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**What does the future of peer support look like here in Connecticut?** We can't say for sure, but it is the consensus of most peers that we should be the ones to decide our own destiny. If our lived experience makes us so effective in helping others, we believe it should be that same lived experience that carves out our path moving forward. The future is ours to shape. Yes, we may make mistakes and have setbacks, but it is not a straight line to our destination as with recovery itself. We see peers in various roles moving forward and filling a need for our community. Peer-run respites, peers involved on mobile crisis teams, and peer caseworkers... Wait, casework? Did we really just say peers should be relegated to casework? Yes, and there is a good reason for it.

In the various conversations around the role of peer support specialists in Connecticut, one common comment that always seems to come up is how many certified peers are hired and help with the casework of different organizations rather than performing traditional peer support. What is the basic definition of a caseworker? A caseworker is an employee of a government agency, nonprofit organization, or other group who takes on the cases of individuals and provides them with advocacy, information, and solutions.

Most of the trained peer support specialists are advocates and have received additional training in advocacy. The peer supporter generally provides information on the services and programs that might be beneficial to the people they are working with at any given time. Supplying support, advocacy, and information opens the path to finding solutions and guiding those who need help to overcome obstacles.

So here is a question, if trained peers can take on a task that can help so many people in recovery, why not expand our role to include the use of that skillset? Looking at the number of certification class offerings in our state each year, you will quickly see we produce more new trained peers for the workforce than we have available job opportunities.



Our goal is not to redefine the definition of peer support. We want to increase its scope and include the work most peers are doing already. This is where Project R.O.S.E. comes into the picture.

**R.O.S.E. is an acronym** that stands for Recovery, Opportunity, Sustainability, and Empowerment. In our last quarterly newsletter, we shared a story with you and then asked the question, What happened to us?



What happened to us as a society where we think it is better to let a person crash and burn, then search the wreckage and rebuild afterward? We believe it is because a treatment and recovery system is more profitable than one of support and compassion. We always talk about recovery and what is needed for success, but how often does a person who is stressed out from real-life situations suppose to overcome those obstacles if they are not addressed? We often ask ourselves, how can we work better within the current system of services? Why? Why are we so eager to work within a broken system that has proven so ineffective? Peers in Connecticut have built a fantastic foundation of support, and it has already changed the lives of so many people. We believe it is time to build on that foundation and create an option outside the system. Better yet, a network!

Even those who call themselves nonprofits, professional providers sell you a service. It is extremely rare that a mental health network of any kind will recommend a supportive program or service that may redirect you away from their billing department.

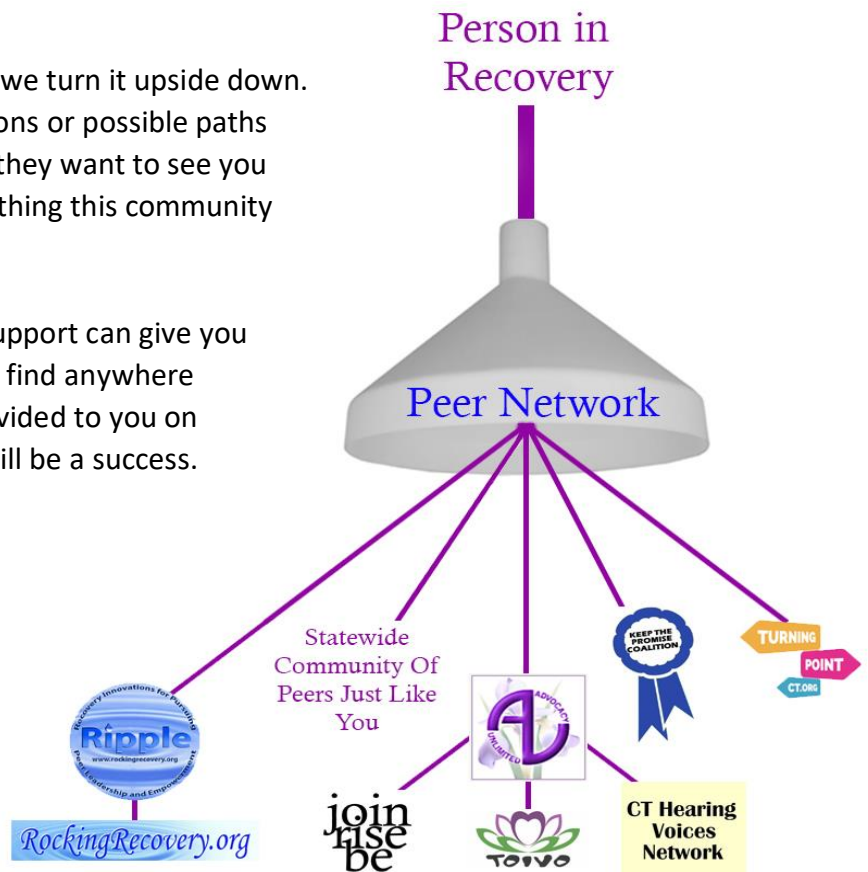
Think of this as a funnel. In a mental health care system, using traditional treatment methods, they work with you (hopefully) to create your treatment plan and then narrow the focus to the course of action they believe will benefit you.

