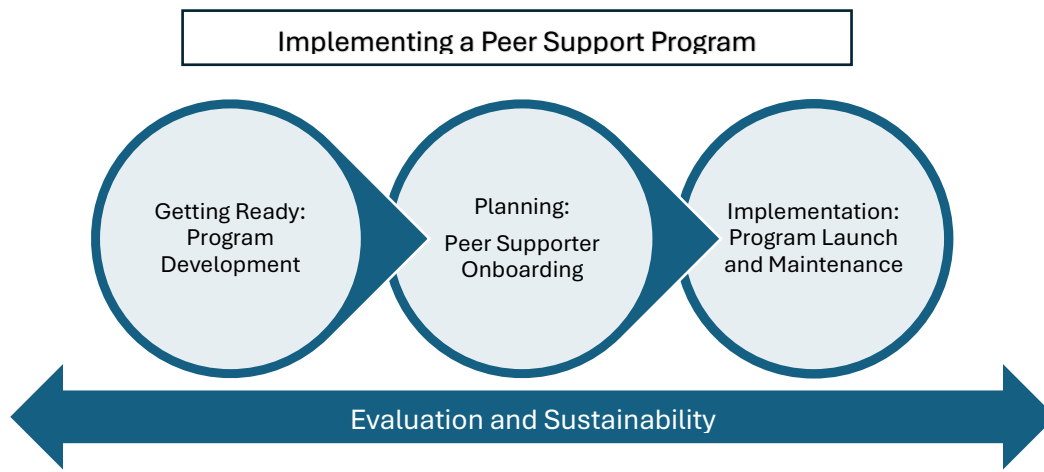## Creating and Sustaining a Peer Support Program

Ontario Medical Association, Physician Health Program (PHP)

Peer support is empathic, practical support between two people who share a common experience, such as a professional role, health challenge, or adverse event. Physician Peer Support programs encourage an intentional, authentic human connection with another physician who understands the unique stressors and challenges in medicine.

When facing a challenging professional or personal event, many physicians have a strong preference for support through a peer. Increasingly, peer support programs have emerged as an evidence-informed approach to address physician (dis)stress and reduce barriers to seeking support.

Implementing a Peer Support Program

Getting Ready: Program Development → Planning: Peer Supporter Onboarding → Implementation: Program Launch and Maintenance

Evaluation and Sustainability

1. Program Development

Getting ready:

- What are your organizational needs and opportunities regarding physician health?
- How does peer support integrate with other wellness initiatives?
- Who do you aim to serve?
- Is everyone on board? i.e. Senior leadership, MSA/PSA, wellness leads
- Are there dedicated resources to supporting the implementation and maintenance?
- What challenges could your organization face?

2. Peer Supporter Onboarding

- Developing processes and guidelines
  - ➢ Peer supporter recruitment process
  - ➢ peer supporter/supportee matching
- Recruiting peer supporters
- 3-hour virtual training with peer supporters, facilitated by PHP:
  - ➢ Brief overview of PHP services
  - ➢ Peer support definitions and scope
  - ➢ Confidentiality
  - ➢ Preparing for a peer support conversation
  - ➢ 4-step conversational framework

➢ Practice using scenarios
➢ Next steps for implementation within organization

3. Implementation and Maintenance

- Communication plan - reaching and ongoing engagement of program participants
- Overseeing, coordinating, and ongoing support of peer supporters

4. Evaluation and sustainability

- Ensuring a process for feedback and continuous improvement

We want to acknowledge you for your interest in fostering supportive connections for the community of physicians in your workplace. We look forward to supporting you in this journey.

For more information on PHP peer support, contact PHP Peer Support Leads Jordanna Graves and Beth Collison at peersupport@oma.org.

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