



## **SAFETY AND WELLNESS POLICY**

HRN's mission to use PRSS personal experience to help participants reach a stable place in their recovery process carries inherent risk to safety that must be managed appropriately. This purpose of this HRN's Safety & Wellness policy includes balancing the needs and requirements of (1) employees; (2) participants; (3) relevant support networks; and (4) agencies including HRN, Oak House and appropriate law enforcement. The goal of this policy to ensure these varying needs and requirements are met in the safest way possible given the available resources and requirements.

And as such, Support Specialists need to be in a **safe and stable place in their own recovery process** to be able to support others in their process. PRSS's need to be aware of their limits to effectively manage risks to themselves and the participants they support. Practicing Self-Care is essential, including addressing mental health needs, maintaining personal boundaries and ensuring other key aspects of a healthy lifestyle are balanced. HRN employees will not be penalized if time-off or other reasonable accommodations are requested that do not overly impact their ability to perform their job duties, while respecting applicable laws accordingly.

Peer Recovery Support has unique boundary and safety issues unlike other professional support roles due to the varying locations and areas of engagement: including driving with a participant, going to participant specific locations including new unfamiliar locations, assisting with crisis response and trauma informed care, and otherwise filling in where and when other roles may not be able to. Helpful PRSS practices include:

- Setting **first meetings with a participant in a neutral, public place** where both persons are on equal footing to get to know each other well enough to begin tailoring the mutually agreed upon recovery support path.
- Being **aware of one's surroundings and possible risk factors** for yourself and the participant: entrances, exits, fire or other building hazards, other persons in the space,
- Being aware of the risks while **respecting limitations** stemming from participant needs including individual mental health diagnoses (*including but not limited to general anxiety, PTSD, schizophrenia, ect.*), substance abuse histories, developmental and intellectual disabilities or other considerations all of **which can limited ability to communicate when not feeling safe**, and higher risks of adverse complications.
- Respecting their own and asking for possible participant triggers related to, other traumas or health conditions that may adversely affect recovery

Minimizing possible risk from participants to PRSS and/or from PRSS to participants in an ongoing process. Larger public safety concerns may impact individual needs (*examples pandemics requiring masks, mandating reporting, ect.*) but any such impact will be treated fairly and in a way that minimizes it as much as possible. If a PRSS is concerned for the safety of a participant, they need to discuss this with the HRN supervisor. And if a participant has concern for their PRSS's safety or is otherwise feeling unsafe with their PRSS, they can fill out a Cause for Concern form or contact the HRN Supervisor directly.

HRN reserves the right to conduct background checks, verify valid driver's license and minimum car insurance requirements, during hiring process and thereafter to minimize risks to safety and liability. HRN requires PRSS's to have a safe, compliant vehicle to transport participants as required. Medical verification and/or a release to work after a significant event or return from an extended leave may also be required to ensure ongoing safety while engaged in peer recovery support. HRN reserves the right to put in place other measures as required to maintain the balance of safety between all parties and relevant concerns as they arise.

### **WELLNESS CHECKS**

Verifying the safety of HRN PRSSs may require confirmation with a Wellness Check. **Cause for Concern** may come from a number of avenues and persons, some of which may wish to remain anonymous. Therefore it will be evaluated case by case at the discretion of the HRN Supervisor based on their training, experience and direct knowledge of relevant situation(s) through monthly supervision. After establishing sufficient Cause for Concern for any aspect(s) affecting the safety of involved person(s) or agency, the HRN supervisor may set a meeting to discuss this concern with the employee to determine if any actions are required to affirm stability and safety.

A **Self-Evaluation will likely be the first step to ascertain** what, if any further action, need to be taken. HRN shall have an Emergency Plan with Contact Person for their employees, and if appropriate this contact may be contacted as another method to affirm PRSS safety. HRN's mission it to support recovery for their employees **and** the participants in a way that does not put either at risk. Ongoing satisfaction and safety of participants may also be polled to affirm or quell the Cause for Concern. If the PRSS refuses to participate in this process, which shall include the opportunity to refute the concern or file grievances, further actions may be taken up to and including employee dismissal.