

Peer Listener Training Manual

PWSRCAC Board of Directors Meeting

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Who We Are

Agnew::Beck Consulting

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- Project Manager
- Communications and design specialist

Dr. Adryan Glasgow

- PhD in Anticolonial Narrative
- 5 years helping Alaskan behavioral health providers incorporate peers into their workforce
- Anchorage School District Peer Mediator circa 1993
- Peer Mentor and Peer Educator trainer and mentor at Purdue University
- Over a decade of teaching writing and rhetoric

Project Understanding

- **Goals:**

- Revise and update previous PWSRCAC peer listener training manual
- Ensure the manual is understandable and relevant to community members
 - Simple language
 - Shorter document – 25 pages

- **Audience:**

- Primary audience: community members in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region
- Broader audience (by default of the manual being available online)

- **Our approach:**

- Create a guide for helping people learn to be active listeners

Process

- **Draft 1: Compile best practices**
 - Use Phase 1 recommendations to identify areas for improvement
 - Research global best practice
 - Update culturally-specific and outdated content
- **Draft 2: Revise for audience and purpose**
 - Revisit document organization and flow
 - Adapt language for a wider audience
 - Make it shorter
- **Draft 3: Review for the human element**
 - Emphasize self-care
 - Highlight common cultural misunderstandings

Content Revisions

- Incorporate recommendations from Phase 1.
- Utilize guidelines from federal and national entities – experts in public, mental and behavioral health and disaster readiness.
- Reflect current understanding of culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches, resiliency and the role of peer listeners in disaster response.
- Additional topics
 - Maintaining healthy boundaries
 - Trauma & common responses

Content to include:

- When/how/with whom to use peer listener skills
- Trauma-informed
- Make clear to peer listeners that active listening is a skill to use in everyday life, and can be activated in a crisis or disaster
- Integrate cultural humility and relevancy

The Manual

What the manual is:

- A starting place for those who want to help rebuild their community after a disaster
- An introduction to active listening skills
- Geared toward community members – “peers”
- A resource for communities
- Meant to be used now to build community resilience (before a disaster)

What the manual is NOT:

- Professional training
- A quick fix
- A rigid process to follow

Peer Listeners

What peer listeners ARE:

- Peers!
- Neighbors and community members that could be impacted by the same disaster
- Active listeners
- Informal support
- Caring and validating
- Models for how to rebuild trust and mutual support

What peer listeners ARE NOT:

- Mental health professionals
- Social workers
- Disaster relief responders
- Seeking gifts or rewards
- Available 24/7
- Formal support

The Need for Peer Listeners

- People affected by disasters may be reluctant to use traditional mental health services.
- Traditional mental health services may be overwhelmed when the aftereffects of disaster are widespread.
- Professional services may not be effective at dealing with the long-term effects of disaster.
- Peer listeners can fill the gap when traditional mental health services fall short.
- Talking with a peer from the community can be beneficial in helping people feel understood and cared for.
- Peer listeners serve to rebuild trust, a sense of safety and self-reliance for their friends and neighbors.
- The widespread use and modeling of active listening has lasting impact: it remains in the community as an ongoing resource and builds resiliency against future disasters.

Manual Contents

Section 1: Understanding Disasters

Section 2: Building Peer Listening Skills

Section 3: Recognizing Common Challenges

Section 4: Seeking and Providing Support

Additional Resources

Section 1: Understanding Disasters

How to use this section:

- Understand different types of disasters and how survivors are supported.
- Understand the impact of news media and social media after a disaster.
- Understand the healing process and the different emotions that accompany recovery after a disaster.
- Understand formal vs. informal sources of support.

Section 2:

Building Peer Listening Skills

How to use this section:

- Learn verbal and nonverbal communication tips.
- Learn how to approach peer listening with cultural humility.
- Learn active listening skills, such as common responses and phrases to use and not use while listening. Types of responses covered:
 - “Red flags”
 - Supporting and reassuring
 - Understanding and paraphrasing
 - Recognizing and interpreting
 - Probing and questioning
 - Evaluating and advising

Section 3: Recognizing Common Challenges

How to use this section:

- Learn to recognize common challenges, such as certain emotions or behaviors, that people may experience after a disaster.
- Learn how to listen and support people through these challenges.

Section 4: Seeking and Providing Support

How to use this section:

- Learn the process and steps of peer listening.
 - Take care of yourself
 - Be clear about your role
 - Initiate contact – the peer listening process
 - Don't hesitate to get help
- Learn how to help someone seek professional help.

Additional Resources

How to use this section:

- Resources for suicide prevention.
- Community specific resources and contact information for violence prevention and crisis lines.

Recommendations for Distribution

Planning

- Designate a committee or individual to oversee distribution of the manual.
- Create a communication and distribution plan to outline goals and activities.
- Develop a distribution network.

Recommendations for Distribution

Reaching Audiences

- Translate manual into different languages.
- Develop ePub version of manual.
- Create infographics and images to reach visual learners and make content appropriate for social media.
 - e.g. “After a disaster, here are 5 ways to listen and support your community.”

Recommendations for Distribution

Communication Channels and Tools

- Website/webpage
- Social media
- Radio
- Webinars
- Videos
- Print
- Messengers, partners

Questions?