

# Membership Structures for Non-profit Peer Support Organizations

Prepared for

Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI)

In

May 2019

By

C.A. Klassen

Ron Movilla

Ashley Roy

Amanda Ramkishun

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	6
Background	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Research Questions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Methodology	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Environmental Scan	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Document Analysis	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Findings	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Environmental Scan	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Recommendations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
User Manual	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Data Collection Process	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Spreadsheets and Columns	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Don'ts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Do's	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Limitations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Environmental Scan	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Interviews	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Document analysis	Error! Bookmark not defined.
New Data Collection Tool	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Bibliography	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix A	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Interview Guide	Error! Bookmark not defined.

# Executive Summary

As the provincial organization representing peer support initiatives in mental health and addictions, the Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) must adapt to changes in this sector. Currently, the OPDI is in the process of renewing its overall mandate and strategy. One proposed change is the creation of a membership category for individual peer support workers. To inform the organization's future direction, an environmental scan was completed to identify the types of memberships and benefits offered by Canadian and international peer support organizations. This scan included:

- A review of international and Canadian peer support organizations;
- A review of non-peer/clinical membership-based organizations;
- and interviews with stakeholders in the provincial peer support sector.

The majority of the peer support organizations identified were from Canada (n=14) and the United States of America (n=19). From the 39 peer support organizations, each offered at least one membership type; however, three organizations offered more than one type of membership. In total, there were a total of 45 membership types offered. Very few organizations specifically reported membership for individual peer support workers (n=7). Twenty-seven of the 45 memberships offered had a cost between \$1 to 25 dollars. Thirteen memberships were free of charge.

The most common benefits offered to members were:

- (1) access to other resources such as blogs, documents and reports (n=32);
- (2) access to events and programming (e.g. drop-ins, workshops) (n=28);
- (3) newsletters (n=26);
- (4) voting ability at annual meetings (n=20); and
- (5) opportunities at board meetings (n=15).

From the interviews with three stakeholders, a key advantage of offering individual memberships for OPDI is the creation of a peer network through membership. Some stakeholders felt this network was more important as the number of peer support organizations decreases. For individual peer support workers, membership with the OPDI confers the advantage of having a college-like association supporting them and their profession. On the other hand, a potential risk associated with membership is a shift from OPDI's original mandate and consideration of whether offering membership aligns with the organization's accountability agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Three clinical membership-based organizations were also reviewed: the Ontario Medical Association (OMA), the Ontario Physiotherapy Association (OPA), and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO). All three of these large organizations offer membership to students training to become a professional (e.g. nursing students, medical students). Membership costs vary by membership categories offered by the RNAO and OMA; however, for all three organizations, students have a substantial membership discount. While benefits vary, key benefits include access to:

- Employment opportunities (OPA),
- Varied insurance coverage (RNAO), and
- Being a part of a health program, which provides support for professionals to address/manage individual health issues (OMA).

Based on findings from the environmental scan and interviews, the report offers three key recommendations. Specifically, that OPDI:

1. Determine if it will offer membership to all peer support workers in all fields, or specifically those with experience working in the mental health sector.
2. Conduct a current-state analysis of its financial and human resources prior to determining benefits for members. This will inform what tangible benefits the organization could feasibly offer members, and at what cost.
3. Initiate an individual membership category with a cost of \$100 or less and consider including a sliding scale to improve accessibility.

## Overview

This report has been prepared by Research Associates from the McMaster Research Shop at the request of the Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI). It reviews some of the membership categories, processes (e.g. cost) and benefits that Canadian and international peer support programs offer their members. It also highlights some advantages and disadvantages of having individual memberships that current OPDI members identify. Our environmental scan suggests that individual membership through peer support programs is advantageous to the organization and to individual members: For members it creates a network; for organizations it broadens the scope and creates a governing body.

## Scope

This report draws on an environmental scan of peer support memberships offered in Canada and internationally, and interviews with several stakeholders to inform recommendations to OPDI as it considers expanding its membership model from organizations to individuals.

## Terms

In this report, we use the phrase “peer support” to refer to the emotional and practical support provided by individuals who share a common experience of a difficult circumstance or condition and are living proof that recovery is achievable.

## Organization

The report is organized into the following sections:

- **Methodology and Limitations:** This section presents the data collection methods used for this project and maps some parameters for better understanding the meaningfulness and thoroughness of the material gathered.
- **Findings:** This section highlights comparable organizations’ membership types, structures, costs, and benefits, presents brief case studies of both peer support and clinical membership-based organizations, and summarizes findings from interviews with key stakeholders.
- **Discussion:** This section analyzes and comments on the key findings discussed in the previous section.
- **Recommendations:** This section offers recommendations to OPDI around member eligibility, membership costs, and benefits based on the findings.
- **Future Research:** This section offers suggestions for future research topics to explore.
- **Conclusion:** This section briefly summarizes the report findings and key considerations.

# Introduction

The Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) is a provincial organization that represents peer support initiatives in mental health and addictions in the province of Ontario. Some of these organizations are consumer/survivor-led and independent, and others are peer programs within mainstream mental health organizations (such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, CMHA).

The OPDI has recently undergone a stakeholder consultation and is in the process of renewing their overall strategy. One change that has been recommended that they are interested in pursuing is adding an additional membership category for individual peer support workers. This would be in addition to their current membership which is composed of organizations, initiatives, and programs, but not individuals.

