

Body&Soul

Peer Counseling
Coordinator's Guide

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Introduction

As the new Peer Counseling Coordinator at your church, you have an important and challenging job ahead of you. This guide will help you do it well. It provides all the information you'll need to develop and maintain a successful Peer Counseling program.

Body & Soul

Eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables every day promotes good health. It also may help lower the risk of many chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer.

That's why your church has decided to launch Body & Soul. This program has helped members of African American churches across the country to eat more fruits and vegetables. In time, your church may expand the program to help members make other healthy choices, such as becoming more physically active.

What Is Peer Counseling?

Peer Counselors help interested church members understand how eating more fruits and vegetables relates to their personal goals and values. They also help members create their own plans for eating more fruits and vegetables.

Peer Counselors use a style of communication that is open, supportive, and not judgmental. They generally do not give advice. Instead, they help people overcome their own barriers and find their own motivations for change.

Peer Counseling Coordinator

The Coordinator develops and maintains the Peer Counseling program. The Coordinator also serves as a member of the Planning Team. He or she must serve for at least one year.

Using This Guide

This guide is designed to help you be an effective Peer Counseling Coordinator. It includes information about:

- Recruiting Peer Counselors
- Training Peer Counselors
- Enrolling Church Members
- Maintaining the Peer Counseling Program

In this guide, you'll also find an Appendix that includes:

- Sample Sign-up Sheet
- Interactive Training for Peer Counselors Outline
- Peer Counselor Tools

Recruiting Peer Counselors

Who Makes a Good Peer Counselor?

Peer Counselors are the members of your church whom others turn to for help and advice. Generally, good Peer Counselors:

- Are liked and respected by other church members.
- Communicate and work well with others.
- Keep track of tasks and finish them on time.
- Are willing to complete the training workshop.
- Have experience in a helping profession. Teachers, counselors, social workers, healthcare workers, support-group leaders, and seminary students often make fine Peer Counselors.

How to Recruit Peer Counselors

Start by making a list of church members who have the qualities listed above. Ask your pastor and members of the Planning Team for their ideas.

Once you have several recommendations for Peer Counselors, invite them to stay after service to meet with you. At the meeting, explain that the church has launched a Body & Soul program. Explain the purpose of the program and that you are looking for Peer Counselors to work with interested church members.

Explain the role of a Peer Counselor. A Counselor:

- Is trained in communication skills that have succeeded in other Body & Soul programs.
- Contacts only those church members who have signed up for Peer Counseling.
- Listens to and supports church members to help them figure out ways to eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Does not have to be an expert on nutrition or health.

Then share the responsibilities of a Peer Counselor.

A Counselor must:

- Attend and successfully complete the training workshop.
- Use the skills learned during the training workshop.
- Talk one-on-one with church members in person or over the phone.
- Contact church members at least twice. Each conversation lasts about 20 minutes.
- Participate in follow-up meetings with other Peer Counselors.

Maintaining the Privacy of Church Members

Peer counseling is built on trust. Trust that the Peer Counselor is a safe person to talk to and that what is shared will remain private. Many of us are used to sharing the things we do, and the things we talk about, with family and friends. The talks you have with church members must remain private except when information is shared that discloses a serious issue where outside help may be needed.

Privacy concerns arise in:

- Peer counselor training sessions:
 - Training exercises can lead people to feel comfortable talking about personal issues that should not be shared outside the Peer Counselor group.
- Peer Counselor calls/contacts:
 - Peer Counseling is built on trust. Trust that what is shared with a Peer Counselor will remain private.
 - Often people share information with the Peer Counselor that is serious in nature. Calling about eating more fruits and vegetables could lead to a disclosure of economic problems in the family, of debilitating illness, or even of loneliness and depression. Peer Counselors need to know how to handle these disclosures.

Responding to Personal Disclosures

Peer Counselors should be prepared in their training for the possibility of information being shared that is serious in nature. As Coordinator, it is your role to:

- Remind the Peer Counselors about maintaining privacy
- Practice how to handle unexpected disclosures by:
 - Using appropriate reflections (the loss of your job has left you without enough food for your family and you are worried about what to do; your loneliness is making it hard for you to eat even when you know you should)
 - Asking permission to share the disclosure with you, the Coordinator, in order to provide appropriate help (I'm really concerned and I'd like to talk to our Coordinator about this and see what help is available. Would that be all right with you?)
- Develop a resource list for referrals to appropriate services within the church itself or the community. You can work with your pastor to develop a referral list. You can also work with someone in your church who is a professional social worker or counselor to develop the list.

