Value of Peers, 2017

Peer Support

Peers Supporting Recovery from Mental Health Conditions

Peers Supporting Recovery from Substance Use Disorders

Family, Parent and Caregiver Peer Support in Behavioral Health

Value of Peers, 2017

Peer Support

PEER SUPPORT

"Because of peer support I am alive!"

—Melodie

What is Peer Support?

Peer support encompasses a range of activities and interactions between people who share similar experiences of being diagnosed with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, or both. This mutuality—often called “peerness”—between a peer support worker and person in or seeking recovery promotes connection and inspires hope.

Peer support offers a level of acceptance, understanding, and validation not found in many other professional relationships (Mead & McNeil, 2006). By sharing their own lived experience and practical guidance, peer support workers help people to develop their own goals, create strategies for self-empowerment, and take concrete steps towards building fulfilling, self-determined lives for themselves.

What Does A Peer Support Worker Do?

A peer support worker is someone with the lived experience of recovery from a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both. They provide support to others experiencing similar challenges. They provide non-clinical, strengths-based support and are "experientially credentialed" by their own recovery journey (Davidson, et al., 1999). Peer support workers may be referred to by different names depending upon the setting in which they practice. Common titles include: peer specialists, peer recovery coaches, peer advocates, and peer recovery support specialists.

What Does A Peer Support Worker Do? cont.

Peer support workers

- inspire hope that people can and do recover;
- walk with people on their recovery journeys;
- dispel myths about what it means to have a mental health condition or substance use disorder;
- provide self-help education and link people to tools and resources; and
- support people in identifying their goals, hopes, and dreams, and creating a roadmap for getting there.

What Does A Peer Support Worker Do? cont.

Peer support workers can help break down barriers of experience and understanding, as well as power dynamics that may get in the way of working with other members of the treatment team. The peer support worker's role is to assist people with finding and following their own recovery paths, without judgment, expectation, rules, or requirements.

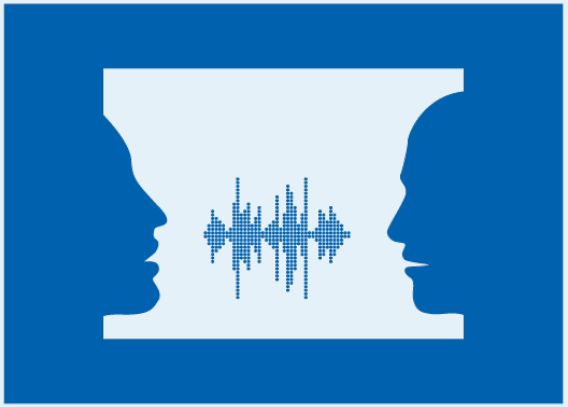
Peer support workers practice in a range of settings, including peer-run organizations, recovery community centers, recovery residences, drug courts and other criminal justice settings, hospital emergency departments, child welfare agencies, homeless shelters, and behavioral health and primary care settings. In addition to providing the many types of assistance encompassed in the peer support role, they conduct a variety of outreach and engagement activities.

"Peer support has been there for me no matter what, and now I am able to help others..."

—Liza

How Does Peer Support Help?

The role of a peer support worker complements, but does not duplicate or replace the roles of therapists, case managers, and other members of a treatment team.



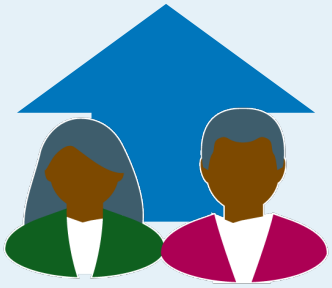
Peer support workers bring their own personal knowledge of what it is like to live and thrive with mental health conditions and substance use disorders. They support people's progress towards recovery and self-determined lives by sharing vital experiential information and real examples of the power of recovery. The sense of mutuality created through thoughtful sharing of experience is influential in modeling recovery and offering hope (Davidson, Bellamy, Guy, & Miller, 2012).

"When I saw that other people recovered, it gave me hope that I could too."

