

Client Case Study



Using competencies to make a positive impact in the health community



Peer Support Canada

ABOUT PEER SUPPORT CANADA:

In 2010, the Mental Health Commission of Canada and its Workforce Advisory Committee (WAC) identified an opportunity to transform the mental health system in Canada through the integration and promotion of peer support. Peer Support Canada was created to carry on the work started by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, promoting the growth, recognition, and accessibility of peer support. Peer

Support Canada offers certification for Peer Supporters, Family Peer Supporters, and for Peer Support Mentors. Peer Support Certification is a confirmation of one's knowledge, skills, and experience as a peer supporter. Certification verifies one's alignment with the nationally endorsed Standard of Practice, and is recognized across Canada.



Challenge

The Mental Health Commission of Canada's goal was to further develop the core competencies needed by peer support workers to provide support to those with mental health struggles, and to raise awareness of the benefits that PSC can provide in the health community. PSC set out on a mission to demonstrate the value of peer support to the medical community. To start, they needed to come up with a standardized definition of what peer support workers do and what their skill set needs to be. "Professionals in the medical field are strongly reliant on hard data, facts, and statistics,"

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says Lauren Dickler, Certification Coordinator at PSC. "It wasn't enough to simply say that someone has certain core competencies, we had to come up with a way to break down what the requirements for these core competencies are."



Solutions

PSC used HRSG's CompetencyCore software to leverage the Mental Health Commission's existing competency framework to provide a basis for their certification program. As part of developing their competency initiative, PSC made several improvements to their evaluation process for certification. For instance, candidates are evaluated in the first phase of the process by people who have observed them in a peer support role and who can judge their level of each competency. This produces an average score that helps PSC determine how to design the second and third phases of the certification. In this way, using competencies helps PSC create tailored approaches for each supporter and allows them to have customized knowledge assessments, test time, skill focus, and more. Once the learning stage is complete, employees are reevaluated by both inside and outside references to again deliver an

average competency score. If this score meets the minimum requirement they can move on and be certified, but if not, PSC is able to provide customized learning to help employees achieve certification requirements.

"So we have these eight or nine competencies, and then we have very specific one or two-sentence descriptors that are behaviors connected to the competencies," says Dickler. "And once we were able to provide this data, these statistics to those in the health field, they were more willing to buy into the importance of peer workers." It also helps PSC to know that everyone is being evaluated in a concrete way, as opposed to being subjectively evaluated. "So, we knew that it was important to speak to those who like data and who like that nice and neat package that having competencies provides," says Dickler.



Results

Since using competencies in their peer support certification program, people have reported more satisfaction. The challenge of getting the best fit people into the peer support role is lessened by using competencies in certification. "We've had people who've said that they hired someone who called themselves a peer support worker but didn't in fact have the necessary requirements," says Dickler. "Really, the requirement to be a peer support worker is to have lived experience, have similar lived experience and then to build

upon those qualifications with training." Using competencies means that employers feel more confident in hiring certified peer support workers, because candidates are guaranteed to meet the National Standards of Practice developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. By ensuring that peer support workers are fully qualified based on skills, knowledge, and ability is a benefit to both employees, employers, and the people in the communities they serve.

Do you want to achieve excellence through competency-based talent management?
To discuss your competency initiative call us at 1-866-574-7041 or email info@hrsg.ca.

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