Training Peer Counselors

One of your most important tasks as Coordinator is to hold a training workshop. The Peer Counselor Training DVD contains everything you need to conduct the training workshop. Well trained Peer Counselors are the key to a successful Body & Soul program.

Purpose of the Training Workshop

In order to be effective, Peer Counselors must learn four communication skills. The training workshop will teach them these skills and give them the tools they need.

DVD

The DVD has three parts:

Movie. The movie demonstrates the four communication skills and how to use them. A practice exercise follows each skill. Pause the movie while Counselors do the exercises.

Printable Materials. This section contains the Peer Counselor's Handbook and the Coordinator's Guide. You can print out copies of the handbook to use for the training.

Bonus Materials. This section includes additional conversations that help Peer Counselors expand their skills and understand how to use them in different situations. These interviews can be viewed at a follow-up meeting, or Counselors can view them at home.

Preparing for the Workshop

The workshop will run more smoothly if you do some work in advance. Take these steps to prepare:

Prepare yourself. Watch the interactive training movie. Get familiar with the content and plan how you will present it. This will also give you a chance to be sure the DVD works before the day of training.

Plan when/where. Set a date, time, and location for the workshop. The training takes about 4 hours. The workshop can be held in someone's home or in the church. Just make sure the room has the equipment you'll need. This includes a TV and a DVD player to show the training movie. You can run the workshop as a single 4 hour session, or you can break it up into two 2-hour sessions. The next page has sample agendas for both the 4 hour and 2 hour workshops.

Prepare Counselors. Give each Peer Counselor a copy of *The Peer Counselor's Handbook*. The Handbook contains information, exercises, and resources that will be helpful to them as Counselors. Ask Counselors to read through the Handbook and bring it to the workshop. Consider asking Counselors to bring tape recorders and blank tapes with them to the workshop so they can record their practice conversations.

Prepare your supplies. Bring these items to the workshop:

- The Peer Counselor training DVD. Set it up before the workshop starts.
- Several extra copies of *The Peer Counselor's Handbook*, in case Counselors forget to bring theirs.
- Nametags.
- A copy of the following tools for each Counselor:
 - Peer Counseling Roadmap
 - Starters for Open Questions and Reflections
 - Values Sheet
 - Importance and Confidence Rulers
 - Self-Assessment Form

Workshop Agenda

Sample agenda for four hour training workshop:

1. Opening prayer.
2. Welcome and introductions.
3. View the movie through the section on 'Asking Open Ended Questions.' Complete the exercises. (35 minutes)
4. Break
5. View 'Listening and Reflecting' and 'Building Motivation.' Complete the exercises for both sections. (50 minutes)
6. Break
7. View 'Summarizing' and complete the practice interview exercise. (45 minutes)
8. View the Brian/Stephen interview in the Bonus Material section and discuss what Peer Counseling Skills are demonstrated. (25 minutes)
9. Wrap up and set a date for the next meeting.
10. Closing prayer.

Sample agendas for two hour training workshops:

Day 1

1. Opening prayer.
2. Welcome and introductions.
3. View the movie through the section on 'Asking Open Ended Questions.' Complete the exercises. (35 minutes)
4. Break
5. View 'Listening and Reflecting' Complete the exercises (25 minutes)*
6. Wrap up and review date and time for next workshop.
7. Closing Prayer.

Day 2

1. Opening prayer.
2. Discuss any questions or comments from the last workshop.
3. View 'Building Motivation.' Complete the exercises. (25 minutes)
4. Break
5. View 'Summarizing' and complete the practice interview exercise. (45 minutes)
6. View the Brian/Stephen interview in the Bonus Material section and discuss what Peer Counseling Skills are demonstrated. (25 minutes)
7. Wrap up and set a date for the next meeting.
8. Closing prayer.

*If time permits on Day 1 you may want to begin the 'Building Motivation' section.

Enrolling Church Members

Now that you've trained a group of Peer Counselors, it's time to sign-up church members to talk with them.

