

## **Guidelines for the Wisconsin Peer Specialist / Parent Peer Specialist Community of Practice**

*Many of the following guidelines were inspired by or adapted from pieces of the Alternatives to Suicide Charter, language from the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community's Defining Principles, the Reading Anti-racism Book Club connected to OutReach LGBT Community Center, and the Witnessing Whiteness workshop.*

1. Center learning, practice, and forming connections. We have come together as part of a collective of people in peer specialist roles in Wisconsin to learn from each other and deepen our practice of peer support.
2. While we are learning and unlearning things, not everything we say is going to be formulated perfectly. We can use this space to grow, and we need to acknowledge the difference between intent vs. impact. What was said may not have been what was heard. Our impact matters more than our intent.
3. Ask clarifying, open-ended questions if you aren't sure what someone is talking about or the meaning behind their words. Avoid assumptions.
4. Unlearning and having our worldviews challenged is often a component of learning alongside others. Each of us have biases; they do not necessarily reflect the character of our being. However, it is our responsibility to actively challenge and push back against them.
5. Speak from your own experiences by using 'I' statements. No one person can speak for an entire group of people.
6. Step up and/or step back. If you notice you are talking a lot and are asked to step back, it is nothing against your contribution towards the group. Please be respectful if we ask you to hold your question/story/comment. If you aren't engaging in the group as much as others, challenge yourself to engage in conversation more. Take risks! That's okay!
7. Certain freedoms are enjoyed within this Community of Practice, such as the freedom to challenge social norms, the freedom to interpret one's own experiences in any way, and the freedom to bring our whole selves and lives into this process of learning, practice, and growth.
8. Though the Community of Practice is not a support group and the focus of our gatherings is to learn and grow as professional peer support practitioners, self-disclosure of struggles may take place in order to gain support from others in this community in similar roles. Therefore, we hold the following as values:
  - Willingness to sit with people in deep distress and explore thoughts and feelings without jumping to clinical or other interventions
  - No assumption of illness and not forcing a certain framework for understanding lived experience upon a person
  - Recognizing, honoring, and validating that many pathways to recovery/resilience/meaningful living exist – what works for one may not work for another
9. Complete transparency around limits to privacy is maintained at all times.
10. Strive to use inclusive and respectful language. The goal is to use open language that honors our differences, and avoids reinforcing the negative ways that systems have labeled us. This means staying open to learning from one another how words can empower or hold us back. It also means respecting the names, pronouns, and other words people ask us to use for them.