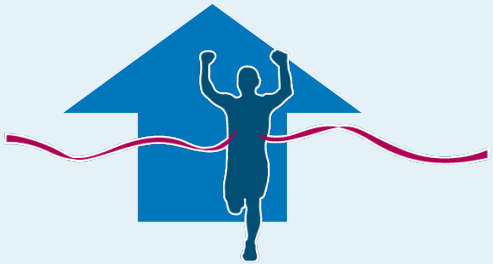
—Corinna

Does Peer Support Make A Difference?

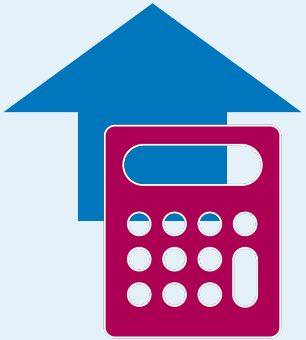
Emerging research shows that peer support is effective for supporting recovery from behavioral health conditions. Benefits of peer support may include:



Increased self-esteem and confidence
(Davidson, et al., 1999; Salzer, 2002)



Increased sense of control and ability to bring about changes in their lives
(Davidson, et al., 2012)



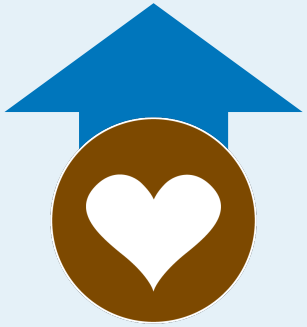
Raised empowerment scores
(Davidson, et al., 1999; Dumont & Jones, 2002; Ochoka, Nelson, Janzen, & Trainor, 2006; Resnick & Rosenheck, 2008)

Increased sense that treatment is responsive and inclusive of needs
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Does Peer Support Make A Difference? cont.

Emerging research shows that peer support is effective for supporting recovery from behavioral health conditions. Benefits of peer support may include:

Increased sense of hope and inspiration
(Davidson, et al., 2006; Ratzlaff, McDiarmid, Marty, & Rapp, 2006)



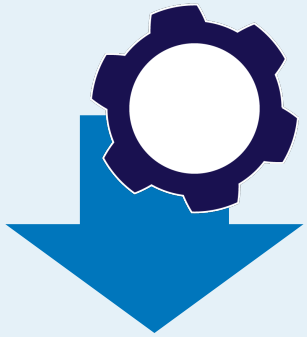
Increased empathy and acceptance (camaraderie)
(Coatswortha Puspokey, Forchuk, & Warda Griffin, 2006; Davidson, et al., 1999)

Increased engagement in selfa care and wellness
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

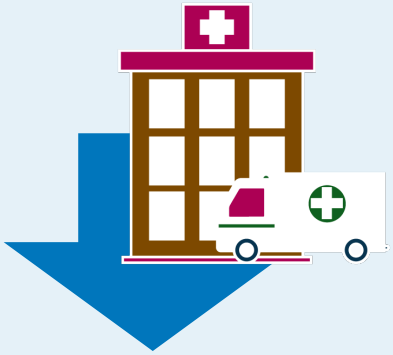
Increased social support and social functioning
(Kurtz, 1990; Nelson, Ochocka, Janzen, & Trainor, 2006; Ochoka et al., 2006; Trainor, Shepherd, Boydell, Leff, & Crawford, 1997; Yanos, Primavera, & Knight, 2001)

Does Peer Support Make A Difference? cont.

Emerging research shows that peer support is effective for supporting recovery from behavioral health conditions. Benefits of peer support may include:



Decreased psychotic symptoms
(Davidson, et al., 2012)



Reduced hospital admission rates and longer community tenure
(Chinman, Weingarten, Stayner, & Davidson, 2001; Davidson, et al., 2012; Forchuk, Martin, Chan, & Jenson, 2005; Min, Whitecraft, Rothbard, Salzer, 2007)

Decreased substance use and depression
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

“Peer support allowed me to feel ‘normal.’”

—Jean

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"Peer support has been excellent. Helping us along the way, being there whenever you need people to talk to. I don't know where to begin. They're always there ... no matter what it is."

—*Mika*

What is Peer Support?

Peer support[1] encompasses a range of activities and interactions between people who have shared similar experiences of being diagnosed with mental health conditions. This mutuality—often called "peerness"—between a peer worker and person using services promotes connection and inspires hope.

