

Purpose: To create a culture of trust and collegiality by providing our physicians with confidential peer support and resources for life's inevitable clinical, professional, and personal challenges.

WHAT IS THE PHYSICIAN PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM?

Everyone has cases or circumstances that are challenging, sometimes because of difficult clinical situations and other times due to the accumulation of emotionally depleting events. Studies have shown that clinicians may initially want to get support from peers rather than mental health providers. To continue building a culture of trust and collegiality, we created a peer support program for our physicians at Cooper University Health Care.

WHAT DO PEER SUPPORTERS DO?

Colleagues trained as peer supporters will reach out to physicians involved in any critical event; they are also available at any time for physicians to self-refer or be referred to the program due to distress from any cause.

This is not therapy. It is support from a peer who understands the pressures of navigating challenging circumstances and is trained with effective listening and responding skills to help others do the same. Peer supporters can also connect you with other organizational resources that may be helpful.

WHO ARE THE PEER SUPPORTERS?

For our initial program, nominated Cooper physicians across various specialties have been trained in peer support and are volunteering their time. You will be paired with someone who you do not know personally, who can listen, provide perspective and offer additional resources if warranted. Peer supporters may provide a slightly different viewpoint and understand circumstances in a way that even caring family members may not.

HOW DO I KNOW THIS WON'T GET BACK TO MY DEPARTMENT?

The fact that a conversation occurred is only known by the Peer Support Program Director and the peer supporter, and conversation details are only known by the peer supporter. We are an independent program and not associated with any evaluative aspect of your performance.

ARE THERE ANY LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY?

As you can understand, we may need to breach confidentiality if there is a danger to yourself or others, including substance use issues that put patients at risk; disclosure of child/elder/dependent adult abuse or neglect; and complaints about discrimination, sexual harassment or retaliation. Depending on the circumstances, we may need to report these issues internally to appropriate Cooper departments or externally to regulatory agencies.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE PHYSICIAN PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM?

Email the Peer Support Program:
physpeersupport@cooperhealth.edu

Once a Peer Supporter is assigned, you can decide the preferred meeting format (face-to-face, Webex, phone call). Typically, peer support consists of one or two interactions, with resources sent to you as follow-up. We are all part of a medical community of shared experiences. We are here for you!