



**PEER SUPPORT**  
Coalition of Florida, Inc.



# Strategic Guide to creating an effective Peer Advisory Council

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# Contents

- What is a Peer Advisory Council? .....3
- Why create a Peer Advisory Council? .....3
- Challenges in creating a Peer Advisory Council.....3
- Types of Peer Advisory Councils.....4
- Peer Advisory Council Costs & Benefits (ROI).....5
- Role of Peer Advisory Councils in overall Service User Engagement .....6
- Benchmarking Peer Advisory Council Performance.....7
- Organizational Structure Required to Support a Peer Advisory Council .....8
- Improving an existing Peer Advisory Council .....9
- How to start your Peer Advisory Council ..... 10

# What is a Peer Advisory Council?

A Peer Advisory Council also known as a PAC, is a group composed of representatives from each of the host organization's peer service programs, who each have shown great progress in their own recovery. These individuals have taken an active role as peer leaders and change champions and have volunteered to assist the host organization in receiving feedback, support and advisement directly from members served. The mission of these volunteers is to represent the needs and concerns of others that receive services from the host organization. The PAC representatives work closely with the management teams and meet with them regularly. The PAC individuals make recommendations on program operations, groups offered, engagement, peer-support and networking. Further, many of these individuals are often active participants and leaders in their own recovery communities. The PAC program involves regularly convening a small group of informed individuals who have a vested interest in helping to shape the host organization's recovery services strategy. An effective PAC will provide a forum for peer networking, while enabling all members to develop solutions to improve recovery management.

## Why create a Peer Advisory Council?

An effective PAC will strategize with the host organization on how to increase sustainable recovery for individuals served, thereby increasing the levels of recovery capital within the organization and the community. PAC activities also promote person-centered services and allow the organization to build more productive relationships with individual served, their families, supporters, and recovery communities. Engaging key stakeholders in the organization's recovery management strategy through a PAC will allow for:

- Early warnings of shifts in needs of individuals served and emerging opportunities within the community
- New service and process development feedback
- Reduced needs for or provide additional supports especially among PAC members and across individuals served
- Advice on approaching and appealing to individuals with similar needs, including referrals
- Intelligence on what other service providers in the community are doing, tactics and strategies - what's working and what's not
- Development of Recovery Advocates/ROSC (Recovery Oriented Systems of Care) Ambassadors

An effective PAC can drive targeted service efforts and lead to significant cost savings for service providers IF managed effectively.

## Challenges in creating a Peer Advisory Council

Designing, implementing and running an effective Peer Advisory Council is not an easy task. The main challenges include:

- Developing a shared vision or theme, for the provider organization and the PAC members to rally around
- Creating an effective charter that is based on best practices
- Recruiting the best members to the PAC, by reaching in all directions for members
- Creating a relevant and powerful agenda
- Running a successful facilitated meeting, that is not just giving lip service to the model
- Creating actionable insight reports following a meeting, that can be used in decision making across the organization
- Balancing the need for program specific PACs with organization wide PACs
- Securing the appropriate level of executive support and subject matter expertise
- Keeping the PAC members engaged throughout their membership tenure and beyond

# Types of Peer Advisory Councils

There are two main types of Peer Advisory Councils:

<b>Program Specific PAC</b>		
<b>Purpose</b>	Overcoming strategic challenges facing program participants and sponsored programs of host organization	Improving a program's services and delivery
<b>Composition</b>	Senior program level decision makers, program participants, family, community partners, etc.	Ensure communication flows between organization wide decision makers, program decision makers and users of services
<b>Executive Sponsor</b>	Program Manager/Director	Most influential and knowledgeable about program strategies and able to conduct multi-direction communications

<b>Organization Wide PAC</b>		
<b>Purpose</b>	Overcoming strategic challenges facing the organization and its recovery management strategy	Improving a host organization's services and delivery and launching new services and programs
<b>Composition</b>	Senior organization and program level decision makers, board of directors, individuals receiving services, family, community partners, etc.	Ensure that communication flows between board of directors, management, users of services, families, recovery communities
<b>Executive Sponsor</b>	Executive level director	Most influential and knowledgeable about organization wide strategies and able to conduct multi-direction communications

In addition to the above types of advisory boards, large organizations may choose to implement an 'Alumni' Peer Advisory Council to further utilize recovery champions who have served their term. The alumni PAC can provide valuable insights to service providers, its membership can scale beyond the size of a traditional PAC and tenure is longer, as there are far less responsibilities and commitments for both the members and the host organization.