Peer support offers a level of acceptance, understanding, and validation not found in many other professional relationships (Mead and McNeil, 2006). "I am an expert at not being an expert, and that takes a lot of expertise," said one (anonymous) peer worker, highlighting the supportive rather than directive nature of the peer relationship (Promise Resource Network, 2016). By sharing their own lived experience and practical guidance, peer workers help people to develop their own goals, create strategies for self-empowerment, and take concrete steps towards building fulfilling, self-determined lives for themselves.

1 This document focuses exclusively on peer support services related to mental health conditions.

What Do Peer Support Specialists Do?

Support the Recovery of Individuals

Peer workers offer encouragement, practical assistance, guidance, and understanding to support recovery. Peer support workers walk alongside people in recovery, offering individualized supports and demonstrating that recovery is possible. They share their own lived experience of moving from hopelessness to hope. They share tools that can complement or replace clinical supports by providing strategies for self-empowerment and achieving a self-determined life. They support people in recovery to connect with their own inner strength, motivation, and desire to move forward in life, even when experiencing challenges. Peer workers offer different types of support, including:

- emotional (empathy and camaraderie)
- informational (connections to information and referrals to community resources that support health and wellness)
- instrumental (concrete supports such as housing or employment)
- affiliational support (connections to community supports, activities, and events)

What Do Peer Support Specialists Do? *cont.*

Improve Mental Health Systems

Peer support is valuable not only for the person receiving services, but also for behavioral health professionals and the systems in which they work. Peer workers educate their colleagues and advance the field by sharing their perspectives and experience in order to increase understanding of how practices and policies may be improved to promote wellness and resiliency. This is particularly important in mental health systems, where historical oppression, violence, and discrimination present significant barriers to recovery for many people. Peer workers play vital roles in moving behavioral health professionals and systems towards recovery orientation.

“Because of peer support,
I can stand on my own today.”

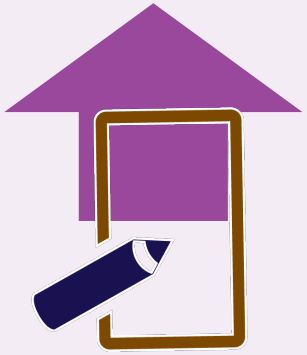
—John

IS PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT EFFECTIVE FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS?

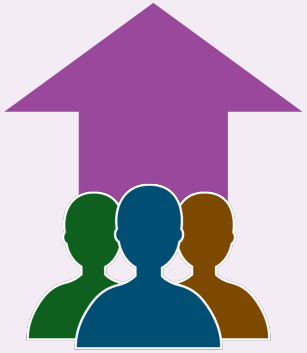
The research on peer support in mental health systems is still emerging, but findings are promising. The research to date suggests that peer recovery support may result in:

Increased empowerment and hope
(Chinman, et al., 2013, Cook, et al., 2010; Repper & Carter, 2011)

Increased social functioning
(Walker & Bryant, 2013)



Increased engagement and activation in treatment
(Druss, et al., 2010; Short, et al., 2012; Bellamy, et al., 2012)

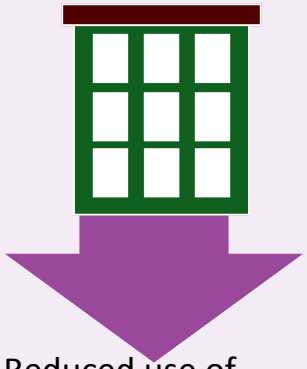


Increased community engagement
(Min, et al., 2007)

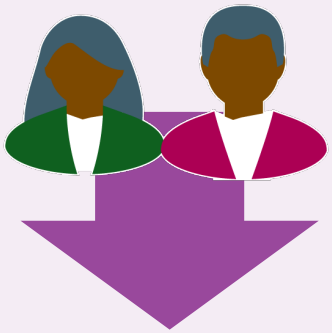
Increased quality of life and life satisfaction
(Bologna & Pulice, 2010; Felton, et al., 1995)

IS PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT EFFECTIVE FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS? *cont.*

The research on peer support in mental health systems is still emerging, but findings are promising. The research to date suggests that peer recovery support may result in:



Reduced use of inpatient services
(Chinman, et al., 2014; Min, et al., 2007; Sledge, et al., 2011)



Decreased self-stigma
(Corrigan, et al., 2013)

Decreased costs to the mental health system
(Trachtenberg, et al., 2013)

Decreased hospitalization
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

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"Peer support helped me see that I was not hopeless. It gave me my voice back and bolstered my self-worth."

