

YEAR PLAN
MSU Peer Support Line
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2017-2018
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OFFICE OF THE PEER SUPPORT LINE INTRODUCTION

The strength of peer support lies at the comfort that one human can give to another through the simple act of listening. My time with the Peer Support Line has taught me that even through the anonymity, there is a connection that you make with each and every caller and chatter. A special interaction behind the sharing of vulnerability, which can, and often does, provide great comfort.

The Peer Support Line has seen a remarkable growth since its inception, especially within the last operating year, founded on the incredible work of Zeinab and Andrew. However, with the unprecedented increase in the usage followed unexpected challenges.

Thus, my goals for the upcoming year aims to implement preventative measures to best navigate previous year's challenges. Additionally, I hope to continue providing quality support to McMaster students through refining our training and developing a resource drive. And finally, to further foster a community amongst our volunteers to ensure that they are well prepared and supported.

GOALS

Objective 1	Refining PSL's executive structure
Description	Previously, PSL operated under a structure that required the Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator as the only 2 people on the on-call. As one may guess, this meant that they could not rest or let alone go home until shifts started and listeners were confirmed. Considering the increase in usage of the line, such structure resulted in the Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator weekly overworking their hours. Thus, the proposed changes to the executive structure will help mitigate these concerns as it will allow more distributed load amongst the executive members of PSL.
Benefits	As stated, the proposed changes to the executive structure will allow more distributed and consistent load amongst the executive members, further promoting the optimal operation of PSL.

Difficulties	The process of implementing the changes to the executive structure may take time as it requires changes to PSL job description and policy. Further, the proposed changes will demand more hours from the executive members; however, we hope to counter such increased hours on on-call duties by decreasing the regular shift hours.
Long-term implications	It will promote a smoother operation of PSL, especially with the expected increase in usage for the coming years.
How?	The Coordinator, the Assistant Coordinator and the 2 (or 3) executives will be on-call for one of the five days of the week. Additionally, the Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator will be on-call during weekends.
Partners	Preethi – VP admin PSL executive team Executive Board

Objective 2	Continuity in Training
Description	Currently, our listeners attend two full-weekend training during the month of September, followed by one booster session during the month of January. Further, with the implementation of ASIST, PSL has seen an immense growth in the quality of peer support provided by our listeners. However, one feedback that we continuously receive in regards to training is the need for the continuity in our training. Thus, the proposed plan will aim to increase continuity in training through providing a platform for listeners to gather and practice their peer support skills, discuss strategies, and learn more about resources on and off-campus.
Benefits	Volunteers will feel better prepared to support their peers. Further, we will be providing better support to students accessing the line. Additionally, given the confidential nature of PSL, our listeners cannot share their involvement with the line to their friends. Thus, these sessions will serve as a valuable time for listeners to debrief on previous calls and chats.
Difficulties	The additional sessions will require more time from the PSL executives. A potential executive position who can assist in such sessions (and other duties) may be explored. Collaboration with TRRA (an external personnel) is likely needed, and given the confidential nature of our service, measures must be taken to ensure the continued confidentiality of our line and our listeners. The sessions will also mean that the volunteers are asked to come in for additional hours. The sessions will likely have food and other snacks, thus the budget for training needs to be re-explored.

Long-term implications	Better supported listeners and thus better supported students! Increase in training budget (long-term) to meet the needs of training sessions.
How?	The executive team and the TRRA will work together to plan and implement the monthly training sessions. As mentioned, the addition of a new executive may be explored to divide the load put on the executive team. Feedback from the team will be an essential component in crafting the training sessions!
Partners	TRRA PSL executive team Preethi – VP admin Executive Board

Objective 3	Centralized Resource Drive
Description	Part of our training includes a session dedicated to resources available on and off-campus. However, not all of the discussed resources necessarily stay with our listeners nor are they informed of the detailed processes associated with the mentioned resources. For example, many of our listeners are acquainted with the services provided by COAST, but not all are aware of <i>how</i> the process works. Thus the proposed plan is one potential solution to ensure that all our listeners are well informed and acquainted with the available resources on and off-campus. Finally, during midterm and exam seasons, PSL receives numerous calls from students asking for resources regarding deferred exams and its like, thus acquainting our listeners with such knowledge is another vision for the resource drive.
Benefits	Providing better support to students seeking the line as our listeners are better prepared and more confident in providing and explaining the resources available on and off-campus.
Difficulties	The resource drive will require increased commitment from the PSL executive team, namely the Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator. An additional executive position may be explored to divide some of the load put on the executive team. Further, it will also require the cooperation of various resources, especially in regards to obtaining a full picture of each resource. Thus getting in contact with such resources may require time and commitment from either end.
Long-term implications	PSL will be able to provide a comprehensive step-by-step guide to each of the resources that they refer students to. Overall, this will increase the quality of the support provided by our listeners.
How?	The Coordinator will look through past logs to identify the most commonly referred resources. The PSL team (and potentially the

	TRRA) will contact on and off-campus resources, as well as other related personnel, to create a centralized resource drive that is accessible to all volunteers. Likewise, our training will continue to focus on increasing our listener's knowledge on resources available on and off-campus. Faculty Advisors will be contacted in regards to the mentioned information on midterms/exams.
Partners	Resources available on and off-campus TRRA PSL executive team Faculty Advisors etc.