Advisory Councils may also include supporters of individuals served such as family and friends as well as collaborating organizations that provide services utilized by individuals being served. Members may also be recruited from individuals who have an interest in the recovery movement.

# Peer Advisory Council Costs & Benefits (ROI)

Creating an effective and successful PAC is a long-term process that yields many different benefits along the way, as illustrated below:

<b><u>STRATEGY</u></b>	<b>Organization Value</b>
Validation of strategic planning for organizational development, recovery management, outreach and community engagement	\$
Faster problem resolution and change process implementation through enhanced communication channels in all directions	\$
Decision making with end user perspective accommodated	\$
<b><u>SERVICES</u></b>	
Deeper understanding of service quality and efficacy	\$
Readily available follow up information	\$
Increased use of ancillary and new services	\$
Ability to recruit PAC members	\$
	\$
<b><u>OUTREACH</u></b>	
First-hand service gap identification	\$
Recovery community collaborations and partnerships	\$
Greater insight into needs for recovery capital development in the community	\$
Greater support for individual plans through family collaborations	\$
Enhanced referral resources	\$
Intelligence insights into regional recovery capital levels	
<b><u>PROGRAMS</u></b>	
New program/service innovation	\$
Volunteers for pilot programs	\$
Cost saving through more effective needs mapping	\$
Validation of recovery program model	\$
<b><u>INDIVIDUAL SERVED SATISFACTION LEVELS</u></b>	
Reduction in support needs	\$
Increased recovery capital scale levels	\$
Increase in levels of participation and engagement in follow up services	\$
<i>TOTAL BUSINESS BENEFITS</i>	\$

**Costs & Budget for Implementing a Peer Advisory Council:**

Annual meeting depending on the size of the organization. May included refreshments, lunch, meeting facilities, accommodation, travel, etc.	\$
Support to design PAC – Limited support services provided by PSCFL under grant funded by SAMHSA. Consultant assigned to design PAC, manage recruitment, facilitate meetings, and engage organization and PAC members following the meeting.	\$ Variable
Materials development and dissemination – based on meeting structure.	\$
Technology to manage PAC and members. This can range from a simple database to a complex program.	\$
<i>Total Annual Budget</i>	\$

## Role of Peer Advisory Councils in overall Engagement

A PAC is one of many recovery management programs available to provider organizations. The following chart describes the two main types, namely Program PAC and Organization PAC. A PAC is often the most effective recovery management program available to drive recovery, grow services, create peer leadership and help develop new services and community connections and collaborations.

Type	Audience	Level	Programs	Outcomes
Executive Engagement	Executive Level or VP	Strategic	Peer Advisory Board Peer Advisory Council	Grow services; thought leadership; develop new programs; supports continuity of care
Service User Engagement	Program Manager or User	Operational	Service user groups; voice of service users;	Service user insights; service user satisfaction; service user recommendation

# Benchmarking Peer Advisory Council Performance

The following scale can be used to rank and compare performance of poorly designed to effective peer advisory council programs.

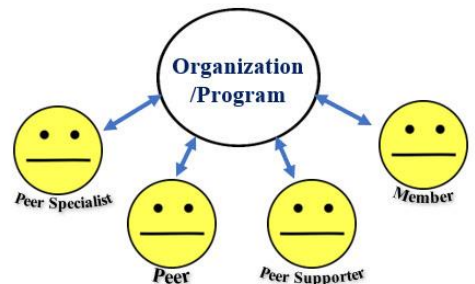
**Disengaged:** Organization presenting 80% and listening 20% of time.

