

YEAR PLAN
MSU Peer Support Line
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2016-2017
(submitted July 29, 2016)



OFFICE OF THE PEER SUPPORT LINE INTRODUCTION

I believe that the Peer Support Line offers a crucial service to McMaster students. Good peer support can be very beneficial, sometimes even when professional care isn't helpful. Everything I hope to achieve this year has the ultimate goal of improving the support that the line is able to provide any students who reach out. I want to be confident that, if someone calls or chats with the Line, they will leave feeling listened to and validated, and hopefully even a little bit better. This will come from improving training, and being more critical of the service we provide. I would also like for each of our volunteers to feel like an integral part of the group, and to be able to contribute meaningfully to the service. I hope to create opportunities for returning listeners to play a more active role in helping new listeners, and develop a more cohesive team. Being unable to discuss the position with most friends/other people in the MSU can feel isolating, and so I think it is important to have that close-knit team feeling so that volunteers remain committed and invested in the service.

GOALS

Objective 1	Improve training/skills assessment protocols
Description	More extensive training, re-training throughout the year, skills assessments in January to ensure that everyone's skills are maintained.
Benefits	Volunteers feel better prepared to answer calls and chats; we provide better support to anyone who accesses the line.
Difficulties	Requires increased commitment from volunteers, more hours. Returning volunteers may be resistant to the extra requirements. With a relatively small exec, it may be very time intensive to do skills assessments for each volunteer.
Long-term implications	May need to hire an extra member of the executive team - Training Coordinator.
How?	Involve returning listeners in training of new volunteers. Review past feedback to improve training. Have mandatory retraining in January, possibly also in November/March. Offer optional practice sessions at least once a month. Run a mock call with each volunteer in January to evaluate skills and gather feedback. Prepare retraining according to the needs of the volunteers.
Partners	Shruti - TRRA; Wallis Ballog - LivingWorks (ASIST)

Objective 2	Improving volunteer experience
Description	Address various volunteer concerns and create a stronger sense of team within the group.
Benefits	Volunteers feel a sense of pride in their involvement, are happy with what they do.
Difficulties	Volunteers do shifts in pairs, and so they don't always meet everyone on the team throughout the year, leading to a lack of cohesion within the group. Attendance at larger volunteer appreciation events is often low. Must balance volunteer appreciation budget.
Long-term implications	May need to readjust budget and move more money to volunteer appreciation budget.
How?	Collaborate with SWHAT and/or reorganize scheduling so that volunteers can walk home together (addresses safety concerns). Check call/chat logs once a week. Debrief with all new listeners after their first call/chat to ensure they feel comfortable. Continue to offer snacks/beverages/crafts to volunteers during shifts. With more team meetings, volunteers will be seeing each other more often.

Partners	Leon – SWHAT
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Objective 3	Increase usage
Description	There are many students who have not heard of the peer support line, The goal is to get more students, especially first years during Welcome Week, to hear about the service and what it does, and encourage them to access the line if needed. Goal: Increase usage to at least 30 calls/chats per month Increase Facebook likes from 1200 to 2000 likes
Benefits	More students on campus receiving support.
Difficulties	Stigma surrounding mental health issues; volunteers must remain anonymous and so cannot often help run events.
Long-term implications	Increased usage may lead to the need for a larger volunteer base, with more volunteers each shift. Might eventually need a larger space to accommodate this change.
How?	Create promotional videos; more active social media presence (ex. Weekly updates/tips related to Mental Health/Support, Facebook contests to increase viewership/actively engage students); hold awareness events (ex. Peer Support 101, Suicide awareness); collaborate with Advocacy/other services (ex. MacTalks, BellLetsTalk); give out more PSL swag (ex. Pens, stickers, buttons)
Partners	Other MSU services; Sandy - Advocacy