Objective 4	Fostering Community
Description	Our listeners are dedicating an incredible amount of their time to support their peers, so it's important that their commitment and efforts are being recognized, valued, and appreciated, especially given the confidential nature of our service. I will be putting in much of my time to show such appreciation and to support the well-being of our listeners, as one cannot support another unless they are well themselves. Hence, I hope to 1) Cultivate and foster a community amongst our listeners, 2) Show appreciation for the incredible work that they are doing, and 3) Support our listeners.
Benefits	Volunteers are well supported as they are part of a positive and supportive community. Volunteers are appreciated and valued as they see and are aware of the impacts of their work.
Difficulties	The implementation of more frequent debriefs and team meetings will demand more hours from the Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator. The frequent sessions will also mean more budget dedicated to such activities. Turn-out is always a concern when hosting such team socials.
Long-term implications	It may mean more budget dedicated towards volunteer appreciation, but hopefully, it also will serve as a foundation for a stronger and more connected team, and thus a community.
How?	<p>Integrate returning listeners into training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of returning listeners into training will help foster and develop a strong sense of community amongst the PSL team. <p>One-on-One debriefs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These debriefs will serve as an opportunity for myself and the Assistant Coordinator to check-in with the listeners - to see how they are doing, how their experience has been thus far etc. These debriefs will also serve as an opportunity to bring up potential concerns that listeners may have <p>December Gift Exchange</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through gift exchange – the listeners will have an opportunity to get to know each other a bit more, and celebrate the end of 2017! <p>End of Year PSL get-together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be an end of the year event in late March or early April, where PSL will have a social celebrating this years work – listeners will receive warm fuzzies, cute awards, and food! <p>Monthly Training Sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are “booster” training sessions, in addition to aforementioned advantages, will also serve as an opportunity for our listeners to come together and debrief!
Partners	TRRA PSL executive team Tuba – VP Finance

Objective 5	Increase PSL’s presence on campus
Description	One of the greatest barriers for students accessing PSL is that they simply don’t know we exist! More rigorous and continuous promotional strategies will be employed to increase PSL's presence on campus.
Benefits	Increased presence on campus comes with many benefits, as more students will be aware of the service provided by PSL and students will feel more comfortable accessing the line. Finally, even if students are hesitant to contact the line themselves, merely knowing about the line (that we exist, and we are a service dedicated to supporting students), are a source of comfort on its own.
Difficulties	Time will be a source of difficulty as certain promotional activities require more than other (i.e. videos). We are also planning to give out PSL swag i.e. buttons, pens, etc. which will require money, so budgets need to be re-assessed to make sure that this is feasible. Nature of promotions requires collaborations with various McMaster staff/members, so some challenges with such collaborations are expected. Our listeners' involvement with the line must remain confidential so all promotional activities can only involve our executive team. So the lack of hands is yet another concern that needs to be looked into.
Long-term implications	With the increase in promo, this hopefully will mean an increase in the usage of the line. With it, we must consider its implications on our current operations and team size.

How?	<p>We will promote PSL through a variety of different mediums:</p> <p>Promo video: We have one started from last year that could not be finished due to time constraints. Thus, we will work on this video, which includes students sharing their story about times they needed support and things that made them feel supported.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During July Iof Setpember we will <p>Avenue Posts & Emails: These will serve as a platform to further promote PSL. We'll need to obtain appropriate permissions as well.</p> <p>Posters around campus: We'll specifically contact ResLife in regards to putting up posters in residences.</p> <p>Facebook & Twitter Posts: Frequent social media posts are another way to engage with the students at McMaster. We will also utilize incentivized posts to further increase traffic onto PSL's social media platforms.</p> <p>Buttons, Rave cards, Stickers, and Pens: To be distributed during ClubFest and other events.</p> <p>PSL events: Continue hosting Study, Snack, & Support events with MBB and other PSL related events in collaboration with other clubs and services.</p>
Partners	<p>Underground PSL executive team Res Life MSU services Other related personnel etc.</p>

Objective 1	Ensuring the safety of our volunteers
Description	<p>With the unprecedented increase in usage of the line, we also observed a parallel increase in calls and chats inappropriate for PSL, leaving our listeners feeling quite unsafe and uncomfortable. While appropriate measures were taken, we hope to now take preventative measures to avoid such incidents from happening and to ensure the safety and well-being of our volunteers.</p>

