

\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\*

## **A new Era in Peer Support: Traditional Health Worker Supervisors**

Who: ShelterCare is a Lane County nonprofit providing housing and behavioral health services to individuals and families at risk of homelessness and those who are experiencing chronic homelessness. Crys Webb is the Traditional Health Worker Supervisor at ShelterCare. In her four and a half year career at ShelterCare, she has helped those experiencing chronic homelessness through many programs as a peer. She has had lived experience that aids her in having an extra level of empathy for ShelterCare's program participants and other peers.

What: The position of Traditional Health Worker Supervisor is a relatively new concept in social services. Also known as a Peer Supervisor, this position's role is to provide support and supervision to Traditional Health Workers (THW) who provide recovery-oriented peer services. Essentially, a Peer Supervisor adds a layer of support and quality control to THW's. THW's have lived experience with things like recovering from addiction and/or mental illness, which aids in providing effective care. This can be challenging and mentally taxing on THW's, which is where the Peer Supervisor role comes in. Having someone to talk to and validate one's experiences can be extremely beneficial for the mental well-being of THW's. Crys says, "I think it's important for Peer Support Specialists to be supervised by someone with similar lived experience who understands what it takes to show up everyday."

By having a position that oversees all THW's, a Peer Supervisor can ensure that consistent and high quality service is provided. So far, the implementation of this position has increased the level of confidence that our THW's have. This confidence comes from having someone there to guide and support them in their work. When asked if other organizations should implement this position, Crys stated, "Yes, It's likely other agencies would see increased staff retention and more meaningful client engagement."

The culture of providing peer support to those receiving services from social service agencies is growing. This year, Crys attended Peerpocalypse: a conference of leaders, emerging leaders, innovators, and peers who want to become more involved in the peer community held in Seaside, OR. There were almost 1000 attendees, their biggest year yet. Crys explains how feeling the support of other peers affected her, "the energy of being surrounded by over 900 of my peers who have similar stories and lived experience to my own was both magical and emotional. I felt no judgment, only true peer support. Attending Peerpocalypse was a healing experience I will never forget."

ShelterCare is excited to be a leader in the field of peer support and we hope other agencies will follow suit in implementing a peer supervisor position.

With questions contact [development@sheltercare.org](mailto:development@sheltercare.org)

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For more information, please contact Crys Webb at [cwebb@sheltercare.org](mailto:cwebb@sheltercare.org) (do not publish)