



## Frequently Asked Questions About PREFER

*This is a collection of some of the most common questions we get about PREFER. If you still have questions about the program, please contact the co-ordinators at: 905-780-0491 ext: 125 or toll-free at: 1-888-780-0724.*

### **HOW OFTEN DO I GO TO TRAINING?**

When you join PREFER, you are joining an innovative learning community of peers! PREFER is more than a series of workshops or trainings, You must commit to participating in the PREFER community for one year – or more – up to 2 years to complete trainings, depending on your needs and even longer involvement in the network of peers. You'll be able to select the trainings you attend from a limited set of options and the Coordinator will be available to support you in your choices. **Each training is 1 to 4 days** in length and the eight core trainings are spread out in time. **You might expect to attend a training workshop every one to three months** until you complete all eight. **IN ADDITION to the workshops, the PREFER community gathers monthly for Network Meetings** to discuss and explore their learning, do additional skills practice and development, and learn about related topics of interest like disability and Accommodation Rights, Employment laws, and do further work to prepare for employment. Because these meetings are an integral part of the PREFER program, they are a required component of the program. PREFER community members have said it's been the most impactful part of the program. Network meetings happen during a weekday evening.

### **WHERE DO THE TRAININGS HAPPEN?**

All of the workshop trainings happen in community spaces in Toronto and in Richmond Hill. PREFER uses various community spaces, but we make sure that our spaces are located on major roads near public transportation and are accessible. Depending on the needs of our community, we may hold additional trainings in various parts of South Simcoe, York Region, or the Toronto area, but you can count on each workshop being held in the North York area as well as in the Yonge and Major Mackenzie areas of downtown Richmond Hill.



### **WILL I NEED TO TRAVEL TO THE KRASMAN CENTRE IN RICHMOND HILL?**

**Yes**, well – sort of! All PREFER community members will need to plan to visit the Krasman Centre’s neighborhood in downtown Richmond Hill in order to participate in Network Meetings, but we don’t actually hold our trainings or meetings at the Krasman Centre. **There is excellent, frequent service to this area by YRT and VIVA buses and free parking nearby all locations we use for training.** We will do our best to ensure that travel is not a barrier to full participation of any PREFER community member. All training workshops also happen in the North York area of Toronto. Although you will get to select your preferred training locations and dates from a small set of options, it’s important to keep in mind, that you might not get your first choice.

### **I WORK AT A MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM BUT I WANT TO LEARN MORE; CAN I ATTEND TRAINING?**

PREFER is a program that prepares people in recovery, sometimes called consumer/survivors, to work in the peer support field. It recognizes that peer support and self-help are distinct, and they can complement and be an alternative to conventional mental health, substance use, trauma or related programs. If you identify as a consumer/survivor/ex-patient, a person in recovery, a Mad person, a person with mental health, substance use, emotional, and/or spiritual concerns, and you are working in peer support or self help, we welcome you to apply to this program to deepen your comfort and skill in doing your work. If you are not a consumer/survivor, or you are not working in a peer support or self-help role at a mental health or substance use program, please contact the Coordinators at 905-780-0491 ext: 125 and we can talk about programs that can be delivered for your mental health program to support the recovery of the people you serve.

### **CAN I GET THE SCHEDULE OF TRAININGS?**

All PREFER community members get a list of the trainings available so that they can make arrangements to attend the trainings that work best with their schedules and other lives. You will know ahead of time the options, so that you can arrange to attend to your commitments within the PREFER community and outside of it. You will need to complete some programs first before you move forward. For instance, Orientation to WRAP is required before you consider registering for Like Minds Peer Support Education or WRAP Facilitators Certification –the Coordinator is there to navigate these steps with you!



### **WILL I GET PAID?**

NO, PREFER community members do not get paid to attend trainings, workshops, meetings, or other events.

### **DO I HAVE TO PAY ANYTHING?**

PREFER community members are awarded bursaries to cover the costs of the training workshops, and there are no application fees, although a small refundable deposit (\$5) may be required of participants when they register for a workshop, as a sign of their commitment. This money is returned to when you attend the workshop. **NO ONE WILL BE TURNED AWAY BECAUSE OF THEIR FINANCIAL RESOURCES.**

All books and other materials you need to complete any training are also provided to you through the bursary. These are given to you free of charge and are yours to use and keep.

Refreshments will be provided at trainings and meetings, but you should plan for your own lunch. We recommend you pack lunches and snacks and keep in mind the length of your day including travel time, so that you can take good care of yourself.

You should plan for your transportation expenses. You might be able to access additional transportation support from your other sources of income support, if you are joining our education & employment preparation program. For example, if you are receiving benefits, you can check with your support worker to see if funds are available to you! Limited transportation support is available for people for whom transportation costs would not allow them to attend or participate. If you are concerned about your ability to participate because of finances, please speak with the coordinators for assistance.

### **I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE. DO I NEED TO PREPARE IN SOME WAY?**

We're so excited you are thinking about joining our PREFER community! We believe that communities are more vibrant, healthy, exciting, and just plain fun when they are full of people with different experiences, viewpoints, and ideas. There is nothing specific you need to do to prepare. We welcome people from varied backgrounds. All we really need from you is for you to share with us why you are interested in joining our community of learning and peer support development. We do not require any specific education, training, or prior experience to join our community. All we do require is that you are able and willing to meet the commitments that are listed on our [application form](#). One of the commitments we require is your contribution to a comprehensive evaluation of the program. This includes completing surveys – these activities will take about one hour of your time about every two months, and they can easily be completed on-line. If you are concerned about your comfort with computers, English, or writing, please contact the co-ordinators. We want to support you!



## **WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE? WHO WILL GET ACCEPTED INTO PREFER?**

Please take a look at our [application form online](#) and the question just above this one.

We are an education and employment preparation program for people in recovery who are interested in doing peer support work with their peers. **The major requirement is that you identify as a peer and are interested and willing to work from a perspective of personal, lived experience** of mental health issues, addiction, substance use/abuse concerns, emotional or spiritual challenges, survival of trauma, or other related mental health experience of difference or disability. We recognize that members of our community have varied ways of understanding ourselves and our experiences and that is diversity that we celebrate!

Everyone who applies, will be given equal opportunity to participate in the PREFER community. All applications will be considered and you will be contacted about your application.

We value and respect the diversity of our community and the people we support. PREFER is committed to reflecting and responding to the diversity of our communities and of our peers in recovery. Applications are encouraged which reflect diversity in culture, race, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ability and experience that reflects the people that we support.

## **ARE THERE JOBS AVAILABLE IN PEER SUPPORT?**

YES! Peer Support is a growing and diverse field in health, mental health, addictions/substance use, and social services. Various levels of government and health funders have recognized the value of peer support and are helping to make changes to programming and services so that peer support is more widely accessible and embedding in our mental health and addictions services systems. If you'd like to learn more about the changes that are happening and what you can do to help push change along, you may want to connect with the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) -- including their [Peer Support Project](#), the [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#) (you can read the recent report of recommendations for Ontario's mental health and addictions strategy: [Respect, Recovery, Resilience](#)), your [Local Health Integration Network \(LHIN\)](#), your [local Consumer/Survivor Initiative](#), and/or your MPP.

Peer Support opportunities are broad and are available not only in traditional mental health and addiction/substance use services and agencies, but also in the full gamut of social services: housing, shelters, child & youth programs, drop-in centres, food banks, centres for women and trans people, anti-poverty agencies, community health centres, seniors' programs, recreation and arts programming, LGBTQ-focused services, ethnocultural agencies, Aboriginal and First Nations programs, and agencies and groups with other focuses.