—Michelle

What are Peer Recovery Support Services?

Peer recovery support services,[1] delivered by *peer recovery coaches,* are one form of peer support. They involve the process of giving and receiving non-clinical assistance to support long-term recovery from substance use disorders. A peer recovery coach brings the lived experience of recovery, combined with training and supervision, to assist others in initiating and maintaining recovery, helping to enhance the quality of personal and family life in long-term recovery (White, 2009). Peer recovery support services can support or be an alternative to clinical treatment for substance use disorders.

1 Peer recovery support services, peer-delivered recovery support, and peer-based recovery support are used interchangeably.

What are Peer Recovery Support Services? cont.

Peer-based recovery supports are part of an emerging transformation of systems and services addressing substance use disorders. They are essential ingredients in developing a recovery-oriented system in which clinical treatment plays an important, but singular, role. Acute care substance use treatment without other recovery supports has often not been sufficient in helping individuals to maintain long-term recovery. Substance use disorders are currently understood to be chronic conditions that require long-term management, like diabetes. Peer-based recovery support provides a range of person-centered and strength-based supports for long-term recovery management. These supports help people in recovery build *recovery capital*—the internal and external resources necessary to begin and maintain recovery (Best & Laudet, 2010; Cloud & Granfield, 2008).

What Do Peer Recovery Coaches Do?

Peer recovery coaches walk side by side with individuals seeking recovery from substance use disorders. They help people to create their own recovery plans, and develop their own recovery pathways.

Recovery coaches provide many different types of support, including

- emotional (empathy and concern)
- informational (connections to information and referrals to community resources that support health and wellness)
- instrumental (concrete supports such as housing or employment)
- affiliational support (connections to recovery community supports, activities, and events)

What Do Peer Recovery Coaches Do? cont.

Recovery plans and other supports are customized, and build on each individual's strengths, needs, and recovery goals.

Peer recovery support focuses on long-term recovery and is rooted in a culture of hope, health, and wellness. The focus of long-term peer recovery support goes beyond the reduction or elimination of symptoms to encompass self-actualization, community and civic engagement, and overall wellness.

The unique relationship between the peer recovery coach and the individual in or seeking recovery is grounded in trust, and focused on providing the individual with tools, resources, and support to achieve long-term recovery.

Peer recovery coaches work in a range of settings, including recovery community centers, recovery residences, drug courts and other criminal justice settings, hospital emergency departments, child welfare agencies, homeless shelters, and behavioral health and primary care settings. In addition to providing the range of support encompassed in the peer recovery coach role, they take an active role in outreach and engagement within these settings.

"When I needed someone to walk beside me, peer support was there."

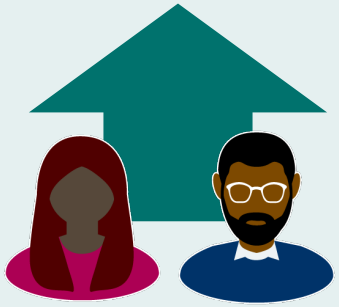
—Steve

Is Peer Recovery Coaching Effective?

People who have worked with peer recovery coaches provide strong testimonies of the positive impacts of peer recovery support on their own recovery journeys. The research supports these experiences. While the body of research is still growing, there is mounting evidence that people receiving peer recovery coaching show reductions in substance use, improvements on a range or recovery outcomes, or both. Two rigorous systematic reviews examined the body of published research on the effectiveness of peer-delivered recovery supports published between 1995 and 2014. Both concluded that there is a positive impact on participants (Bassuk, Hanson, Greene, Richard, & Laudet, 2016; Reif et al., 2014).

Is Peer Recovery Coaching Effective? cont.