A team of McMaster Research Shop volunteers undertook an environmental scan and key informant interviews to explore the following research questions:

- What membership categories, processes, and member benefits do other peer support organizations in Canada and internationally offer?
- How do other non-peer/clinical healthcare membership-based organizations operate in terms of membership categories, procedures (e.g. cost), and what they offer their membership?

## Methodology and Limitations

### Methodology

#### *Environmental Scan*

The research team gathered information from a wide variety of sources, and critically analyzed findings to reduce the effects of biased data reporting. We used key search terms such as peer support, mental health, and membership, and benefits into Google search engine (See Appendix C for a full list of search terms). Some of these organizations are consumer/survivor led and independent, and others are peer programs within mainstream mental health organizations (like CMHA) in Canada and around the world. Peer support has become a widespread model of support taken up in Western countries especially the United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States of America, Australia.

We examined 39 websites of peer support organizations primarily focused on supporting individuals affected by mental health and addictions. We looked for the membership categories, processes... and tracked this information through an Excel sheet. We found a total of 39 organizational websites were found that offer peer support primarily for individuals affected by mental health and addictions. We examined the membership categories, processes, and member benefits of these peer support organizations were examined. These organizations websites were searched thoroughly for this information and were inputted into an Excel document used for tracking purposes by corresponding category. The focus on this report is for organizations that represent peer support workers/volunteers as opposed to organizations that represent people with lived experience of mental health concerns also called member-based organizations.

## Interviews

3 interviews were conducted with individuals working in 3 peer support organizations in Ontario. All interviews took approximately 15-45 minutes and were conducted over the phone, and later transcribed. The interviews were semi- structured in nature and consisted of a total of 8 relevant questions.

## Limitations

This project is limited in two main ways: The scope of our search and our sample size.

1. **Scope:** This project does not capture every peer support organization around the world. Due to the limited time constraint of this project, 39 organizations - mainly located in Canada and the USA - were examined. Websites reviewed were also not always up-to-date or complete.
2. **Sample size:** The small size of the interviews may not be entirely reflective of all unique perspectives, ideas, and opinions on this topic. Despite this limitation in our data, we critically analyzed the evidence we found and used this to develop our recommendations.

## Findings

### Peer Support Organizations

#### *Organization Locations and Types*

A total of 39 organizations were identified and reviewed for this environmental scan. The peer support programs examined are located across Canada (n=14; 36%), the United States of America (n=19; 49%), England (n=2; 5%), Australia (n=2; 5%), Scotland (n=1; 3%), and New Zealand (n=1; 3%). See Appendix A and Appendix D, Table D1 for more details. Many of the organizations operated as a not-for-profit organization. Eleven of these organizations focused on supporting individuals and organizations with mental health conditions and/or supporting the community.

*Table 1 - Organizations by Country*

Canada	n=14; 36%
USA	n=19; 49%
England	n=2; 5%
Australia	n=2; 5%
Scotland	n=1; 3%

New Zealand	n=1; 3%
-------------	---------

### **Membership Types, Lengths, Application and Cost of Membership**

Membership Type	<p>There was a total of 45 different membership types offered by the 39 organizations (See Appendix D, Table D1).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twenty-one (46.7%) of the membership types did not report if the membership was specific for peer support workers.</li> <li>• Only seven (15.6%) of the membership types were specifically reported for peer support workers.</li> <li>• Other common membership types included individual memberships for service users (n=6; 13.3%) and for individuals who were of low income or unemployed (n=4; 8.9%).</li> </ul> <p>See Table 2 for additional information about membership types.</p>
Membership Length	<p>Thirty-eight of the 45 (84.4%) memberships identified were annual memberships, with five identified as lifetime memberships. Two (4.4%) membership offers identified did not report term length.</p>
Method of Application	<p>The majority (n=35; 77.7%) of memberships could be obtained through an electronic submission; the remaining 10 (22.3%) required hard-copy submissions.</p>
Cost of Membership	<p>From the 45 different membership types identified, 13 (28.8%) reported providing membership at no cost, with another 13 (28.8%) costing members between \$11 to \$25 dollars. Seven (15.6%) of these membership types cost between \$1 to \$10 dollars, and another seven (15.6%) reported costing between \$26 to \$50 dollars. For additional details, see <i>Figure 1</i>.</p>

**Table 2 - Membership types identified in the environmental scan**

Membership Type	Count of Membership Type
Unspecified	21
Individual - Peer Supporters	7
Individual - Services Users	6
Individual - Low Income/Unemployed	4
Student	2
Individual Practitioners	1
Investing member	1
Organization	1
Student - Low Income/Unemployed	1
Unknown (website is currently down)	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>45</b>





Figure 1 - Membership costs identified in environmental scan

### Benefits of Membership

Benefits of Membership: The three most common benefits were access to

- other resources such as blogs, documents and reports (n=32);
- events and programming (e.g. drop-ins, workshops) (n=28);
- and organizational newsletters (n=26).

Other common benefits included

- the ability to vote at annual meetings (n=20)
- and opportunities at board meetings (n=15).

See Figure 2 for more details about membership benefits.

