate connection
- Support voice and choice
- Protect the privacy of individuals served
- Engage people served in care design
Scaling Digital Recovery Supports in a Pandemic

Robert D. Ashford, MSW
Executive Director
Unity Recovery
Unity Recovery

- Recovery community organization (RCO) in Philadelphia, PA
- Before COVID–19, provided three tiers of recovery support services (RSS): In-person, community, and digital
- Shut down physical services in phases beginning March 9, 2020
Multi-pronged digital recovery support service (DRSS) framework:

- Emulation of face-to-face recovery support services wherever possible using SaaS, RecoveryLink electronic recovery record system, and emergency policies:
  - Expanded SaaS licenses to accommodate increased capacity needs
  - Removed geographic eligibility requirements on recoverees
  - Suspended PTO and sick time policies for all staff
  - Increased peer text line hours
  - Launched website integrated chat—real-time and asynchronous
RecoveryLink

Awaiting full intake

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<th>Participant</th>
<th>Peer Recovery Support Specialist</th>
<th>Last Engagement</th>
<th>Next Engagement</th>
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There are no participants awaiting full intake.

Awaiting initial recovery plan

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There are no participants awaiting initial recovery plan.

Engaged participants

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There are no engaged participants.
DRSS Available to Recoverees

- Digital All Recovery Meetings, including individual, family, womxn’s, LGBTQ+
- Recovery Yoga and CrossFit
- Guided Meditations
- 24/7 Recovery Chat Server
- 1-on-1 peer specialist telerecovery support engagement
Connect with your new recovery network

Pick from daily recovery meetings, physical activities, meditations, and more - all available through your smartphone or computer.
March 9
Suspended in-person mutual aid meetings at RCO; began emergency protocol planning with leadership

March 13
Closed RCC and went fully digital; launched partnerships with Alano Club of PDX, SOS Recovery, and WEconnect

March 20
Expanded DRSS and launched RecoveryLink hub; passed 10,000 recoverees served in 11 countries

March 30
Passed 40,000 served in 24 countries; expanded partnership to allow for over 60 peer staff facilitators

April 8
Launched integrated chat feature on website for incoming service requests and questions
Lessons Learned

Key Lessons:

- Policies and procedures specific to 1) teleworking and 2) full service protocols for peer staff are critical
- Digital fatigue for peer staff and recoverees is a DRSS side effect
- Telephonic (audio only) is likely not as effective as video (anecdotal evidence at this stage)
- Preliminary evidence suggests attrition is lower when DRSS is available

Suggestions for RSS Providers:

- Implement an electronic recovery record ASAP (several options available)
- Telerecovery support services exist in a gray area vis-à-vis reimbursement, so check with payers for specifics
- Modify peer staff schedule to cover as much of 24/7 as possible
Experiences in Providing Digital Peer Support

Ryan K. Markley, BA, CPS
Certified Peer Specialist
Open Sky Community Services

Peer Research Consultant
Center of Excellence in Psychosocial and Systemic Research
Mass General Hospital
My Thoughts before Using PeerTECH

- Innovative
- Holding space
- Accessibility
- Mutually beneficial
- Peer values and ethics
Delivering PeerTECH

- Smartphone application
- Extensive library of recovery eModules
- Different wellness topic each week
- Surveys every morning
- Goal-setting
- Wellness planning
- Face-to-face weekly appointments
- One on one text messaging at least three times weekly
- Co-learning and mutual support

PeerTECH Infrastructure at Open Sky

- Collaboration with our team to best maintain peer values
- Transparency about confidentiality issues
- Solicited input from our team on content and language
- Researchers were open to and accommodated feedback
- Collaborative training on use of technology
- Tech support available by phone or email
- Supervisory support for PeerTECH team members
- PeerTECH team focus groups
PeerTECH Successes

- Provided access to smartphones
- Introduction to other peer support apps
- Increased interest in young adults
- Identified unmet needs and next steps
- Increased connection and generated hope
- Decreased loneliness
- Increased interest in physical health and wellness
- Explored meaningful relationships
- Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP)
- Mutually beneficial
Contact Our Presenters

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Resource Page – includes resources mentioned by presenters

Contact BRSS TACS

➢ To learn more about BRSS TACS activities or to ask our presenters follow-up questions, contact us via email at recoverylive@c4innovates.com

➢ To request technical assistance, complete the online request form at https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/technical-assistance-form

SAMHSA’s mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities.


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