Emerging research indicates that peer recovery coaching holds promise for supporting recovery from substance use disorders. Taken as a whole, the current body of research suggests that people receiving peer recovery support may experience:



Improved relationship with treatment providers
(Sanders et al., 1998; Andreas et al., 2010)

Increased treatment retention
(Mangrum, 2008; Deering et al., 2011; Tracy et al., 2011)

Increased satisfaction with the overall treatment experience
(Armitage at al., 2010)

Improved access to social supports
(O'Connell, ND; Boisvert et al., 2008; Andreas et al., 2010)

Greater housing stability
(Ja et al., 2009)

Is Peer Recovery Coaching Effective? cont.

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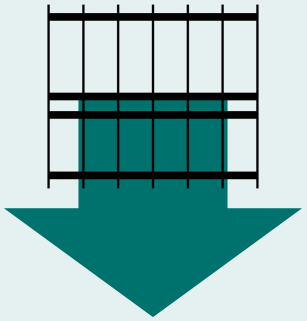
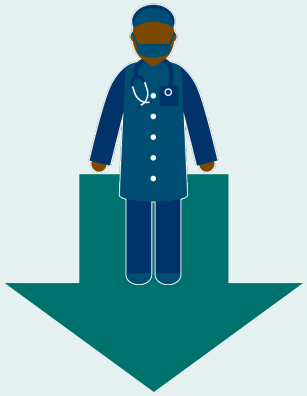
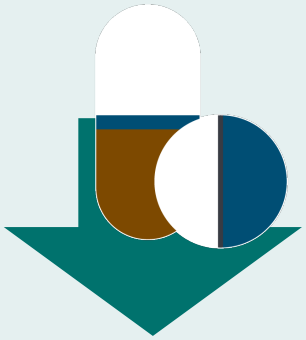


Decreased criminal justice involvement
(Rowe, et al., 2007; Mangrum, 2008)



Decreased emergency service utilization
(Kamon & Turner, 2013)



Reduced relapse rates
(Boisvert et al., 2008)

Reduced re-hospitalization rates
(Min et al., 2007)

Reduced substance use
(Bernstein, et al., 2005; Boyd et al., 2005; Kamon & Turner, 2013; Mangrum, 2008; O'Connell, ND; Rowe, et al., 2007; Armitage at al., 2010)

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Value of Peers, 2017

Family, Parent and Caregiver Peer Support in Behavioral Health

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

Family, Parent and Caregiver Peer Support in Behavioral Health

"My family was involved in a variety of services in our community. Once we began to work with a parent support professional, we felt that we had a person in our corner who worked just for us. It made a huge difference."

—David

What is Peer Support for Parents and Other Caregivers?

Parent peer support, also commonly called family peer support or family support services, offers hope, guidance, advocacy, and camaraderie for parents and caregivers of children and youth receiving services from mental health, substance use, and related service systems. Parent support providers deliver peer support through facel tol face support groups, phone calls, or individual meetings. They bring expertise based on their own experience parenting children or youth with social, emotional, behavioral, or substance use challenges, as well as specialized training, to support other parents and caregivers. Working within a peer support framework that recognizes the power of mutuality and experiential understanding, parent support providers deliver education, information, and peer support (Obrochta et al., 2011).

What is Peer Support for Parents and Other Caregivers? cont.

Parents trying to identify and access appropriate services for their child may find child-serving systems (e.g., mental health, education, juvenile justice, child welfare, substance use treatment) complicated and overwhelming. Parent peer support can help these parents navigate systems more effectively, learn from the experiences of other families, feel less alone, and gain hope, ideas, and information. This support can help parents meet their children's needs more efficiently, and with greater confidence and hope. (Kutash et al., 2011, Hoagwood et al., 2009).

What Do Parent Support Providers Do?

Parent support providers offer:

- emotional connection of people who have “been there”;
- informational and educational support on systems and strategies;
- support for parents as they develop positive approaches and methods for addressing their family’s day-to-day needs, including their own needs for self-care;
- concrete support, such as help arranging child care or transportation; and
- living proof of resilience and recovery.

What Do Parent Support Providers Do? cont.

