



Resilient
Communities Peer
Ambassadorship
Project (RCPAP)



**Peer Support Framework
to support
Women Experiencing Challenges Related to COVID-19'**

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About MWC



Founded in 2009, **Malton Women Council (MWC)** is a registered non-profit organization based in Malton Community of Mississauga, Ontario. Our mandate is to mentor, motivate and mobilize women with **the vision of 'Empowered Women, Empowered Communities'**. Our mission is to empower women and enhance their overall well-being by providing platforms and creating opportunities to excel.

As a women-centered organization, we continue to do the work to increase women's economic security and prosperity; to encourage women's leadership and democratic participation; and to end gender-based inequality. The demographics that we cater to typically comprise of South Asian immigrant women who are experiencing cultural, social, economical, legal, and systemic barriers to realize their full potential as members of the Canadian society.

In the last 12 years, MWC has provided opportunities, resources, and a strong platform for women to thrive and excel; to mobilize their skills and experiences in various capacities and to help them express their talents and abilities and see themselves as leaders. Currently, our programming domain includes holistic health and well-being; information and resource linkages; education and awareness; peer support; civic engagement; cultural connections; intergenerational activities; skills development and training.

Resilient Communities Peer Ambassadorship Project (RCPAP)



About RCPAP

Funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), **the Resilient Communities Peer Ambassadorship Project (RCPAP)** will provide peer support to South Asian women who are experiencing COVID-19 challenges and losses related to health and well-being, economic security, social and cultural connections, domestic violence, and community resource navigation. Through online/virtual individualized and group peer support sessions, the group of 10 trained Women Peer Ambassadors will support and empower South Asian women by providing them with the knowledge, tools, and resource linkages to build resilience and capacity to deal with the aftermath of COVID-19.

Project Objectives:

1. Ensure that women are provided knowledge, tools, resources, and supports to build their capacities and resilience to deal with COVID-19 challenges and losses related to health and well-being, economic security, social and cultural connections, domestic violence, and community resource navigation.
2. Leverage lived experiences, knowledge, and wisdom of women to provide holistic, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services, using a strength based and anti-oppressive model of service delivery.
3. Identify and address barriers experienced by women in having equitable access to services, especially during COVID-19.
4. Engage project beneficiaries and community partners to develop a framework to enhance women's access to services and capacity building during and post COVID-19.

Project Approach

The project will recruit 10 South Asian Women as Peer Ambassadors. Their lived experiences related to settlement, societal, cultural, systemic, economic, legal and health barriers and challenges will be leveraged to support and empower other women during these tough times of COVID-19. The 10 Women Peer Ambassadors will receive training in the areas of peer support; leadership and civic engagement; mental health and well-being; financial literacy, entrepreneurship; digital literacy; gender-based discrimination, domestic violence; and community resource navigation. The group of trained Women Peer Ambassadors will form a Project Guiding Committee, which will work closely with the Project Coordinator to guide, implement, and evaluate project activities. Leveraging the learnings from the trainings; inputs collected from project beneficiaries and knowledge exchange with partner organizations, the Project Guiding Committee will develop a 'Framework to Provide Peer Support to Women Experiencing Challenges Related to COVID-19'.



Project Team

Peer Ambassadors:

Aashim Kochar
Arshi Ali
Farrah Chughtai
Faiza Maqsood
Gaya Nagendra

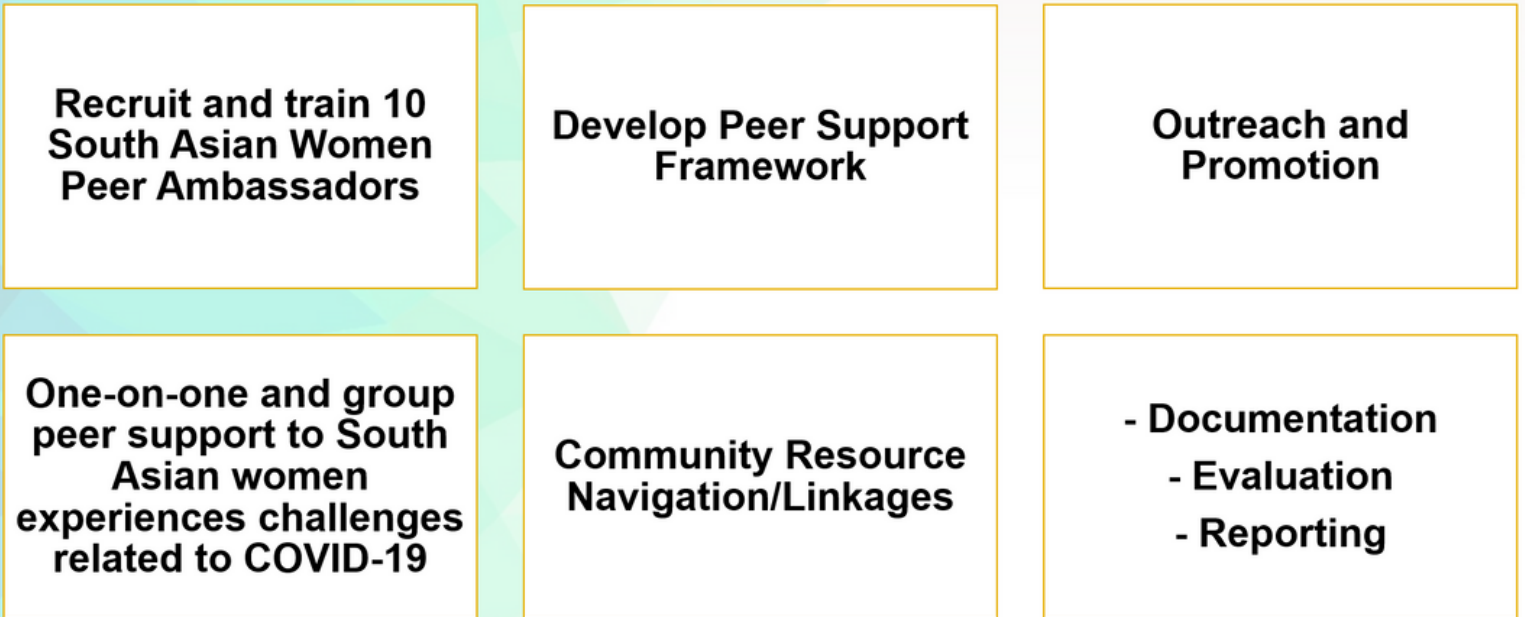
Peer Ambassadors:

Gulnaz Rehan
Ishaa Amir
Mahmooda
Surjit Kaur
Tahiya Naeem

Project Coordinators: Uzma Irfan and Asma Khan

Compliance, Quality Assurance and Reporting: Anu Randhawa

Process Map



Areas of Support

- Health and Well-Being
- Economic Security
- Social and Cultural Connections
- Domestic Violence
- Community Resource Navigation



The Facts: Women and COVID-19

COVID-19 has drastically impacted individuals and families in all facets of life, ranging from daily necessities, social connections, mobility, finances (jobs and careers) to their overall health, safety, and wellness. During the last 18 months of this pandemic, through MWC's clientele, we have witnessed that this impact was further intensified for women who belonged to one or more of the following vulnerable categories: newcomer, immigrant, racialized groups, low income/living in poverty, experiencing domestic or gender-based violence, caregivers, seniors, young girls, and individuals experiencing mental illness.

Facts and Findings from Canadian Women's Foundation

"Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex," says a United Nations policy brief. "With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic," says the UN, "even the limited gains made in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back." The Canadian Human Rights Commission has echoed this statement with its own, saying: "These disproportionate impacts could have long-term and far reaching consequences. If we are to restore momentum in our efforts to bring about gender equality in Canada, social and economic recovery efforts must take a feminist approach."

"Rates of gender-based violence were high in Canada, even before the pandemic: on average, every six days, a woman is killed by her intimate partner. Thousands of women, girls, and trans and non-binary people now face a heightened risk of violence at home with COVID-19 isolation measures, whether it takes the form of emotional, physical or sexual abuse."

"Given that women are concentrated in sectors and industries hardest hit by isolation measures, a higher proportion of women lost their jobs in the early stages of the pandemic. Women accounted for 63% of the 1 million jobs lost as of March 2020, and 70% of losses by workers aged 25 to 54."

"Surveys conducted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic suggested that women in Canada were carrying a bigger burden of worry about the situation than men.

Forty-nine per cent of women reported feeling "very worried" about the outbreak, compared to 33 per cent of men, indicated a poll by Abacus Data. The data also showed that men were less likely to follow the advice of public health officials around staying home and social distancing.