Benefits	Through the development of protocols regarding such inappropriate calls/chats, our listeners will now be able to provide consistent response to such calls/chats. Additionally, there will be less ambiguity for the listeners, helping to make the listeners feel more safe and comfortable while attending their assigned shifts.
Difficulties	It's a rather intricate and sensitive subject, so the whole process of deciding on the protocol will be difficult.
Long-term implications	Volunteers will feel more safe and comfortable, and we hope to see a decrease in such inappropriate calls/chats to our line.
How?	Firstly, we must find a solution to the current space issue. Further, as mentioned, we will create a protocol to ensure that all listeners are on the same page and are providing a consistent response. Finally, frequent team meetings, debrief, one-on-ones, and the training sessions will all aid in such increase in safety and comfort.
Partners	Security Services Preethi – VP admin Allsion – Director of student support and case management office PSL team

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 7pm-2am or 8pm – 2 am, 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. This will likely to increase service usage.
Year 1 (2015-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (2016-2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot extended service hours during peak nights/months as determined from previous year. • 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. • *last academic year, we had extended hours for Saturday – Monday for the month of Novemeber and March
Year 3 (2017-2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the benefits of extended hours, if statistics indicate the benefit or the potential benefit of extended hours, contemplate the possibility of month long extended hours for November and March. • Edit listener job descriptions to include possible extended hours when hiring. • Create new promotional material to highlight extended nights. • Gather listeners feedback to assess the impact of extended hours on listeners’ commitment and safety.
Year 4 (2018-2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Preethi – VP admin Executive Board

Overarching Vision (<i>what is the ultimate goal?</i>)	<i>Summer PSL hours</i>
Description	Currently, PSL does not operate during summer but the need for support is present regardless of which month of the year we are in. Being off school doesn’t necessarily equate no stress or no need of support. Thus, the possibility of operating PSL during the summer should be explored.
Benefits	Students are able to access support even when most other on-campus services are closed.
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather data feedback on the possibility of summer PSL hours.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If deemed beneficial, pilot summer hours (even starting from just the chat rather than both chat and call), during peak hours. • Discuss potential summer hours with volunteers via anonymous feedback forms. • Discuss any potential volunteer concerns (e.g. safety) with EB, Security Services, etc. as needed.
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather statistics and critically evaluate the benefit of summer PSL hours • Edit listener job descriptions to include possible summer hours when hiring. • Create new promotional material to promote summer hours • Depending on commitment, allow volunteers to opt into summer shifts when possible.
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If PSL summer hours are deemed to be beneficial, consider additional hiring of summer PSL volunteers • Edit PSL policy and listener job descriptions • Create new promotional material
Partners	Executive Board Preethi - 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

Have PSL resource drive ready

Have all PSL training materials ready, confirm all training-related materials/facilitators etc.

Select dates for PSL promo and outreach events throughout the year

Schedule returning volunteer shifts for September, including Welcome Week

Confirm new PSL space and executive structure

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

Hiring of new volunteers

Training for new and returning volunteers

A PSL event on supporting friends and self-care

Implement monthly training sessions beginning October, one-on-one debriefs in

November

PSL end of 2017 social

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

Retraining of all volunteers, with specific focus during the month of January

Event discussing suicide – possibly in collaboration with Maccess

Hire and Transition Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator for 2018-2019

Second wave of promotional activities including another video

Possibility of fully shifting over to extended hours for 2018-2019 & summer operations of PSL

Master Summary
(calendar and checklist)

May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss additional executive position and changes to executive structure • Meet with PSL assistant coordinator to discuss plans and visions of services
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review call and chat logs, gather stats/data • Create PSL protocol regarding the nature of certain calls • Assess PSL space situation
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire and Train PSL executives • Create promotional plan with exec team (contact Sarah, Underground, Reslife etc) • Meet with Sarah to discuss PSL promo video • Order PSL promo material • Get in contact with appropriate services and clubs for PSL related events • Get in contact with appropriate personnel for PSL training i.e. begin preparing for PSL training/hiring • Begin discussing PSL monthly training sessions and PSL socials • Revise PSL listener job description to reflect extended hours
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizone Successfest • Have welcome week related promo material ready • Open PSL listener positions • Confirm • Begin PSL operation during welcome week
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire PSL listeners • Train PSL listeners.
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSL event on support and mental health/illness awareness

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release PSL promo video
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-One debriefs/check-ins • PSL training session • Extended hours (month long)
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • .Study, Snack, and Support with MBB • Listener check-ins
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSL training session. • Begin discussing PSL summer operations • PSL promotional activities – namely a new video • Hire incoming coordinator
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire incoming assistant coordinator • PSL event on suicide
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended hours (month long) • PSL training session
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study, Snack, and Support with MBB. • Evaluated statistics and usage for extended hours