Parent support providers are also known as *parent support professionals, navigators, mentors, family partners, parent partners,* and *parent support specialists*. Parent support providers offer a wide range of assistance and support, depending on the settings in which they work and the needs of the families they serve.

What Do Parent Support Providers Do? cont.

Common services include:

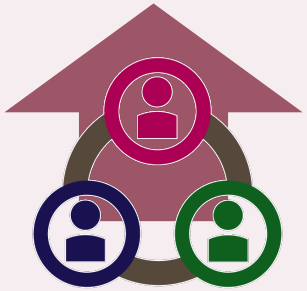
- information and referral;
- individualized supports to help parents understand their children's needs and access natural supports;
- support groups;
- parent training and education to increase knowledge and skills;
- system navigation to assist a family in finding or accessing resources;
- intensive family support during periods of crisis;
- specialized supports for families experiencing challenges with systems such as child welfare, juvenile courts, or schools; and
- social activities and events to bring families together, raise awareness, or offer educational opportunities.

"I don't know what I would have done without our parent support provider. She understood what I was going through, and she didn't judge me. She was available whenever I needed her, not just during business hours. She helped my family get back on our feet."

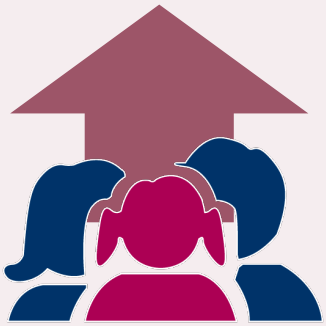
—Stacey

What are the Benefits of Parent Support Services?

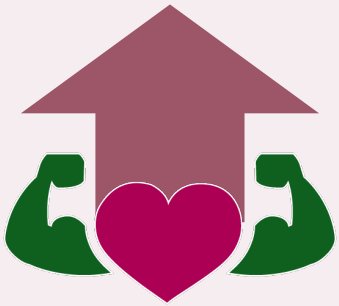
Early research suggests that parent peer support offers parents and other caregivers:



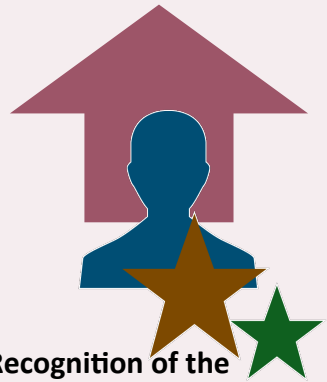
Increased sense of collaboration: Receiving skills training and support from parent support providers helps family members collaborate effectively with treatment professionals.
(Hogwood, et al., 2010)



Increased sense of selfn efficacy: Family support services increase family members' confidence in their abilities to care for their child.
(Hoagwood et al., 2010; Obrochta et al., 2011)



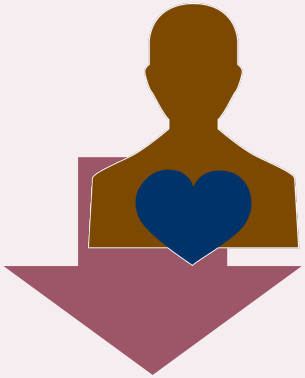
Increased empowerment to take action: Receiving education about service systems, navigation skills, advocacy skills, and rights helps empower families to become active participants in their child's services.
(Kutash, Duchnowski, Green, & Ferron, 2011)



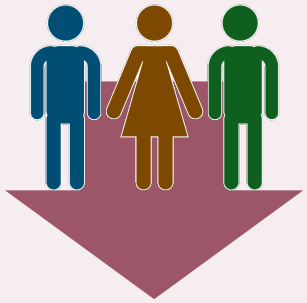
Recognition of the importance of self-care: Parent support providers help families increase their awareness of the need for self care.
(Obrochta et al., 2011)

What are the Benefits of Parent Support Services? cont.

Early research suggests that parent peer support offers parents and other caregivers:



Decreased internalized blame: By providing education and connections with others, parent support services help family members reframe their experiences and debunk damaging myths about behavioral health conditions and emotional distress.
(Obrochta et al., 2011)



Decreased family isolation: Parent support providers assist family members with identifying and accessing community supports that help them feel less alone.
(Obrochta et al., 2011)

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