Seventy-five per cent of female respondents were afraid of a family member contracting the virus, compared to 64 per cent of men, suggested an opinion survey by Leger."



Definitions

"Peer support is emotional and practical support between two people who share a common experience, such as a mental health challenge or illness. A Peer Supporter has lived through that similar experience, and is trained to support others." **Peer Support Canada**

"Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other. There are different types of peer support, but they all involve both giving and receiving support. This could be sharing knowledge or providing emotional support, social interaction or practical help, for example. Everyone's experiences are treated as equally important and no-one is more of an expert than anyone else." **Mental Health Foundation**

Peer support is a supportive relationship between people who have a lived experience in common." **Mental Health Commission of Canada**



Peer Support Values

Hope and recovery

Empathetic and equal relationships

Self-determination

Dignity, respect and social inclusion

Integrity, authenticity and trust

Health and wellness

Lifelong learning and personal growth

Understanding Peer Support

"Peer Supporters listen, provide emotional support, and most importantly, inspire hope."

Peer Support: Dos and Donts

DOs:

- Be positive
- Keep information confidential
- Always listen (active listening)
- Make clients feel comfortable
- Offer support and guidance
- Try to understand
- Be encouraging
- Reflect on own experience/behavior
- Show respect
- Develop a rapport
- Be patient
- Be helpful
- Document all your interactions with the clients
- Establish clear boundaries
- Value clients' opinions and beliefs
- Value diversity
- Encourage clients to talk about any concerns and/or aspirations they might have
- Talk about any relevant experiences and problems you have overcome (without taking the focus away from your clients)
- Refer to specialist services where appropriate
- Discuss any concerns/problems you might have with your Supervisor

DON'Ts:

- Don't judge
- Make it too personal
- Become too attached
- Cross boundaries
- Give false information
- Act as a counsellor/therapist (there are other people trained in these roles)
- Take responsibility for your client's problems and feel you have to solve them
- "Friend" your clients (but be friendly!)
- Involve your clients in your own personal issues

Virtual Peer Support During COVID-19



- Online/virtual tools such as, telephone, text messages, e-mail, social media, Zoom Meeting will be used to provide peer support during COVID-19.
- Based on the needs of the clients, they will be connected with appropriate community resources and services (please refer to the 'RCPAP Resource List').
- Provide clients with accurate information to overcome rumors related to COVID-19.
- Provide clients with warmline, crisis & helplines, and other important information to support them during COVID-19.
- Have regular client case consultations during supervision and project team meetings.
- Make sure the clients stay in touch with family and friends or are part of an online support group.
- If necessary, arrange to have groceries and supplies delivered to them. Some local food banks provide deliveries.
- Make sure the clients have important contact information.
- Conduct group peer sessions on topics related to physical mental and social well-being; financial security; domestic violence; and community resource navigation.

COVID-19 Helpline: **<http://cassa.on.ca/covidhelpline/>**

The Helpline provides information about:

- Health & safety during COVID-19
- Details on reopening processes
- Government benefits
- Support services
- The Helpline is available 24/7 with live Intake Specialists available on a set schedule each week.
- Call 647-846-2233 to access to Helpline.

Apna Health: **<https://apnahealth.org/>**

- COVID-19 related information and supports
- Call 905-366-1010 to get information in Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Tamil, and Bengali

Punjabi Community Health Services: **<https://pchs4u.com/covid-19-resources/>**

- People infected with COVID-19 and need help with self-isolation, call 416-605-6134

Dixie Bloor Neighborhood Services: **<https://dixiebloor.ca/covid-19-hotline/>**

- The Dixie Bloor Neighborhood Centre Covid-19 Hotline provides wraparound supports for anyone that has tested positive for COVID-19.
- The hotline covers the following postal codes L5B, L5R, L4X, and L4Z in the following languages: Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Mandarin and Albanian.
- Call at: 1-833-632-6819

COVID-19 Helplines for South Asians in Peel Region

References

Canadian Women's Foundation

Peer Support Canada

Mental Health Commission of Canada

Peer Mentoring Practice

Mental Health America

Mental Health Foundation

“Everyone has an innate capacity to bounce back from setbacks, reconnect with their passion for work, do their best and thrive no matter how dire external circumstances may seem.”

— Rani Bora



www.mwc.community