

peer support



CRU believes we are more likely to be successful in our efforts for change when we are connected with other people.

People with disabilities and their families supporting each other as peers is an effective way to build capacity to self-manage NDIS supports for a good life in community.

What is peer support?

Peer support is a term used to describe when people with similar, personal experiences help each other, based on their common experience. It can be two people having a conversation, or networks and groups with regular or more official meetings.

Peer support is a way to be supported by other people who know where you are coming from. Peer support is **mutual support**: the sharing of ideas, learning from other people's experiences and passing on what you've learned through your own experiences.

Peer support can help us feel more confident, more connected and better informed to make decisions – which can lead to an increased sense of control.

In the context of self-management, 'peers' are people with disabilities and their families who have personal experience in self-management, and those who are thinking about moving to self-management.

What peer support is not.¹

Peer support is a form of 'informal support', which means it should be freely given and provide mutual benefit.

- It is not an obligation – it should be freely given and freely entered into.
- It is not giving advice, it is sharing experiences and listening to the experiences of others.
- It is not the same thing as friendship; it can and should have limits/boundaries (*though sometimes people do become friends*).
- It is not the same thing as advocacy.
- It is not the support that comes from funded services, from professionals or from people who don't have the same personal or lived experiences that are the basis for the peer support.

¹ Peer Support Guide, Department of Human Services Vic, 2012

What CRU believes about peer support

Peer support recognises and values the experience and expertise of people with disabilities and their families. While peer support can provide emotional support (helping people to cope), CRU's particular interest is in peer support as a **way to build individual and community capacity**. Effective peer support enables people to draw on the experience and wisdom that exists in the community. Providing and receiving peer support can develop people's confidence and leadership skills. It can assist and inspire people to sustain their efforts, remain hopeful and overcome feelings of isolation.

In connecting people to hear other perspectives, peer support can expand people's thinking. As a shared learning experience, peer support complements individual efforts and formal learning. Peer support does not replace professional or formal support if that is needed. Used well it can enhance and complement those supports.

What are peer led networks?

A peer led network is where the people involved decide collectively how they will connect and support each other. This could be simply people who know they can call on each other when they need, being members of an online group, or by getting together for meetings. In more formal or structured groups, there is a peer leader or leaders who take on some responsibilities for the network.

What can CRU offer to peer led networks in this project?

Between July 2019 and May 2020 CRU will work to connect people with others who are self-managing their supports. The purpose of these connections will be so that everyone gains in confidence, their support arrangements are strong and sustainable and people are not isolated through choosing to self-manage. Perhaps most importantly, CRU encourages imagination and high expectations for what is possible.

CRU can offer help with getting a group started and can provide resources, training and mentoring for people who want to be peer leaders or who are interested in convening or facilitating networks.

If you would like to know more, contact Catherine Laherty at CRU on catherine.laherty@cru.org.au or phone 07 3844 2211

References:

Peer Support: A Guide to how people with a disability and carers can help each other to make the most of their disability supports, May 2012, Department of Human Services, State Government of Victoria
<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Peer-support-guide.doc>

Peer Connect website <https://www.peerconnect.org.au/>

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