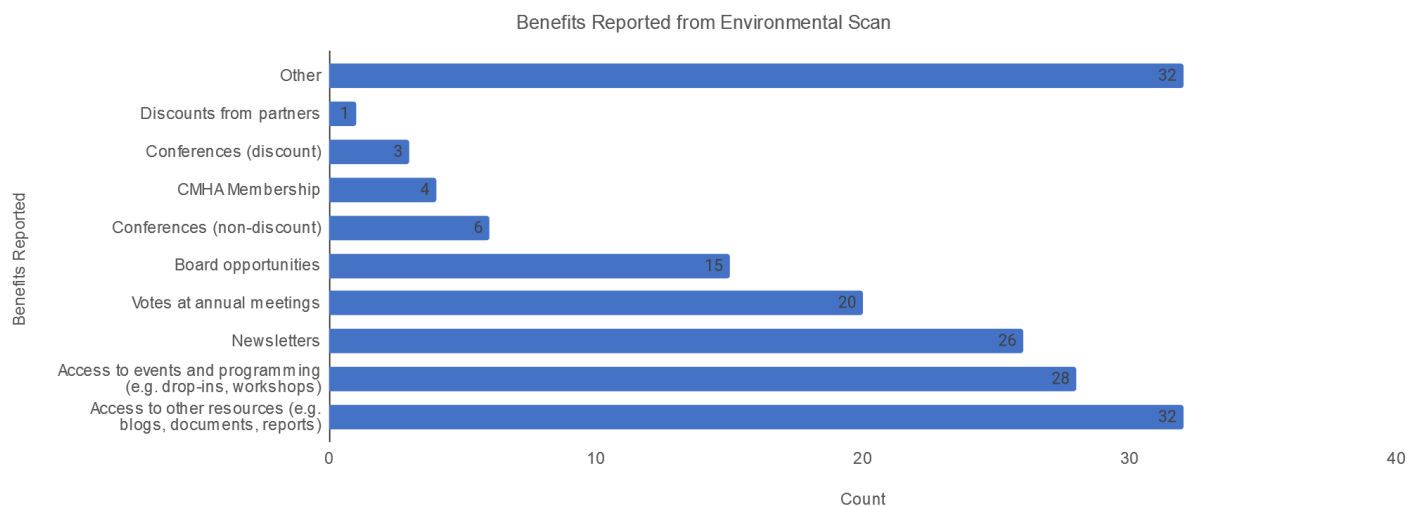


Figure 2 - Membership Benefits identified in environmental scan

## Peer Support Organizations Reporting Memberships for Peer Supporters

### Overview

There were eight unique organizations which reported providing membership specifically for peer supporters. Table 2 lists these organizations and country of location. These organizations are discussed in further detail in later sections of this report.

*Table 3 - Organizations specifically reporting memberships for peer supporters*

Country	Organization Name
Australia	Peer Support Australia
England	Mind
New Zealand	Platform
Scotland	Support in Mind Scotland
United States of America	Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network
	Montana's Peer Network
	Wellness in the Woods

### Membership Length

Of the 7 memberships offered specifically to peer support workers, five were annual memberships (see Table 3).

*Table 4 - Membership lengths for peer supporters*

Membership Type	Total
Annual	5
Lifetime	1
Unspecified	1
Total	7

### Membership Benefits

The three most frequently reported benefits for peer support workers when signing up for these memberships were newsletters (n=5); access to events and programming (n=4); and access to other resources. See Table 4 for full list of memberships.

*Table 5 - Benefits for memberships specific to peer supporters*

Membership Benefits	Total
Newsletters	5
Access to events and programming	4
Access to other resources	4
Board opportunities	3
Conferences (discount)	2
Votes at annual meetings	1
Opportunity to be involved in research projects and trialing of resources	1
Access to mentoring program	1
Weekly conference call supporting your relationship with a person in recovery	1
Access to our Speed Skills Webinars	1
Certified Peer Specialist Chat Room	1
Priority to sign up for MPN trainings	1
Access to webinars/podcasts	1

### **Membership Costs**

Overall, two of the seven memberships incurred a cost between \$11 to \$25 dollars; an additional two memberships cost were between \$51 to \$150 dollars. Table 4 summarizes the details of the costs of these memberships. Table 5 summarizes the details of the costs of these memberships.

*Table 6 - Costs for memberships specific to peer supporters*

Costs	Total
\$11-25	2
\$51-150	2
\$151+	1
\$26-50	1
Free	1

### **Profiles of Organizations with Peer Supporter Members**

#### **Peer Support Australia**

Focuses on providing peer support for schools located in Australia and delivering a positive impact on the wellbeing of young people. Peer Support Australia offers an annual membership for schools who want to utilize resources and workshops to provide peer support services for their students. Program manuals and modules are provided to schools that register, as well as consulting services and planning services to ensure the smooth and effective run of the program. An initial cost of \$140 is invoiced for the first year and is then renewed annually at a cost of \$100 per year. Members get the added bonus of being involved in research projects and receive the opportunity to trial new resources as well.

**Mind**

Provides membership for peer supporters who want to give a voice to those living in England and Wales and experience mental health problems. Members of Mind can shape mental health services by voting for trustees or becoming a trustee themselves. To become a member there is a one-year membership cost of £26 for those who are employed and £6 for individuals who are unemployed. Benefits of becoming a member include: a quarterly membership magazine, fortnightly e-news, shortlisting the Mind Media Awards and entry into the Mind membership book club.

**Platform**

Supports New Zealanders by providing addictions and mental health services and creating a positive space for those experiencing mental health and addiction issues. Platform currently offers a general membership for peer supporters and an investing membership. Investing members are organizations that want to invest in the social change of New Zealand, and the cost of membership is \$5000. On the other hand, membership for peer supporters costs \$500 and allows individuals to contribute and participate in a community network development movement.