Objective 4	Revise Crisis Protocol
Description	Currently, our crisis protocol involves patching the caller through to Security Services. This is not always effective, as many of our callers are off-campus, which means they have to be patched through multiple times. It would be better for the callers to minimize this, and so I hope to find a better crisis resource/referral.
Benefits	Students in crisis will receive better care, and won't have to be patched through multiple times.
Difficulties	Finding a willing and able community partner. Ideal partner would have a phone and/or chat service that operates 24/7, or at least during PSL hours.
Long-term implications	As community services grow and change, and as PSL itself grows with time, the crisis protocol may need to be revised again.
How?	Meet with possible crisis resources to better understand their service and if it would be a good match. Make connections and

	see if they are willing to work with us as our crisis resource. Strike PSL advisory committee.
Partners	Possibilities include Youth Wellness Centre, COAST, Good2Talk. Shaarujaa - VP admin; Taryn, Maggie and/or Debra Earl - SWC

Long-term planning

Below is an example of something that you could plan for longer than one year. This is quite a simple example, but you can choose to use this for simple tasks (such as increasing Facebook likes) or for broader visions (planning a multi-school conference for example)

Overarching Vision (<i>what is the ultimate goal?</i>)	<i>Extending PSL hours</i>
Description	Change PSL hours to 8pm-2am, as many people are most in need of someone to talk to later on at night.
Benefits	Students are able to access service when they need it most. Likely to increase service usage.
Year 1	Gather data and statistics on call and chat timings to find peak hours/nights/months. Evaluate when the line is most heavily used (e.g. during midterms). Discuss shifting hours with returning volunteers, use anonymous feedback forms. Discuss any potential volunteer concerns (e.g. safety) with EB, Security Services, etc. as needed.
Year 2	Pilot extended service hours during peak nights/months as determined from previous year. Edit listener job descriptions to include possible extended hours when hiring. Create new promotional material to highlight extended nights as needed. Depending on commitment, allow volunteers to opt into extended shifts when possible. Track service usage throughout the year and critically evaluate benefits of extended hours.
Year 3	If it is deemed worth shifting, fully shift service hours to 8pm-2am. Edit job descriptions with new hours when hiring. Create new promotional material to reflect new hours.
Partners	Executive Board; VP Admin

GOALS to strive for

List 5 things that you would like to have prepared for the beginning of September

Have all new promo material ordered/ready for welcome week

Confirm training dates and facilitators

PSL-specific training materials

Select dates for PSL promo and outreach events throughout the year

Schedule returning volunteer shifts for September, including Welcome Week

List 5 things you would like to have completed during the fall term (1st)

Hiring of new volunteers

Training for new and returning volunteers

Collaboration with Advocacy/other peer support services for #MacTalks

A PSL event on supporting friends and self-care

Meet with relevant partners regarding changes to the crisis protocol

List 5 things you would like to have completed during the winter term (2nd)

Skills assessment of all volunteers

Retraining of all volunteers

Event discussing suicide - possibly in collaboration with Maccess

Edit operating policies as needed and officially change Crisis Protocols

Hire exec for 2017-2018

Master Summary

(calendar and checklist)

May	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire new assistant coordinator• Research alternate online chat software
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire promo coordinator• Review call and chat logs, gather stats/data
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create promotional plan with exec team

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on promotional materials to order • Collaborate with Advocacy and other peer support services on MacTalks planning
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizons Successfest • Order new promo material for WW • Open listener positions • Prepare all training materials • Confirm training facilitators/partners
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire new volunteers • Training • Facebook contest for PSL swag (promotional event)
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASIST • Meet with possible crisis partners • Discuss crisis protocol with advisory committee • MacTalks
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional training/practice sessions for volunteers • Debriefs with volunteers • Peer Support 101 Event
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam campaign/promotional event
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills assessment • Retraining • Hiring Coordinator • Suicide-related event
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire Assistant Coordinator • Decide on need for expanding exec team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Edit OP and create JD's if needed • Valentine's Day Campaign (Candy grams)
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire rest of the exec team. • Hold optional training sessions/practice for volunteers • Facebook contest for PSL swag (promotional event)
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam campaign/promotional event