

**More than 72% of clients
said peer support was an
employability benefit.**

Peer Support

Overview from **A Case Study of Peer Support Within
Career Services at a Nova Scotia Works Centre**

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A recent three-month study submitted to the Nova Scotia Career Development Association recommends a community navigator/peer support worker as a core service at Nova Scotia Works centres.

The project included the creation of part-time peer support/community navigation roles at Team Work Cooperative and Job Junction Nova Scotia Works centres, enabling researchers to examine gaps in services and understand the challenges faced by job seekers.

The emerging field of career development treats the job seeker as a “whole person” rather than just an individual seeking employment. Job seekers are often confronting a challenging time in their lives, encountering financial pressure, health issues, social alienation and psychological challenges, all of which can be barriers to success.

In particular, mental health is a significant barrier in Nova Scotia. This province has some of the highest prevalence of mental health disorders in Canada.

The research finds that a community navigator/peer support worker can identify and bridge gaps created by these barriers. Not only would this role help individual job seekers, it would also increase the efficiency of connecting organizations with appropriate candidates for jobs.

When asked whether the community navigator/peer support experience was a benefit to increasing their employability, 72.22 percent of clients agreed that it was. Clients indicated that it directly and indirectly helped them in their job search tasks by helping them to focus, providing confidence, and providing an opportunity to focus on health. For example, one client responded that the service provided “non-bias support to encourage me that I am valuable and employable and that this little nudge could keep me going in difficult times or times approaching possible crisis” Clients also identified the value of the community navigator / peer support worker service in helping them in their personal life and navigate the mental health system. For example, one client responded:

“... (it) helped me get through hard times as my previous employer considered people like me “mental cases” (I was undisclosed for this reason!) and helped me find resources closer to home for job search, etc. to save me personal time not having to travel and a lot of gas money.”

Consequently, 94.12 percent of clients involved in the study indicated they would refer others to the community navigator/peer support worker service.

All referrers agreed with the sentiment that the community navigator/peer support worker service was a benefit overall.

Based on the findings of this report, the study made the following recommendations:

1. A community navigator/peer support worker should be part of the core service at Nova Scotia Works.

2. Referrals for this support should come from clients themselves and staff. All should be informed that information tracking systems will be used to help case managers understand how and when their clients are using the service.
3. There should be a formal feedback loop between the community navigator/peer support worker and clients and staff who make referrals.
4. The community navigator/peer support worker should address issues of diversity and inclusion as potential barriers to clients' success.
5. There should be further research on the roles and potential benefits of a community navigator / peer support worker in a Nova Scotia Works Centre, particularly in the relationship between mental health and wellness and employment services.



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— Peer Support Client