

PEER SUPPORT CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose

The Code of Conduct provides Peer Supporters and EMQ with guidance in relation to the conduct and behaviour of Peer Supporters.

It also provides a reference point for performance evaluation of both individual Peer Supporters and for the Peer Support Program (“the Service”) as a whole.

Introduction

The EMbrace Program has a mission to enhance the psychological and emotional well being of paid and volunteer personnel.

In pursuing its goals it provides a Peer Support Program to support volunteers and employees through informal, confidential contact by peers who have been appropriately trained for this role.

The following Code of Conduct (“the Code”) is designed to allow the Program to preserve its reputation of integrity and credibility within EMQ. The Code is to be used as a reference tool. It will be useful in making decisions relating to Peer Supporter work. It will help in identifying acceptable behaviour, making fair minded decisions, and in developing a positive culture within and about the Peer Support Program.

A Peer Supporter acting inconsistently with the Code must show that his or her behaviour was not unethical or inappropriate. Violation of the Code is a serious matter and may result in corrective or disciplinary action. (More information can be found in the Peer Support Procedural Guidelines)

Practice Standards

Peer Supporters will deliver services with integrity, sensitivity, respect and confidentiality. Peer Supporters occupy a position of trust with service users and shall act at all times to preserve that trust.

Peer Supporters must ensure that their conduct as a Peer Supporter, member of their community and as an SES member is of the highest standard at all times, regardless of whether they are acting in an official Peer Support capacity.

This Code of Conduct is in addition to the Department of Emergency Services Code of Conduct and this Code of Conduct must also be adhered to at all times.

Confidentiality is a critical component of any Peer Support program and should be respected at all times. However, limited exceptions to confidentiality apply. These include: threats of harm to self or others, disclosure of criminal activity or serious misconduct, or when legal requirements dictate (e.g subpoenas, workcover investigations). These concerns must always be discussed with the EMbrace Program Coordinator prior to any breach of confidentiality (see below for more details).

Service

In provision of quality services, Peer Supporters agree to:

- Undertake their role without bias, prejudice or favouritism.
- Remain neutral in their SES role, as representatives of EMQ, adopting an impartial stance on controversial issues and not engaging in gossip or slander.
- Not receive private fees, gratuities or other remuneration for work performed as a Peer Supporter. Any form of payment or gratuity offered must be reported to the EMbrace Program Coordinator.

Accountability

To ensure accountability to all stakeholders, Peer Supporters agree to:

- Comply with all training and supervision requirements or orientation provided by the EMbrace Program, or on its behalf.
- Adhere to all policies and procedures of the EMbrace Program.
- Ensure that they do not exceed the authority of their position.
- Not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training or experience.
- Refrain from offering advice or undertaking work beyond their competence/training.
- Refrain from any act that would bring the EMbrace and Peer Support Programs into disrepute.

Conflict Of Interest

To ensure professional responsibilities are adequately met, Peer Supporters agree to:

- Refer close friends to other Peer Supporters for one-on-one emotional support.
- Not enter into any intimate or otherwise non-professional relationship with a Service user nor behave in a manner that could be perceived by others as inappropriate in nature.
- Will discuss any potential conflict of interest with their Supervision Counsellor or the EMbrace Program Coordinator immediately.

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality is maintained, Peer Supporters agree to:

- Respect the confidentiality of information disclosed to them by individuals who seek their assistance, formally or informally.
- Disclose information only under the following circumstances:
 - Consent is provided by the person seeking support
 - Where a subpoena for information is received through legal channels
 - Workcover investigations or if required by legislation
 - Where there is known or suspected criminal activity, or serious misconduct
 - Where there are threats of harm to self or others
- Any of the above exemptions concerning a breach of confidentiality MUST be discussed with the EMbrace Program Coordinator or relevant Supervision Counsellor immediately and whenever possible before breaching confidentiality.
- Peer Supporters must inform their clients of the limits of confidentiality before carrying out Peer Support duties.

Summary

Strict observance of the Code is fundamental to the activity and reputation of the Peer Support Program. It is essential all Peer Supporters adhere to this Code. All current Peer Supporters, through signing the Peer Support agreement, have agreed to read and abide by this Code of Conduct.

It is the responsibility of Supervision Counsellors to ensure all Peer Supporters fully understand and adhere to this Code of Conduct through ongoing training and supervision. Any suspected breaches of the Code should be reported to the relevant Supervision Counsellor and/or EMbrace Program Coordinator for appropriate action.