



**Manning Family  
Children's**  
LCMC Health

## **SCI Peer Support Group Procedures**

### ***Purpose***

The SCI Peer Support Group is designed to provide emotional, practical, and social support to individuals with spinal cord injuries (SCI). Peer support can be an essential part of rehabilitation, offering encouragement, advice, and shared experiences to help individuals navigate the physical, emotional, and social challenges associated with SCI.

## **I. Initial Training: Introduction to SCI Peer Support**

### **Objective:**

Ensure all peer support volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to effectively assist peers living with SCI.

### **A. Overview of Peer Support**

#### **1. Definition of Peer Support:**

Peer support is the process through which individuals with similar experiences share knowledge, guidance, and emotional support with one another. In SCI, this involves sharing experiences, coping strategies, and practical advice related to managing the daily challenges of living with a spinal cord injury.

#### **2. Benefits of Peer Support:**

- a. Emotional validation and empathy
- b. Sharing of valuable resources and information
- c. A sense of community and belonging
- d. Encouragement for setting and achieving goals

### **B. Understanding Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)**

#### **1. Person-Centered Approach:**

- a. Respect for everyone's experience, needs, and autonomy
- b. Understanding the differences in recovery journeys and personal goals

### **C. Core Skills and Competencies for Peer Supporters**

#### **1. Active Listening:**

- a. Focus on the speaker, use body language to convey empathy, and ask open-ended questions.
- b. Reflect and paraphrase what has been said to ensure understanding.

#### **2. Confidentiality:**

- a. Ensure all personal information shared within peer sessions remains confidential.
- b. Discuss boundaries with the peer from the outset.

#### **3. Empathy and Compassion:**

- a. Show understanding of the challenges the peer is facing without judgment.
- b. Recognize the emotional highs and lows of someone with SCI and respond appropriately.

#### **4. Setting Boundaries:**

- a. Clearly define what the peer supporter can and cannot provide (emotional support vs. professional advice).
- b. Encourage the peer to seek professional help when necessary.

### **E. Practical Tools and Resources**

#### **1. SCI Resources:**

- a. Provide information about local SCI rehabilitation centers, support services, and legal rights.
- b. Introduce assistive technologies and adaptive equipment.

#### **2. Crisis Management Protocols:**

- a. Understand when a peer may need immediate medical or psychological intervention.
- b. Set up procedures for directing peers to appropriate professional help when required.

## **II. Ongoing Training: Advanced Practices in Peer Support**

### **Objective:**

Ensure peer support volunteers continue to grow in their roles, stay up to date with best practices, and enhance their capacity to provide valuable support.

## **A. Annual Training Updates**

### **1. Current Trends in SCI Research:**

- a. Stay informed about breakthroughs in SCI treatments, rehabilitation methods, and medical advancements.
- b. Share information on new adaptive technologies, accessibility improvements, and psychological therapies.

### **2. Emotional Support and Mental Health:**

- a. Recognize the signs of mental health struggles such as depression, anxiety, or PTSD.
- b. Learn about coping mechanisms to support peers through difficult emotions and setbacks.
- c. Encourage peers to attend therapy or counseling if needed.

### **3. Cultural Competence:**

- a. Understand and respect the cultural, social, and personal differences of group members.
- b. Learn to approach peer support with sensitivity toward diversity (age, gender, race, socioeconomic status).

## **B. Peer Support Techniques**

### **1. Advanced Communication Skills:**

- a. Focus on non-verbal communication and emotional intelligence.
- b. Practice “reflective listening” to facilitate deeper understanding and connections.

### **2. Motivational Interviewing:**

- a. Learn techniques to help peers articulate their goals, reflect on their motivations, and create actionable plans for change.
- b. Use positive reinforcement and constructive feedback.

### **3. Navigating Challenging Conversations:**

- a. Role-play scenarios where peers may need guidance around tough topics (e.g., dealing with loss, adjusting to life after SCI).
- b. Learn to provide information and support in a non-judgmental, compassionate manner.



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### **Peer Mentor Agreement:**

As a volunteer at the Manning Family Children's SCI Peer Mentor Program, I understand the importance of my position and will make every effort to perform my duties as expected and follow all policies and procedures relevant to my assigned role.

### **Peer Support Mentor Requirements:**

- Be at least 13 years of age
- Demonstrated a successful reintegration into the community (e.g. Demonstrated independence in activities of daily living, participation in recreation, involvement in community activities and/or employment).
- Completed an appropriate treatment/rehabilitation program, and one year of experience living in the community, following treatment/rehabilitation.
- Demonstrated positive behaviors related to reliability, dependability, trustworthiness, and resourcefulness.
- Reliable public or private transportation.
- Understand that my personal treatment/rehabilitation experience may have been effective for me but may not be the correct approach for others.
- Realize that people can adapt successfully in many different ways; individual differences must be respected.
- Will participate in continuing education, training, and supervision as required.

All volunteers are obligated to adhere to codes of ethical conduct and behavior. When meeting with Peers within the hospital, rehabilitation center, outpatient clinic, or community-based setting, they are required to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the mission and values of Manning Family Children's.

- If uncertain about an issue, the Mentor should say so and refer the Peer to an appropriate staff member or care professional.
- A volunteer should use respectful language when speaking with their Peers.

- A volunteer should not use language that may be considered offensive or derogatory.
- A volunteer should not accept money, goods, or services from a Peer as payment for their services.
- A volunteer should not use the Peer relationship for personal, religious, political, or business gains.
- A volunteer should not sexually harass or become sexually involved with a Peer, a Peer's relatives, or other individuals with whom the Peer has a close relationship.

The responsibilities of a program volunteer Mentor, Coordinator, or Group Administrator may include, but may not be limited to:

- Providing Mentoring to assigned peers who could be in different settings (e.g., acute care hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, and outpatient clinics), or in the community.
- When in a hospital or rehabilitation facility, the volunteer is expected to follow all institutional policies and procedures.
- Establish a friendly relationship with their assigned Peers and with co-volunteers.
- Respect their Peer's right to make their own decisions.
- Help the Peer by listening, offering empathy and support.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the Peer Mentor relationship, except in the following circumstances:
  - The Peer reports that he/she has been abused emotionally or physically, or believes they are at risk of being abused.
  - The Peer reports that he/she has or has had suicidal thoughts or is threatening suicide.
  - The Peer reports that he/she has/had intentions, thoughts or explicit plans to harm someone or damage property.
  - Maintain and submit all necessary information in a timely manner.

I understand that while performing my role with the group, I may have access to confidential information related to a peer. I am expected to exercise the greatest caution and concern in the protection of any information that might be considered confidential. I understand that divulging confidential information without a peer's consent is grounds for termination, and possible legal action.

#### Data Security

As part of my responsibilities in keeping data secure, I will adhere to the following:

- Transmit data only over secure wireless networks.

- Not leave printed data in open view.
- Store printed data in a secure container within a secured room when unattended.
- Store digital data (downloaded files) on a secured storage device.
- Share data with only those parties within your group who have a clear need or purpose for the information.
- Share data with parties outside of your group only with permission of the person who is the subject of the data.

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Peer Mentor Signature

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Date

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Peer Mentor Name (Please print)