**Support in Mind Scotland**

A charity that aims to improve the quality of life of those who experience mental health problems and to support those who are heard to reach out to and engage. Membership for peer supporters are offered free of charge and help Support in Mind Scotland to provide essential services for mental health service users, their friends, relatives and carers. Some benefits of becoming a member is receiving the latest news and updates on Support in Mind Scotland and also receiving a membership pack and copy of regular newsletters that include news from across Scotland.

**Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network**

The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network believes in the ability of everyone living with mental health concerns to enjoy lives of purpose, meaning, productivity, and wellness. Since it was founded in 1991, this grassroots non-profit organization has been led and run by mental health peers—people in mental health recovery. GMHCN has evolved into a statewide organization of over 100 employees engaged in advocacy, education, training, and peer support services for the people of Georgia. GMHCN is recognized as a national leader in the peer support movement. At its core, the basis of peer support—one person using their lived experience to support another—is not new; in fact, it is the basis of human growth and development. Mental health peers with special training are now able to use their lived recovery experience in clinical settings to provide something beyond a diagnosis or medication. The Peer Annual Membership Fee is \$5.00 and the Ally and Supporter Annual Membership Fee is \$20.00. By becoming a member, they let GMHCN and decision-makers and politicians know that their work matters to members, their family, and their community. They also receive access to The Pipeline newsletter to access to information about the important work that is being done here to support behavioral health, and the resources and opportunities available to them.

### **Montana's Peer Network**

Montana's Peer Network is a statewide peer run non-profit recovery organization with a mission to lead the expansion and development of recovery-oriented behavioral health services in Montana. They are a network of over 1000 individuals in 78 communities across Montana who are in recovery from mental health, substance abuse and/or addiction struggles. They provide information, education, training, peer support and resources across the state using their own "lived experience" in long term recovery. They are peer run, by people in recovery. They promote the recovery concepts of hope, self advocacy, education, peer support, personal responsibility and resiliency. They believe that these concepts are universal regardless of what recovery program you may chose. They are a member-based organization with a board of directors and staff. There are 3 types of membership including a Free Membership, a BHPSS Membership (\$55.00 a year), and a Business Ally Membership (\$125.00 a year). The paid membership of \$55.00 representation on the Board of Behavioral Health, notice of employment opportunities, access to MPN mentoring program, Access to their Speed Skills Webinars, Specialized CEU Recovery Conference Workshop, weekly PS Pulse newsletter, free admission into recovery conference, priority sign up for MPN trainings, and connection to Montana's recovery network.

### **Wellness in the Woods**

Wellness in the Woods is a non-profit agency promoting wellness in eight dimensions including: physical, emotional, vocational, social, spiritual, intellectual, environmental and financial. They specialize in advocacy and education work with and for persons with a mental health lived experience and hold each community member in unconditional high regard by providing wellness and strength-based services in rural Minnesota. Their organization is considered "consumer run". This means that all of their board and staff have a lived experience with a mental illness. They want to work to decrease the stigma that surrounds asking for help, getting healthy, and finding good support networks. Their first membership Pine (pay what you can) is for people who want to be general members and are interested in wellness and recovery. member benefits include invitations to local, regional, and statewide social gatherings, newsletter, mental health legislative updates, and early notice of Wellness in the Woods training events. Their Aspen \$20.00 membership is for peer advocates, representatives, family & loved ones, community members & professionals involved on Local Advisory Councils (LAC), State or Regional Advisory Councils, going to public meetings and/or taskforce work groups about matters of concern to people in recovery. Their member benefits include all pine level benefits plus 50% off the annual conference registration, and monthly information on training and webinars. The Ash membership worth \$25.00 annually is for family members, friends, loved ones, individual community members and service professionals supporting the voice of people in recovery from mental health life challenges. Membership benefits include all pine level benefits plus weekly conference call supporting their relationship with a person in recovery. The maple \$50.00 membership is for people certified as a peer specialist completing state-approved training in the provision of services to peers in recovery. They may or may not be actively employed as a certified peer specialist now. The benefits include include all pine level benefits plus free registration to Annual Certified Peer Specialist Statewide Convening, a certified Peer Specialist Chat Room, and access to webinars/podcasts.

## **Profiles of Clinical Membership-Based Organizations**

### **Ontario Medical Association**

The Ontario Medical Association (OMA) represents the interests of medical professionals. Membership is offered to residents, physicians (retired or practicing), medical students and international medical graduates. The annual cost of membership varies based on individual status. For current medical students,

the cost for membership is \$10 per year. For residents, the cost is \$155 per year, and for regular members, the cost is \$1970 per year.

Benefits vary depending on the type of membership; however, there are common benefits shared between physicians, residents, retired physicians and medical students. All members have access to insurance benefits. In addition, all of these members are offered the Physician Health Program (PHP), which provides support to these individuals regarding any issues that affect them personally or professionally (e.g. mental health, substance abuse). Lastly, all members receive special rates and services offered by the OMA Advantage Program that are tailored to the members' needs.

### **Ontario Physiotherapy Association**

As a branch of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association, the Ontario Physiotherapy Association (OPA) aims to help its members through advocacy, professional development and career support services to improve the quality of physiotherapy in Ontario. Membership is offered to physiotherapists (PTs), physiotherapist assistants (PTAs) and PT students. The costs for membership for PTs and PTA is unclear; however, membership is free for PT students.

All members receive access to various resources; however, the type of resources may vary. PTs gain access to resources around research, best practices, and practice management. Members who are PT students gain resources on resume writing and on interviewing. It is unclear what resources PTAs attain through membership. In addition, PTAs and PT students receive discounts on courses, with PTs receiving discounts on services that support their personal and professional growth. A key benefit for PTs through membership with the OPA is that the organization helps the public find PTs for employment.

