



# RBC Foundation BIPOC Peer Supporter Certification Initiative Information Package

## Context

Peer Support Canada (PSC) serves as the national voice for peer support in Canada, providing leadership to peer support workers and organizations providing peer support services across Canada. As an entity of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), PSC exists to facilitate a vision wherein peer support is an integral component of mental health and substance use health systems, accessible to all who live in Canada who are affected by mental health and substance use health challenges and mental illness.

**This initiative, funded by the RBC Foundation, offers 25 fully funded spots for Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour (BIPOC) peer supporters to participate in Peer Support Canada's National Peer Support Certification assessment process at no cost.**

The goal of this initiative is to reduce financial and systemic barriers to certification and to support greater equity, representation, and lived-experience leadership within the peer support workforce. While peer support is rooted in lived experience and is intended to reflect a diversity of lived and living experiences, systemic barriers continue to limit who can get involved in the peer support workforce, and who can access certification. This initiative represents a small but intentional step toward minimizing those barriers and supporting a more diverse and representative peer support workforce.

While we are grateful to offer this opportunity, we also acknowledge that barriers to access remain. We are committed to ongoing learning and accountability.

## About the Peer Support Canada National Peer Supporter Certification Program

This is an **assessment-based certification, not a training program**. It is intended for folks who already have experience providing peer support (or who have completed prior peer support training) who are looking to go through an assessment process against the national standards for peer support. Peer support is understood as drawing from **personal lived and living experience** to support others, and the program assesses candidate's skills and competencies guided by Peer Support Canada's core competencies, values, and Code of Conduct. The certification process typically costs \$1,200 per person.

## Eligibility for the RBC Foundation Initiative

The RBC Foundation BIPOC Peer Support Certification Initiative offers 25 funded spots for Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour (BIPOC) peer supporters to participate in Peer Support Canada's National Peer Support Certification assessment process at no cost.

**Interested applicants should be BIPOC individuals with peer support experience.** We recognize that systemic barriers limit access to formal peer support roles and opportunities, and we are committed to valuing a wide range of peer support experiences that meet the certification program's acquired experience standards. Provisional certification pathways are also available for applicants who do not yet meet the formalized experience requirements\*.

\*More information about full and provisional certification can be found on the [FAQ page](#), and the [certification handbook](#).

## Application and Selection Process

Interested applicants must complete a brief expression of interest form. From the submissions received, 25 individuals will be selected.

Applications are reviewed by a selection committee made up of Peer Support Canada staff and a BIPOC Certified Peer Supporter, who acts in an advisory role. The selection process is designed to reduce biased decision-making as much as possible, while recognizing that bias can never be fully eliminated and requires ongoing reflection and accountability.

The goal of this initiative is to select a diverse group of BIPOC peer supporters who would benefit from this opportunity and who experience significant systemic barriers to accessing certification, while recognizing that many more individuals are deserving than the number of funded spots available. Selection decisions are based on available capacity and program goals, not on individual worth or value, and we remain committed to ongoing efforts to reduce systemic barriers to certification and participation in the peer support workforce.

## Certification Process

For a detailed overview of the Peer Support Canada National Peer Support Certification program, folks are highly encouraged to review the [FAQ page](#), and the [Certification Handbook](#).

For the cohort of individuals going through the certification process as part of the RBC Foundation BIPOC Peer Support Certification Initiative, the certification process will be much the same as it currently operates. Some adjustments (such as improved transparency about the availability of accommodations, a brief visual aid outlining the process, video introductions about the program) have been made based on consultation with BIPOC peer supporters that are familiar with Peer Support Canada's certification program.

Additional opportunities related to the RBC Foundation initiative include hosting a kick off meeting with the selected candidates, PSC staff and a BIPOC mentor, and the availability of "office-hours" for the selected candidates to meet with PSC staff and a BIPOC mentor to ask questions and connect throughout the process.

Peer Support Canada is committed to supporting and empowering candidates throughout the certification process, while also upholding the integrity of the National Peer Support Certification Program. This means working to promote equity in the assessment process while ensuring working to ensure that anyone awarded certification demonstrates the required standards. **Participation in the RBC Foundation initiative covers access to the certification process but does not guarantee certification; certification is awarded only when the standards are successfully met.**

## Additional Questions

*The below questions are specific to the RBC Foundation initiative. There is an abundance of information about the PSC certification program available within the certification handbook, and the FAQ page on our website. If you intend to apply as part of the RBC Foundation initiative, you are required to review those materials ahead of submitting your expression of interest.*

### Is Peer Support Certification a training program?

Peer Support Canada Certification is **not a training program**. It is an **assessment** of a peer supporter's demonstration of the National Standards of Practice, and participants are encouraged to have prior peer support experience or training before applying.

### How will I know if I've been selected to participate?

Due to capacity limitations, we are only able to contact candidates who are **selected** for the initiative. If you are selected, you will be contacted directly via email with next steps. Unfortunately, applicants who are not selected **will not receive a notification**. We appreciate everyone's interest in this initiative and want to acknowledge the value of the experiences, perspectives, and strengths all applicants bring to peer support, and encourage you to stay connected for future opportunities.

### I am not BIPOC, but I experience significant marginalizations and systemic barriers. Is this opportunity available to me as well?