A peer network uses the same funnel, but we turn it upside down. You come into it not knowing all your options or possible paths to recovery. If a peer is working with you, they want to see you succeed and will share anything and everything this community has to offer.

The bottom line is, a peer community of support can give you access and connection to things you won't find anywhere else. We believe the more options are provided to you on your recovery journey, the more likely it will be a success.

We need something new!

Remember, if you keep on doing what you have always done, you will never get anything more than you have already gotten.



**How does R.O.S.E. work exactly?** Here is the exciting part, you likely already know, and if you are a peer supporting someone else, you are probably already doing what needs to be done. It involves a lot of common sense. Let's break it down:

**Recovery:** When a person seeks help after a crisis, relapse, traumatic event, or to overcome addiction, that is when recovery begins. It is not anyone's place to force recovery models on someone else. Every peer knows proper recovery can not begin until that person is ready to do the work. It must be their choice because, in the end, no one will work harder towards their well-being than they will themselves. Certified peers already fill a role in assisting in navigating the recovery system. They offer support, encouragement, and a living example that recovery is possible. This is the work we have always done and will continue doing in the future.

**Opportunity:** This is where the "caseworker" aspect comes into play. Have you ever dialed 211 or waited a long time to get the help you need? Most people have become very discouraged by the process and the results it tends to produce. The current network of peers working in Connecticut is part of a network of hundreds of people who dedicate their time to supporting and advocating for others.

Over the last two years, Ripple has filled RockingRecovery.org with hundreds of resources because common sense suggests that a person needs things to survive. Housing, access to transportation, employment, food, clothing, etc. There are many different options depending on where you live in the state. We need to be the ones to connect peers who are struggling to these offerings and services. We should be the ones helping them navigate this system of services along with the mental health and addiction services system. Why? Because getting a foundation underneath them and taking some of the stress out of their lives will only serve to benefit their recovery.

**Sustainability:** Once a person has been in recovery for a while and has made progress towards their goals, they need a feeling of security. Life happens, and we will always need some level of support from time to time. We have looked at the peer support specialist as a guide up until this point. We have listened to the needs of the person we are working with, and they are now starting not just to survive but also to thrive. This can be a challenging point because fear can creep into their thoughts. What if I lose my job? What if I relapse? What if...

This is the point where the peer supporter is no longer a guide. You have helped them this far, but now it is time for a change. The new phase you enter is where the relationship you have built together becomes a partnership. You begin planning for the what-if scenarios and how to implement those plans if needed. Think of it as kin to a wellness action recovery plan, but the sustainability plan prepares them for what life might throw in their direction. The main goal of the sustainability phase of the program should be to reinforce the foundation you have built together while creating a sense of security and confidence.

**Empowerment:** Once a person feels stable enough to explore more of the peer community, we encourage them to become more involved. Perhaps by now, they are thinking about helping others and have become interested in the work done by certified peer supporters. Perhaps they want to advocate and want to take classes so they may better express their needs and the needs of others. If you are currently certified as a Recovery Support Specialist or a Recovery Coach, you know what we are talking about, that pull to become part of something meaningful. Empowerment feels like you are no longer on the outside looking in, feeling like you are ready to take that seat at the table. When a person reaches that point, it is our job to offer them a chair.

At the end of the day, it does not matter what career path a person takes, whether they work in the peer recovery community or not. True empowerment comes from knowing how far you have come and that



you are ready to face what tomorrow may bring. Empowerment is knowing when you are able to help others and when you need to take a step back for your own well-being. Above all else, empowerment is knowing you are part of something larger, a movement, a community, an idea. It is knowing that no matter where you choose to go from here, you are not alone.

*RockingRecovery.org*

Recovery Innovations for Pursuing Peer Leadership and Empowerment (RIPPLE)



zoom

## Peer Hosted Late Night Support Group

Everyone needs to talk from time to time, and sometimes there is no one else around. Many people in recovery struggle at night when the warmlines are closed. If you are one of those people, we invite you to join us. If you live with depression, anxiety, PTSD, intrusive thoughts, or need help facing an addiction, you are not alone.

**Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Sundays  
10:00 PM to Midnight**

**These meetings will be offered on the  
Zoom platform and open to anyone  
who would like to attend.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89824032752>

**One tap mobile**

**+19292056099,,89824032752# US (New York)**

**Dial by your location**

**+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)**

**Meeting ID: 898 2403 2752**

Powered by Peers....

And a  
lot of  
coffee!



**Please visit our website for more information:  
[www.rockingrecovery.org/zoom-meetings](http://www.rockingrecovery.org/zoom-meetings)**