### **Registered Nursing Association of Ontario**

Representing registered nurses (RNs), nurse practitioners (NPs) and nursing students in Ontario, the Registered Nursing Association of Ontario (RNAO) aims to help shape the healthcare system through advocacy and promotion of nursing excellence. Membership is offered to RNS, NPs and nursing students; however, those who support the work of the RNAO can also join as a 'Friend of the RNAO.' Membership for students cost \$21.50, with the regular fee set at \$100.00

Members are entitled to career counselling services; various insurance coverage; liability and legal protection; and discounts on education. In addition, nursing students who are members gain access to best practice guidelines and networking opportunities.

### **Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)**

Goals	The CASW and membership aims to contribute to a strong profession that advocates for social justice -- and better conditions for social workers.
Eligibility	Registered Social Workers (RSW) and BSW/MSW students
Fee	Students - free Regular fee \$50.00.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• access to job opportunities</li></ul>

- eligibility for award nominations
- access to the social work reference center which is up to date social work and medical journals on adolescent health, aging, behavioral and mental health, end of life care, clinical social work, diversity and equality and more
- legal advice for members with professional liability insurance
- Access to affinity programs for extended health, life, and disability Insurance
- Continuing education Opportunities and webinars
- Canadian Social Work (CSW) journal
- national sponsorship opportunities or national representation on coalitions and sustained lobbying to the Parliament of Canada that is focused on promoting and strengthening the profession while advocating on issues of social justice
- receive CASW's Media Monitoring Service – a daily email service of national news relative to the social work profession and the reporter – monthly update on CASW initiatives and national resources

### **The Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA):**

Offers members a uniquely Canadian voice that speaks on behalf of Canada's 4,700 psychiatrists and 900 residents on issues that affect the future of mental health in Canada and psychiatry's role within it. They offer members a voice at the national government level on issues that affect patients, opportunities for professional development and networking, clinical practice resources and much more. The cost for the membership can vary greatly depending on the position and year of service for membership. For instance, currently licensed and practising psychiatrists pay \$583.00 or can pay a reduced fee for one spouse when both are active members \$491.00. Early career psychiatrists can pay \$145.00 for Year 1, \$292.00 year 2 and \$438.00 year 3. As well, Members-in-Training pay \$59.00. Membership is free for medical school students, members who have reached age 70 and who have been Active Members in good standing for 30 consecutive years, and Physicians who have achieved pre-eminence in their profession and who have been recognized by the Membership Affairs Committee or CPA Board of Directors. Early, Mid, and Late Career Psychiatrists each receive different levels of membership criteria. However, most common benefits include *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, Canada's preeminent academic journal, on a monthly basis, CPA's weekly electronic newsletter, *PsychEXPRESS*, and access to CPA's job bank. They are also eligible to sit as a member of CPA committees and the Board of Directors and to meet and network with their peers and senior leaders at the annual conference. Discounts to attend the conference, life/health/disability/car/travel insurance, and a special corporate rate at GoodLife Fitness centres across Canada are all perks that are also included.



### The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA):

The CPA has several different membership types ranging from Members and Fellows (\$330.00), Retired Members and Fellows (\$120.00), Student Affiliates (\$75.00), Special Affiliates (\$178.00), International Affiliates (\$200.00), International Student Affiliates (\$123.00). The member benefits include

- advocacy on matters of government policy and funding'
- the opportunity to network with leaders and colleagues from across Canada
- joining one or more CPA Sections that reflect a member's subject matter area of interest/expertise,
- attending the CPA's annual national convention.
- professional development offerings, from in-person workshops, half- or one-day seminars, sponsored workshops, and online offerings
- access to peer reviewed publications, association publications, Psynopsis quarterly magazine, or e-newsletter.
- running for a seat on the CPA's Board, joining a Committee, or joining a Task Force receiving a CPA award.
- preferential pricing on CPA activities, products and services,
- as well as exclusive savings from vendors across Canada and the USA. For both professional and personal products and services, such as professional liability insurance, home and auto insurance, transportation, cell phones, payment services, fitness programs, publications, and hotels.

## Interview Findings

### *Interviewee Characteristics:*

All the Interviewees bring with them a variety of wealth, knowledge and experience to the Peer support sector. The interviewees have been associated with OPDI as member organizations for many years and have attended the annual conference on a yearly basis. As member organizations, they can vote in elections, apply to join the board, and share information with OPDI to gain access to what's going on in the field of the provincial level that are unique all consumer and survivor initiative experiences. Interviewees had been connected to their organizations in the mental health and addictions field and OPDI for between 2 and 25 years and brought a range of experiences in frontline service and governance in various mental health and addictions-focused organizations.

### *Potential Advantages of OPDI Individual Memberships to OPDI:*

Some benefits to OPDI of membership identified by interviewees with is that it broadens the scope of the organization and provides different perspectives. This broadening of membership is far more inclusive and having individual workers can also serve to revitalize the organization. The number of individual peer workers is growing, so it would be prudent for OPDI to broaden its membership to include this growing part of peer work and to provide an opportunity to provide connections. OPDI member organizations are disappearing due to wider contextual shifts like organizations are being eaten up into bigger organizations. If OPDI involves individual peer workers, there may be opportunities to develop a profile of where peer work is at in Ontario and use that as leverage for policy advancement or maybe advocacy work. Involving individual peer workers would support OPDI in their relevance to the contemporary peer community and their ability to advocate for peer support at



the provincial level. This Could have more impact in structure of advocacy and add benefits to the system in general.

