



## **Peer Support Network Application Guide**

The Peer Support Network Executives are at the heart of our program and we encourage all interested students to apply to work with us! This guide encompasses all the key information to help you understand what is expected of our executive, what to expect from the application process, and frequently asked questions. If after reading through this short guide you still have questions concerning any piece of the application process to the Peer Support Network (PSN), please email [mcgillpsn@gmail.com](mailto:mcgillpsn@gmail.com) and we will get back to you shortly.

For the 2014-2015 academic year, our executive application deadline is 5pm on Monday, February 17th 2014. However, we encourage you to apply as early as possible! Whenever you are ready to apply, the application form can be found [here](#) or on our website at [studentsinmind.ca](http://studentsinmind.ca)

## About PSN

The Peer Support Network is a student-led program at McGill which aims to provide a safe space for students to access immediate support from peers during drop-in sessions on campus. PSN is a paraprofessional service--it does not diagnose or treat mental illness. It is solely intended to provide short-term support to students in need of assistance and to increase student awareness of services available on campus. Student volunteers provide welcoming, confidential, and empathetic peer-based support using active listening, resource referral, information guidance, and practical assistance.

Our hope is that by providing social support and informing both students of McGill services and McGill services of student needs, we can reduce stigma in seeking help and promote a mentally healthy community here on campus. By seeking help from peers, students don't have to feel alone in times of difficulty and can be given appropriate support, resources, and referrals if necessary, to help cope with their situation. By understanding the reasons for why students are in distress, more informed health promotion and prevention efforts could be taken to target the issues faced by students at-hand. This program will help students improve overall mental health and stability during their years at McGill University.

## Eligibility

Before you apply, ensure that you fulfill all three of our eligibility requirements:

- ☐ A currently registered McGill student of at least 18 years of age
- ☐ Available to volunteer with PSN for the entire 2014-2015 academic year
- ☐ Expectation of availability for volunteer training in late August and early September of 2014
- ☐ Previously volunteered with the McGill PSN as a Peer Supporter

## Commitment Requirements

In late August and early September 2014, executives must be able to attend all 30 hours of training sessions. The purpose of this training is to best equip the executive team with the necessary understanding and resources to help educate volunteers and provide volunteers with support when necessary.

The training sessions will take place in the two weeks leading up to classes and are mandatory for volunteers. A full list of training sessions, date and times will be released closer their occurrence. Training sessions will cover topics including but not limited to; academic advising, active listening, addictions, eating disorders, ethical conduct, gender identity and sexuality, graduate and undergraduate student issues, grievance and loss, self-care, student mental health

and suicidality, student services, students with disabilities, race, culture and oppression, and transgender issues.

## **General Executive Responsibilities**

As a PSN executive, you will be expected to fulfill all of the following responsibilities:

- Weekly meetings ranging from 1-3 hours
- Personal role responsibilities (2-3 hours)
- Shift-leader role once per month
- Being available to help organize and attend training (30-hours) at the end of August and early September as well as volunteer appreciation events

## **Positions to be Filled**

### **1. Volunteer coordinator**

- Liaise between volunteers and exec
- Set volunteer & shift-leader shifts
- Organize last-minute shift coverage when necessary
- Regular communications/emails (about training dates, bonding events etc.)
- Create and organize volunteer applications and other written material for volunteers
- Collect volunteer feedback
- Answer volunteer specific email address (questions about becoming a volunteer, applications etc.)

### **2. Sponsorship**

- Apply for funding for operating costs
- Seek donors for gift certificates/food donations
- Maintain detailed records of PSN's budget/expenses
- Handle cheque requisitions/reimbursements of all purchases

### **3. Training**

- Organize volunteer training before PSN launches and maintain training throughout the year
- Organize training schedule with student and service liaisons
- Book rooms for training and organize the tech needs (i.e. laptop, cables, mics, sound system)
- Work with Sponsorship to organize meal provision during training

### **4. Student groups (liaison with students)**

- Inform student groups of who PSN is and what we do
- Work with student leaders to help with training/train on their specialities to volunteers

- Build a relationship with them and work with them to promote PSN within their programs/connections
5. Program evaluation
- Keep up-to-date on theory-based peer support literature and evidence of best practices
  - Consider PSN program developments or changes within the aforementioned evidence context
  - Create way to collect feedback on program:
    - Volunteers
    - Exec
    - Peer supportees
  - Analyze the feedback with basic to intermediate statistics
  - Suggest ways to improve program from feedback provided
  - Write report on findings and submit to Student Services Director, Counseling and Mental Health Services Directors

## Application Process

The following gives you a brief outline of what you can expect from the entire application process. Selecting only few students from such an astounding array of talent and interest is always a challenge but we will thoroughly consider all applications submitted.

Date	Timeline
February 17th 2014 -- 5pm	Application Deadline
February 18th 2014	Selection of Candidates for Interviews
February 22nd-23rd 2014	Interviews
February 24th 2014	Selection of PSN Executive

## FAQs

*Q: As a member of the PSN Executive team do I also have a volunteer role as a Peer Supporter?*

PSN executives have a full plate with their role in organizing the program already and we do not encourage executives to act as volunteers at the same time. Partly, this allows new people to become involved with PSN and ensures that the executive can dedicate adequate time to their

role without feeling over-burdened. However, executives do still maintain a close connection with the volunteers and the service in their role as a Shift-Leader.

*Q: I want to work on the PSN Executive team but I have never been a volunteer with PSN previously, can I still do it?*

We encourage all PSN executives to have experience first as a volunteer with PSN. In working as a volunteer first, we can ensure that all PSN executives have extensive experience with the training material and also knowledge of how the program works. We also hope to build a sense of community at PSN and keep incorporating ideas on how we can improve this service from the volunteers who know it the best.

*Q: I do not have any experience in counselling or mental health services, will I still be able to be a PSN Executive?*

Absolutely! The Peer Support Network is not a counselling program – that is beyond the scope of our role on McGill campus and the services that we offer. Executives need to be interested in organizing a student service on campus but need not have any previous experience doing this. A successful executive member will be dedicated to PSN and excited to work with the executive team . Most of all they will be as excited about this service as we are!

*Q: I want to be involved with PSN but the Executive team sounds like a big commitment, are there other ways I can be involved?*

Yes, it is important to note that the executive role does require a big time commitment and may not be the right fit for everyone. We recommend that applicants who have volunteered with PSN before and are looking for just a bit more responsibility consider applying to take on the role of Shift-Leader along with volunteering. This allows for more involvement with PSN than first-time volunteers, however is less time-demanding than a role on the executive team.