Promoting the Peer Counseling Program

In the beginning, you may need to make church members aware of the Peer Counseling program. Here are some ways to raise interest:

- Promote Peer Counseling during a Body & Soul event, such as a kick off event.
- Ask the pastor to make an announcement.
- Place a notice in the church bulletin or newsletter.
- Ask Peer Counselors to spread the word.

As you promote Peer Counseling, tell church members about the benefits of the program.

Say that Peer Counseling:

- Can help people think about eating more fruits and vegetables.
- Can help people create a plan that works for them.
- Can promote a healthier, happier lifestyle.
- Is anonymous. Peer Counselors do not reveal the names of church members without permission.

As the Peer Counseling program at your church becomes established, church members may hear about it from other members.

Enrollment Paperwork

Interested church members should fill out a Sign-Up Sheet. This asks for their name, phone number, and times when they are available to talk.

In addition, each member should receive a copy of:

- Values Sheet
- Resources about the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables (from The Peer Counselor's Handbook)

Match Church Members With Peer Counselors

Now it's time to match interested church members with trained Peer Counselors. If possible, try to match each member to a Counselor:

- Who has a similar schedule. This will make it easier for them to meet.
- Of roughly the same age.
- Of the same sex.

It's important not to overburden Peer Counselors.

Assign no more than three church members to a Counselor at a time.

Maintaining the Peer Counseling Program

Congratulations! You've gotten the Peer Counseling program off the ground. But your job isn't over yet. The program requires careful maintenance to keep it running smoothly.

Track Assignments

You need to make sure that Peer Counselors contact and talk with the church members assigned to them. To help you track assignments:

- Give Peer Counselors the Sign-up Sheet for each church member assigned to them.
- Keep a copy of all Sign-up Sheets for your records. On each one, write the name of the Peer Counselor assigned to the church member.
- Ask Peer Counselors to return Sign-up Sheets to you as soon as they have finished both conversations with the church member.

Hold Peer Counselor Meetings

It's important to hold regular meetings with Peer Counselors. You can decide with Counselors how often to hold them.

These meetings allow you to:

- Hear about problems.
- Help Peer Counselors find solutions.
- Provide review or further training.
- Collect Sign-up Sheets.
- Hand out new assignments.
- Announce Body & Soul events.

In addition, meetings give Peer Counselors a chance to:

- Share problems.
- Help each other find solutions.
- Share tips and positive outcomes.
- Practice conversations.
- Get support.
- Keep informed.

At meetings, Peer Counselors should feel free to discuss any of the issues they deal with. But they **should not reveal the names** of church members **without permission from the member**.

Make Yourself Available

Invite Peer Counselors to talk to you if they have any questions or concerns. Let them know how to reach you. Try to help them with any problems that arise.

Say "Thank You"

Peer Counselors provide a valuable service for their church. Ask the Planning Team and pastor to arrange a church-wide "thank you" for the time and effort they spend. The recognition could take the form of a ceremony, with certificates for all Peer Counselors. This would be a great time to recruit new Peer Counselors!

Train New Peer Counselors

From time to time, you may need to train new Peer Counselors. This may happen when current Counselors leave the program or when more church members request Peer Counseling.

Make sure new recruits get the same training as current Counselors. In addition, you may want to arrange for current Counselors to mentor new ones. Mentoring gives new Counselors needed support and the knowledge that comes from experience.

Appendix

- Sample Sign-up Sheet
- Peer Counseling Roadmap
- Starters for Open Questions and Reflections
- Values Sheet
- Importance and Confidence Ruler
- Self-Assessment Form

Sample Sign-up Sheet

Are you looking for ways to improve your health? Do you want to eat more fruits and vegetables, but you aren't sure how to get started?

Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables every day may be one of the easiest ways to help improve your health.

A Peer Counselor may be able to help you find a way that works for you. Sign-up below to get a call from a Peer Counselor.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Best time of day to call: _____

Today's date: _____

Peer Counseling Roadmap

Use the roadmap as a guide to the main points of the Peer Counseling conversation. Each conversation will take its own path, so you may not follow the roadmap exactly. For example, you might talk about values, importance, and confidence in a different order.

Make Contact/Arrange Meeting

- Introduce yourself as a Peer Counselor from your church.
- Say that you understand the person has signed up to talk with a Peer Counselor.
- Ask if the person still wants to talk. If so, set a time and place for the meeting or call.