Memberships could also aid in the future existence of OPDI as it builds a community of practice to further strengthen the peer support community. It would allow standardized approach to communications and knowledge exchange across the province. OPDI has opportunity to work with emerging practices, turn these into an understanding of best practice and potentially formulate new policy across the province.

#### ***Potential Benefits for Individuals:***

- Peer Support workers can feel that there is an organization that they can belong to and get resources, feel connected, and have people understand what they are doing. This knowledge of realizing that they do not have to work in isolation of each other as they belong to a part of a larger whole is validating and reassuring.
- The ability to travel to an annual general meeting or a workshop to meet and collaborate with people who are doing similar work.
- Having an accredited college through OPDI, Peer Support Workers have the ability to be insured (for private contractors), insurance at a better price, or receive standards that are emerging from the province. Creating a college of peer support can offer opportunities to individuals and organizations.

Other benefits include access to peer support knowledge and expertise, and being able to connect isolated peer workers with peer support training and knowledge.

#### ***Potential Challenges of OPDI Individual Memberships:***

Some potential disadvantages could be as follows:

- individual memberships could diminish the organization's role and power within OPDI. There was a concern that individuals would overrun and take over the organization.
- The peer support community is diverse, so how would OPDI adequately represent or speak to all of the issues. There's the concern with broad and diverse membership, trying to find commonality among diversity is a challenge.
- Also, OPDI would need to have adequate resources to support that membership influx. Currently, OPDI is a staff of 3 FTE. If membership were to double, it is vital that there are resources to adequately support that membership. An increase of membership may create more expectations for certain services or benefits of membership. The organization would have to address the planning for growth.
- Furthermore, there is an accountability agreement with OPDI's funding body, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). As part of the function of the agreement, there is a description of practices and businesses they engage in. Offering individual memberships might lead to mandate drift, which could jeopardize the organization's funding. It would be important for OPDI work with ministry representatives to ensure alignment with core mission and Ministry requirements. Once lined up with the Ministry, OPDI could reach out to the membership at large as it exists now to communicate the organization's membership goals and where the organization is in the process of exploring these possible changes to membership structure.

# Discussion

From the environmental scan, there were very few memberships that were specific for peer support workers. Nearly all of the memberships reviewed required annual renewal. Despite the increased availability of technology, it was interesting to find that 10 of the 45 memberships identified required a hard-copy submission of the application. With respect to the costs of the membership, 33 of the 45 memberships required a payment of \$25 dollars or less, with 13 of these 33 memberships being free.

The most common benefits identified were accessing resources such as blogs, documents, and reports; access to events and programming; and newsletters. Key benefits offered by membership-based clinical organizations include employment opportunities for professionals, comprehensive insurance coverage, and access to health support programs. Nevertheless, offering these benefits may not be feasible at a low membership cost as they are resource and finance dependent - especially those offered by the clinical membership-based organizations.

Interviewees who participated in this environmental scan all discussed the advantage of creating a community for peer support workers. One interviewee noted the decline in the number of peer support organizations despite the increase in peer support workers and highlighted the imperative of connecting peer support workers to each other.

A key risk of offering membership discussed by one interviewee is misalignment with OPDI's mandate. As the organization is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOLTC), OPDI has an accountability agreement with this government body. If OPDI proceeds with a new mandate and strategy that does not align with the accountability agreement, organizational funding may be reduced.

# Recommendations

Based on the environmental scan and interviews, there are three specific recommendations.

1. **Eligibility:** From the interviews, there were differences in opinion around who should be eligible for membership. Thus, OPDI should determine if the membership will be open for all peer support workers or if it will be specific for those working in the mental health sectors.
2. **Membership Cost:** Although 13 of the membership types identified in the environmental scan of peer support organizations reported having no cost, it is recommended that OPDI charge members an annual fee. All of the interviewees stated that a cost should be associated with membership. A key consideration is providing membership at a sliding scale to include those want to be involved, but may have financial restrictions. Two of the interviewees reported that \$100 or less was an appropriate amount. From the analyses of memberships offered specifically for peer supporters, four of the seven memberships cost between \$11 to \$150 dollars; thus, \$100 seems to be a reasonable amount. This proposed cost is approximately the same as the annual fee charged by the RNAO to its various members.
3. **Benefits:** Specific member benefits are largely dependent on the current resources (financial and human capital) that OPDI has. From the environmental scan of peer support organizations, there were various tangible benefits that were frequently reported such as access to resources, events and programming, and newsletters. Prior to determining tangible benefits for members, it is critical for OPDI to first determine its current state of finances and human resources. Afterwards, OPDI should have a proposed list of benefits it wants to offer its

members. This will help the organization identify gaps in resources and determine overall feasibility of benefits. Furthermore, this will also help determine how much it should charge individuals to become members as the revenue raised from membership can help fill in financial gaps.

## Future Research

1. **What are the resources, events, programming, information in newsletters, etc. specifically that OPDI could offer that would entice individuals to join as members? Frequencies of these? Methods of application? Would these actually appeal to peer support members in Ontario?**

Out of the 39 organizations we looked at, all of them provided some sort of benefit for individuals who sign up to become a member. These benefits may include a newsletter, access to events, and/or the ability to vote in general meetings. Future research could look at what benefits promote individuals to join as members and if members are actually using these benefits. To answer these research questions, surveys can be distributed to members to identify which benefits appeal to them, if any.

