



**Name of policy: Peer Mentoring**

**Date of Revised Policy Adoption:** *SLSC Annual General Meeting, June 7, 2019.*

**Historical Policy Adoption Date(s):** *SLSC Annual General Meeting, May 25, 2013.*

**Mission and Mandate:** St. Leonard's Society of Canada is a membership-based, charitable organization dedicated to community safety. The mission of SLSC is to promote a humane and informed justice policy and responsible leadership to foster safe communities. It:

- a. Endorses evidence-based approaches to criminal and social justice.
- b. Conducts research and develops policy.
- c. Supports its member affiliates; and
- d. Advances collaborative relationships and communication among individuals and organizations dedicated to social justice.

**Purpose of SLSC Policies:** Policies of SLSC are developed in collaboration with affiliate agencies, SLSC's Board of Directors and members, and are ratified at the Annual General Meeting with the express purposes of:

- Identifying criminal justice and related issues relevant to its membership;
- Reflecting SLSC organizational values and social justice goals;
- Articulating SLSC approaches, practices and standards to achieve these goals; and
- Ensuring the good governance of SLSC on matters of legal, administrative and organizational relevance.

**Background:**

St. Leonard's Society of Canada (SLSC) and its members have decades of experience with peer mentorship administered through a variety of brand identities. These include LifeLine® and Option Vie®, peer-based services that sought to support people with life sentences (lifers) through their transitions in institutional and community settings. This firsthand experience has resulted in SLSC's appreciation for the impact that peer mentoring can have on the eventual release of an individual to the community. It has been shown to help establish a vision of hope, in what can be an otherwise hopeless environment. This policy serves to guide SLSC in advocating and implementing peer mentoring services.

Peer mentoring is a deceptively simple concept that requires great skill to provide. Reduced to its basic elements, it is about discussing shared, lived experiences. Peers inside prisons have long offered each other support and encouragement on their carceral journeys. Peer mentoring is an acknowledged best practice in many settings and has had particular success when formalized within the correctional context. Historically, peer mentors came from the community into the institutions to provide mentorship services.

**Issues/Scope**

In order to understand the concept of peer mentoring it is important to provide a definition. As explained in the literature, peer mentoring can be described as having a mentor (an experienced person) interact with a mentee (a less experienced/vulnerable person) in order to help facilitate personal growth and provide support for the mentee. Peer mentoring is primarily characterized by face-

to-face meetings between the mentor and mentee in which both parties are equal. The relationship between the mentor and mentee is one that encourages learning and personal development with a high level of commitment to the relationship. Although both of the parties can benefit from the relationship that is built through the mentoring process, the main goal of peer mentoring is to assist the mentees in their growth/transition and provide them with positive support. Peer mentoring is also a concept that entails some degree of flexibility in which the needs and goals for both parties can change and expand over time and space.

While SLSC recognizes the benefits of peer mentorship in a variety of contexts, SLSC's experience up to now has been with lifers, aging/elderly clients, and people with problematic substance use. SLSC has also been involved with supporting the PeerLife Collaborative in a research and advisory role to achieve greater capacity for service provision of peer support services within institutions and in the community. People in all security levels can benefit from peer-mentorship. The implications of peer mentorship for each individual depend on which area, in particular, is being addressed; but, the ultimate aim is to assist the mentees to meet their personal goals. With respect to people who may be moved into security settings separate from the general population, or those who are already separated, this intervention can be helpful in preventing placement in higher security levels or transitioning to lower ones. Peer mentorship can be beneficial to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. It is particularly useful for individuals transitioning into the community.

#### **Resolutions:**

Whereas SLSC affirms its commitment to peer mentoring, including ensuring appropriate training and utilization within a variety of environments; and,

Whereas research and practice have shown the positive effect of peer mentoring,

Be it resolved that St. Leonard's Society of Canada supports peer mentoring and encourages its use in a wide variety of correctional contexts.

#### **Additional information**

##### **Brand Varieties of Peer Mentor Service Delivery within SLSC Affiliates:**

- LifeLine®/ Option Vie®
- PeerLife Collaborative

##### **SLSC Reports/Publications:**

- St. Leonard's Society of Canada. (2019). *Life(r)'s Work: Developing a Modernized Strategy for Life-Sentenced People in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: St. Leonard's Society of Canada.
- St. Leonard's Society of Canada. (2019). *Lifer Resource Strategy (revised)*. Ottawa, ON: St. Leonard's Society of Canada.
- PeerLife Collaborative. (2017). *Life(r)'s Work: An Historical Analysis and Evaluation of a Program for Life Sentenced People in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: St. Leonard's Society of Canada.
- Munn, M. (2012). *Survey Results: Client Evaluation of LifeLine Services*. Ottawa, ON: St. Leonard's Society of Canada.
- St. Leonard's Society of Canada. (2014). *Literature Summary: Promising Practices for Train the Trainer Peer Mentoring Workshop*. Ottawa, ON: St. Leonard's Society of Canada.

##### **External Reports/Publications:**

- Government of Canada. (2010). *Lifer Resource Strategy*.
- Gottschall, S. & Axford, M. (2010). *A Preliminary Investigation of Institutional Outcomes for LifeLine Clients*. Retrieved from <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/005008-b45-eng.shtml>.

- Olotu, M. (2009). *Evaluation Report: LifeLine Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pa/ev-ll/index-eng.shtml>
- Groves, D. (2005). *LifeLine In-Reach for Women in the Ontario Region*. Elizabeth Fry Society.
- Delveaux, K. & Blanchette, K. (2000). *Research Report: Results of an Evaluation of the Peer Support Program at Nova Institution for Women*. Retrieved from <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/lbrr/archives/hv%206089%20d44%202000-eng.pdf>
- Syed, F. & Blanchette, K. (2000). *Research Report: Results of an Evaluation of the Peer Support Program at Grand Valley Institution for Women*. Retrieved from <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/lbrr/archives/hv%206089%20s94%202000-eng.pdf>
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