This RBC Foundation-funded initiative is specifically for Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour (BIPOC) peer supporters, so it is **not available to non-BIPOC applicants**. We recognize that systemic barriers affect many peer supporters, and while we don't currently have a similar opportunity for non-BIPOC applicants, we are committed to **exploring**

**and creating future initiatives** to support greater equity and access for all peer supporters.

### **When do I need to apply for certification if I am selected?**

If you are selected for the RBC BIPOC Peer Support Certification Initiative, you will receive **coupon codes valid for one year**. We encourage you to **apply soon after being notified of your selection** to allow ample time to complete the certification process within that year. You should feel prepared to spend approximately **2 hours** in the coming weeks to submit your application and are ready to set aside **10–15 hours** over the following months to complete the assessment process.

### **What is the cost of Peer Support Canada Certification, and how is payment handled if I am selected?**

Peer Support Canada Certification typically includes two fees: an **application fee** (\$200) and an **assessment fee** (\$1,000). However, if you are selected to move forward through the funded process, you will not be required to pay these fees out of pocket.

Selected candidates will receive coupon codes that fully cover both the application fee and the assessment fee. These codes are entered during the online application and later at the assessment stage, allowing you to proceed through the certification process without making a payment. Once you receive your coupon codes, it is your responsibility to complete the application and assessment requirements **within the designated timelines**.

### **What is the timeline for using the coupon codes, and what happens if I don't use them within that window?**

Selected participants will receive coupon codes that are valid for **one year**. We strongly encourage participants to begin the application process **soon after being notified of their selection** to ensure they have enough time to complete the certification process. Coupon codes that are not used within the **one-year** timeframe will **expire and cannot be extended or reissued**.

### **What adjustments have been made to the certification program given the intentional recruitment of BIPOC communities to participate?**

PSC staff engaged in one-to-one consultations with

BIPOC folks familiar with the Peer Support Canada Certification program and have applied most of the feedback that was given to us during these consultations.

For this RBC Foundation-funded initiative, selected BIPOC peer supporters receive **coupon codes to cover certification costs** and have a **one-year window** to complete the process. The application and assessment process includes **updated wording on accommodations** to acknowledge systemic barriers, and participants will be supported through a **kick-off event** and **“office hours”** through out the process with BIPOC Certified Peer Supporters available to answer questions. These changes aim to make the certification process more accessible, equitable, and supportive.

### **I am a BIPOC peer supporter, and I previously paid for certification with Peer Support Canada. Can be certification costs be refunded as part of the RBC initiative?**

Unfortunately, the RBC Foundation-funded initiative **cannot provide refunds** for certification fees that have already been paid. This initiative covers certification costs **only for new applicants selected for this program** and is a **time-limited grant**, which cannot be applied to certification completed prior to or after the funding period.

### **What if I experience harm as a BIPOC peer supporter while going through the certification process?**

Peer Support Canada is an organization currently primarily run by white, cis-gendered staff members. We recognize that this is a barrier to participation and doesn't lend itself to a brave space for BIPOC candidates to engage with our programming. Our white settler staff are required to participate in an anti-racist required reading initiative and are committed to embracing practices and vibes that are inclusive, anti-racist and anti-oppressive. And we will make mistakes. We are open to feedback, and keen to take on the labour of addressing harms and discomforts that may transpire. We will have certified BIPOC peer supporters available at the kick-off event, and our “office hours”, and we are open to discussing additional support opportunities with BIPOC peer supporters.

### **What accommodations are available during the certification process**

Peer Support Canada is committed to creating

a certification process where participants feel **respected, supported, and able to fully participate**. If selected, there is an opportunity within the certification application to let us know if you anticipate needing accommodations, and applicants are encouraged to share this **as early as possible** so we can anticipate needs and explore options.

Accommodation requests are discussed collaboratively with our **Certification Coordinator** to explore what supports may be possible. While we do our best to accommodate individual needs within our capacity, we may not be able to meet every request. All candidates must still be able to **demonstrate the core requirements of certification**, but we are committed to approaching accommodations with care, flexibility, and transparency wherever possible.

### **What support is available during the certification process?**

Selected participants will be invited to a **kick-off event** and **optional “office hours”**, where **Certified BIPOC Peer Supporters** will be available to share insights, answer questions, and offer guidance. Participants

are also supported throughout the process by our **Certification Coordinator**, who is available to help navigate the certification requirements. We are open to discussing additional support options with BIPOC peer supporters as needs arise.

### **Who will be available to answer questions during the process?**

Our Certification Coordinator, **Brookelyn Fortier**, will be available to support participants and answer questions throughout the process. You can reach out at [certification@peersupportcanada.ca](mailto:certification@peersupportcanada.ca) or [info@peersupportcanada.ca](mailto:info@peersupportcanada.ca), and we'll do our best to respond with care and clarity.

### **How will my information be used by Peer Support Canada?**

We may use information from participants to **look at overall participation and trends** in the initiative and potentially ask for feedback or quotes to include in reports back to the RBC Foundation. **No identifying information will ever be shared without your permission**, and your privacy is always respected.

*This project was made possible with a donation from RBC Foundation*



Foundation