2. **Explore the process of becoming an accredited college.**

From the 3 interviews that were conducted, one of the benefits that were identified for individuals was the fact that they had an accredited college behind them. Therefore, it would be valuable to explore the process of becoming an accredited college. This information can be obtained by reaching out to accredited bodies to understand the various key steps involved in the process. Also, case studies and clinical organizations can be looked at to gather further information.

3. **Explore benefits and costs for organizational memberships.**

This report focuses on individual memberships, but what about organizational memberships? Currently, OPDI doesn't charge a cost for organizational memberships, but what would it look like if OPDI implemented a cost for these memberships? How much would that cost be and what are the various benefits? To answer these questions, more information would need to be collected and another environmental scan would need to be performed to gain further insight on organizational memberships.

## Conclusion

The results of this environmental scan helped identify common benefits offered by peer support organizations in various countries as well as those benefits offered by clinical membership-based organizations in Ontario. Interviews completed as part of this scan also highlighted the advantage gained for OPDI by offering membership OPDI and those gained by peer support workers if they become members. Although it appears that offering individual peer support membership is appropriate, OPDI must consider whom membership should be and its current capacity to support potential members.

# Appendices

## Appendix A - List of Peer Support Organizations Reviewed

Number	Organization Name	Location	URL
1	Peer Support Australia	Australia	<a href="https://peersupport.edu.au/our-programs/membership/">https://peersupport.edu.au/our-programs/membership/</a>
2	Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)	Australia	<a href="http://www.sharc.org.au/membership/">http://www.sharc.org.au/membership/</a>
3	Canadian Mental Health Association, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R.).	Canada	<a href="https://cmhahkpr.ca/get-involved/membership/">https://cmhahkpr.ca/get-involved/membership/</a>
4	Canadian Mental Health Association Sault Ste. Marie Branch	Canada	<a href="http://ssm-algoma.cmha.ca/get-involved/membership">http://ssm-algoma.cmha.ca/get-involved/membership</a>
5	CMHA of Vancouver Fraser Branch	Canada	<a href="https://vancouver-fraser.cmha.bc.ca/">https://vancouver-fraser.cmha.bc.ca/</a>
6	Connect for Mental Health	Canada	<a href="http://connectformh.ca/get-involved/become-a-member/">http://connectformh.ca/get-involved/become-a-member/</a>
7	Helping Ourselves through Peer Support & Employment	Canada	<a href="https://hopebrant.ca/become-a-member/">https://hopebrant.ca/become-a-member/</a>
8	LGBT Youth Line	Canada	<a href="https://www.youthline.ca/get-involved/membership/">https://www.youthline.ca/get-involved/membership/</a>
9	Mood Disorders Association of Ontario	Canada	<a href="https://www.mooddorders.ca/membership">https://www.mooddorders.ca/membership</a>
10	Mood Disorders Ottawa	Canada	<a href="https://www.mooddordersottawa.ca/membership-volunteer-form">https://www.mooddordersottawa.ca/membership-volunteer-form</a>
11	Mental Health Rights Coalition	Canada	<a href="http://www.mentalhealthrights.ca/membership.html">http://www.mentalhealthrights.ca/membership.html</a>
12	People Advocate for Change Through Empowerment	Canada	<a href="https://www.pace-tbay.net/membership/">https://www.pace-tbay.net/membership/</a>

13	People for Equal Partnership in Mental Health Nipissing (PEP)	Canada	<a href="https://pepplace.org/membership-form/">https://pepplace.org/membership-form/</a>
14	Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa	Canada	<a href="https://www.pso-ottawa.ca/membership">https://www.pso-ottawa.ca/membership</a>
15	National Network for Mental Health	Canada	<a href="https://nnmh.ca/home/why-join/">https://nnmh.ca/home/why-join/</a>
16	Northern Initiative for Social Action	Canada	<a href="http://nisa.on.ca/become-a-member/">http://nisa.on.ca/become-a-member/</a>
17	Platform	New Zealand	<a href="https://www.platform.org.nz/organisations/join">https://www.platform.org.nz/organisations/join</a>
18	Support in Mind Scotland	Scotland	<a href="https://www.supportinmindscotland.org.uk/become-a-member">https://www.supportinmindscotland.org.uk/become-a-member</a>
19	Mind	United Kingdom	<a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/about-minds-membership/">https://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/about-minds-membership/</a>
20	Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	United Kingdom	<a href="https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/gi-become-a-member">https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/gi-become-a-member</a>
21	Association for Mental Health and Wellness	United States	<a href="http://mhaw.org/get-involved/professional-membership/">http://mhaw.org/get-involved/professional-membership/</a>
22	California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations	United States	<a href="https://camhpro.org/individual-membership-2/">https://camhpro.org/individual-membership-2/</a>
23	California Peer Support Association (CPSA)	United States	<a href="http://www.californiapeersupport.org/page-289956">http://www.californiapeersupport.org/page-289956</a>
24	The Florida Peer Support Association Inc.	United States	<a href="https://floridapeersupport.org/become-a-member">https://floridapeersupport.org/become-a-member</a>
25	Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network	United States	<a href="https://www.gmhcn.org/membership">https://www.gmhcn.org/membership</a>
26	Iowa Advocates for Mental Health Recovery	United States	<a href="https://www.iarecovery.org/contact/become-member">https://www.iarecovery.org/contact/become-member</a>
27	Mental Health Association of Palm Beach County, Inc	United States	<a href="https://www.mhapbc.org/BecomeAMember">https://www.mhapbc.org/BecomeAMember</a>
28	Mental Health Association of San Francisco	United States	<a href="https://mentalhealthsf.formstack.com/forms/membership">https://mentalhealthsf.formstack.com/forms/membership</a>
29	Montana's Peer Network	United States	<a href="https://mtpeernetwork.org/get-involved/membership/">https://mtpeernetwork.org/get-involved/membership/</a>