This is a poorly executed peer advisory council that has been hastily convened without the necessary research into roles of members and goals for the council in advance. The organization is left to do all the talking due to a lack of insight into the council member’s challenges in advance. The organization typically struggles to get people to attend a meeting from any pool of possible attendees. Organization typically delegates their attendance to more junior colleagues.



**Neutral:** Organization presenting 50% and listening 50% of time.

The peer advisory council has yet to develop trust in the organization and the agenda touches on challenges that members face, but the skills of facilitators and the structure of the agenda does not allow for in-depth discussion between PAC members and host organization. The organization is able to convene the required numbers of people on a regular basis.



**Fully Engaged:** Organization listening 80% and presenting 20% of time.

This represents a well-designed Peer Advisory Council. The organization has selected hot topics that are key to supporting recovery of PAC members. The facilitator ensures that each PAC member’s opinion is heard and that organization presentations are kept to a minimum to allow for more PAC member discussion.

The organization is able to convene all the required members, without any delegation of membership. Organization attendees are representative of the most senior executives. Sub-committees may be formed, chaired by PAC members, with collaborations outside of PAC meetings, addressing strategic challenges facing the organization. A clear ROI exists from PAC activity and organizational executives internally and externally refer to PAC insights during their decision-making. Fully engaged peer advisory boards usually have a dedicated person assigned to manage the activities of the council.



# Organizational Structure Required to Support a Peer Advisory Council

An effective Peer Advisory Council typically has the support of multiple stakeholders across the organization:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Commitment</b>
Core Team & optional External Consultant	Design, Development, Implementation, Communication, Reporting	Weekly/Monthly
Steering Committee	Cross functional team (program managers, administrators, quality specialists, clinicians, peer specialists) reviews progress and offers guidance	Monthly (relied on heavily during recruitment phase)
Subject Matter Experts	Advise on specific agenda topics and council structure	Bi-monthly
Invested Leadership	These are ambassadors who should be aware of progress of council and have access to resources	Quarterly
Executive Sponsor	Organization executive provides direction and ensures organizational commitment	Quarterly



## Improving an existing Peer Advisory Council

If you have a disengaged or neutral Peer Advisory Council you will want to consider reviewing best practices and following a proven process to overcome the challenges preventing your organization from benefiting from an engaged, highly effective Peer Advisory Council:

### Getting the right members

Recruiting the right members is crucial to the success of the Peer Advisory Council. Have you developed an effective plan and communication program to recruit and keep the right members?

### Having the right conversations

Are you organizing your agenda to make sure you get the most from the time you have available?

### Providing enough value

What are you doing to make sure Peer Advisory Council members receive as much tangible value from their participation as the host organization receives?

### Keeping the focus on strategic insight

How do you make sure you can separate and capture the truly important from the merely interesting and useful insights?

### Leveraging insight and relationships

Do you have an effective process in place to leverage what you accomplished with PAC members across your organization and track progress?

### Measuring impact

How can you be sure you're getting a real return on the time and resources invested? Do you have appropriate metrics and an effective measurement system in place?

### Organizational Sponsorship

Do you have the right level of engagement from the executive level of your organization? Are they ensuring the PAC has access to appropriate guidance and subject matter expertise?

# How to start your Peer Advisory Council

## 1. Follow the outline in this toolkit as a guide.

Peer Support Coalition of Florida developed this toolkit to provide directions for organizations interested in developing Peer Advisory Councils. We are available to provide the technical expertise needed to assist you in understanding how to use this guide in creating or improving your Peer Advisory Council.

## 2. Peer Support Coalition is available to consult with your organization.

Our services range from Peer Advisory Council design, managing recruitment, facilitating meetings, engaging organization and PAC members following the meeting, measuring performance and providing feedback to management.

### Contact Us:

Peer Support Coalition of Florida, Inc.  
1200 W SR 434, Suite 202  
Longwood, FL 32750  
[www.peersupportfl.org](http://www.peersupportfl.org)

[info@peersupportfl.org](mailto:info@peersupportfl.org)