Talk about Fruits and Vegetables

- Ask why the person signed up for Peer Counseling.
- Listen and reflect.
- Ask about how many fruits and vegetables the person eats every day.
- Ask them what they like (or dislike) about fruits and vegetables.
- Ask if the person knows the amount of fruits and vegetables he/she should eat. If not, ask if the person would like to know the recommendation.
- Listen and reflect.

Talk about Values

- Explain that making a lifestyle change is easier if the change is tied to one's values.
- Ask what the person's top 3 values are and what they mean to the person.
- Listen and reflect.
- Ask what connection, if any, the person sees between these values and eating more fruits and vegetables.
- Reflect on the connection or lack of connection.

Rate Importance and Confidence

- Ask the person to rate the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables on a scale of 0 to 10.
- Ask why the person chose _____ and not a lower number, like a 1 or a 2.
- Listen and reflect.
- Ask what it would take to move this number a little higher.
- Listen and reflect.
- Ask similar questions about confidence. Listen and reflect.

Create Action Plan/Summarize/Close

- Ask if the person has some ideas for ways to eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Listen and reflect.
- If not, with permission, suggest some ideas and ways to get more information.
- Ask if any of these ideas might work for them.
- Listen and reflect.
- Summarize the key parts of the conversation.
- Ask if it would be okay to call the person in about 2 weeks.
- End the conversation.

Starters for Open Questions and Reflections

Refer to this sheet whenever you need ideas for how to start open questions and reflections.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Tell me about . . . ?

To what extent . . . ?

What else . . . ?

Help me understand . . . ?

What, if any . . . ?

How did you . . . ?

REFLECTIONS

It sounds like . . .

It has been hard for you . . .

You're feeling . . .

You're not sure . . .

You have mixed feelings about . . .

You're thinking about . . .

Values Sheet

Look at the values below. Mark the 3 that you feel are most important to you in guiding the decisions you make in your life.

- ☐ **Spirituality**, to grow and mature spiritually.
- ☐ **Family**, to have a happy, loving family.
- ☐ **God's will**, to follow God's plan for me.
- ☐ **Good Christian**, to follow the teachings of the Bible.
- ☐ **Health**, to be physically well.
- ☐ **Responsible**, to do what I said I would do.
- ☐ **Disciplined**, to do what is right.
- ☐ **Independent**, to be able to meet my own needs.
- ☐ **Considerate**, to be thoughtful of others.
- ☐ **Honesty**, to be truthful in all areas of my life.
- ☐ **Inner peace**, to feel a sense of quiet/calmness within me.
- ☐ **Friendship**, to be a good friend and have close, supportive friends.
- ☐ **Helpfulness**, to reach out to others.
- ☐ **Loving**, to give and receive love.
- ☐ **Hopeful**, to remain positive in my view of the world.
- ☐ **Other**_____.

Importance and Confidence Ruler

Use these rulers to help the people you counsel rate their motivation.

Importance

How important is it to you to eat more fruits and vegetables? On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being not important at all, and 10 being very important, where would you place yourself?

NOT AT ALL				SOME WHAT						VERY
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Confidence

How confident are you that you could eat more fruits and vegetables if you decided to? On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being not confident at all, and 10 being very confident, where would you place yourself?

NOT AT ALL				SOME WHAT						VERY
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Self-Assessment Form

This form will help you identify skills that you should practice.

Instructions

To use this self-assessment:

- Tape yourself while practicing the Peer Counselor conversation with another Peer Counselor.
- Listen to the tape. As you listen, place checkmarks in the boxes below.

Place a checkmark in the box every time you:

1. Ask an open question	4. Reflect with an upturn
2. Ask a closed question	5. Offer unsolicited advice
3. Make a reflection	Notes:

Scoring

Give yourself 1 point for every checkmark in boxes 1 and 3. Take away 1 point for every checkmark in boxes 2, 4, and 5.

Self-Assessment

1. You should ask more open questions than closed ones.
2. You should be asking very few closed questions. If you asked closed questions, how could you have made them open?
3. Reflect with confidence. You should have more reflections than questions. If you asked many questions, go back and look for places where you could have reflected. Did you reflect deeper feelings and emotions? Look for places where your reflections could have gone deeper.
4. If you reflected with an upturn, practice making statements, not asking questions.
5. Avoid offering unsolicited advice, telling people how you would handle a situation, or giving your opinion. If you offered advice, what could you have done differently?

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