30	Mood Disorders Support Group New York	United States	<a href="http://mdsg.org/membership/">http://mdsg.org/membership/</a>
31	National Alliance on Mental Illness	United States	<a href="https://namiwc.org/membership/">https://namiwc.org/membership/</a>
32	National Alliance on Mental Illness (Mississippi)	United States	<a href="https://namims.org/benefits-of-membership/">https://namims.org/benefits-of-membership/</a>
33	New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services	United States	<a href="https://www.nyaprs.org/join-us">https://www.nyaprs.org/join-us</a>
34	North Carolina Consumer Advocacy, Networking, and Support Organization	United States	<a href="https://nccanso.org/support/membership/">https://nccanso.org/support/membership/</a>
35	Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA)	United States	<a href="http://pmhca.org/membership/index.html">http://pmhca.org/membership/index.html</a>
36	The National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery (NCMHR)	United States	<a href="https://www.ncmhr.org/membership.htm">https://www.ncmhr.org/membership.htm</a>
37	South Dakota United for Hope & Recovery	United States	<a href="http://www.southdakotaunited.org/membership.htm">http://www.southdakotaunited.org/membership.htm</a>
38	Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (VPS)	United States	<a href="https://www.vermontpsychiatricsurvivors.org/members/about-membership/">https://www.vermontpsychiatricsurvivors.org/members/about-membership/</a>
39	Wellness in the Woods	United States	<a href="https://www.mnwitw.org/membership">https://www.mnwitw.org/membership</a>

## Appendix B - Interview Guide

Hi, I'm [name]. Thanks for making some time to speak with me. As you know, we're doing some research for OPDI looking at individual membership structures and processes in other peer support organizations, and we're also doing key informant interviews with some of OPDI's current organizational members to gather their input about potential benefits and drawbacks of having an individual membership category.

The interview should take about 15 minutes, and you can stop the interview at any time. Neither your name nor your organization will be used in any reporting or be connected to anything you say, but since we were connected to you through Barbara at OPDI and the sample size for interviews will be fairly small (about 5 people), we can't guarantee your anonymity. Does that sound okay?

*[If yes, proceed with the interview:]*

I'll be typing your responses as we go, so there may be a bit of a delay as we're talking just so I can capture everything you're saying.

1. So first off, can you tell me about your connection OPDI? [Possible prompt: How long have you been associated with OPDI?]
2. How long have you been in your current role?
3. What do you see as the main benefits to OPDI as an organization of having individual memberships?
4. [Prompt: What leads you to think that individual memberships would be helpful to the organization? What challenge is OPDI facing that might be addressed by expanding membership to include individuals?]
5. What might some disadvantages or risks be for OPDI as an organization of having individual memberships?
6. What would be the most important benefits for individuals to receive as members of OPDI from your perspective? [Prompts: We've looked at some other similar organizations in other jurisdictions, and some common benefits are things like newsletters, access to events, and votes at AGMs. Would any of those seem more important, or are there others that you think might motivate individuals to become members?]
7. So, if individuals received the benefits we just talked about, and OPDI did have individual memberships, how much do you think they should cost, if anything?
8. What kinds of criteria or qualifications would you see as being important for individual membership with OPDI?
9. Is there anything you think is important for us to know that you haven't gotten a chance to say?

*[Thank interviewee for their time.]*

Appendix C - Search Terms Used for the Environmental Scan

Search Terms:

Membership
Peer Support
Mental Health
Addictions
Ontario
Canada
Mentorship
Programs
Individual
Non profit
Organization
Mood Disorders
LGBTQ
Indigenous
Consumer
Survivor
Anxiety
Depression
Gambling



## Appendix D - Total membership types offered by peer support organizations

Table D1

*Total membership types offered by each organization*

Organization Name	Total Memberships Offered
Association for Mental Health and Wellness	1
California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations	1
California Peer Support Association (CPSA)	1
Canadian Mental Health Association Vancouver	4
Canadian Mental Health Association Sault Ste. Marie Branch	1
Canadian Mental Health Association, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R.).	1
Connect for Mental Health	1
Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network	1
Helping Ourselves through Peer Support & Employment	1
Iowa Advocates for Mental Health Recovery	1
LGBT Youth Line	1
Mental Health Association of Palm Beach County, Inc	1
Mental Health Association of San Francisco	1
Mental Health Rights Coalition	1
Mind	3
Montana's Peer Network	1
Mood Disorders Association of Ontario	1
Mood Disorders Ottawa	1
Mood Disorders Support Group New York	1
National Alliance on Mental Illness	1
National Alliance on Mental Illness (Mississippi)	1
National Network for Mental Health	1
New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services	1
North Carolina Consumer Advocacy, Networking, and Support Organization	1
Northern Initiative for Social Action	1
Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	1
Peer Support Australia	1
Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA)	1
People Advocate for Change Through Empowerment	1
People for Equal Partnership in Mental Health Nipissing (PEP)	1
Platform	2
Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa	1
Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)	1
South Dakota United for Hope & Recovery	1
Support in Mind Scotland	1
The Florida Peer Support Association Inc.	1
The National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery (NCMHR)	1
Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (VPS)	1
Wellness in the Woods	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>