

# OPDI provides a strong and unified voice for consumer/survivor organizations in Ontario

## What is OPDI?

The Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) is a membership-based organization, which represents Ontario's consumer/survivor initiatives and organizations that work within the mental health system.

*It is the role of OPDI to represent, support and promote Consumer/ Survivor Initiatives who play a crucial role in making Ontario's mental health services more effective.*



OPDI members are Consumer/Survivor Initiatives (CSI) and Peer Support Organizations (PSO) who support consumer/survivors on their recovery and enable them to transition from mental health services back into their community.

OPDI provides a strong and unified voice for these organizations, advocating on their behalf within the Ministry's mental health reform process.

## What are Consumer/Survivor Initiatives (CSI) and Peer Support Organizations (PSO) ?

CSIs and PSOs are community-based, self-help organizations run by and for consumer/survivors.

Consumer/Survivor is a word that people with direct experience within the mental health system use to describe themselves. CSIs and PSOs are active in communities across Ontario. They provide a much-needed mix of peer support, employment and training opportunities, and inclusion services to support consumer/survivors transition to community living.



"If there has been one thing that has helped me live with madness the most, it is supportive relationships with my friends and families. They have listened to me, cared for me, accepted me, and helped me with simple tasks or problems when I had very little will to get through the day. The isolation connected with living with madness can kill. Without support from people who understand us, life becomes meaningless. I strongly believe that peer support is the key to helping consumer/survivors to believe in ourselves and live the lives we want to lead.

Consumer Survivor

## How effective are CSIs and PSOs?

CSIs and PSOs are an alternative complement to mainstream mental health care. Their positive impact at an individual and systematic level was confirmed by the findings of a recent study:

- CSIs/PSOs are called upon to provide a consumer/survivor voice and perspective, not just on mental health issues but on a variety of issues affecting marginalized people.
- 81% of people stated that self-help and peer support groups helped to increase positive feelings, and to get what they want out of life.

"The support I received from CSI members has saved many trips to being admitted to hospital. Being able to talk, listen and support other members is what I will always need. This has helped my growth and self-esteem. Having a calendar with various activities is a way to join and be involved. I am now a Board Member, first as a secretary and now as Vice President. I strongly believe in CSI.

Consumer Survivor

- Consumer/survivors were more likely to maintain employment, sufficient incomes and continue with their education.
- Respondents reported feeling more positive about themselves, having more self respect and feeling better about themselves, and being able to recognize their strengths.

## The role OPDI plays

OPDI advocates on behalf of its members - consumer/survivor organizations - to ensure that their rights are protected and their concerns are heard.

OPDI works collaboratively with government and supportive organizations to promote positive changes for its members across Ontario.

OPDI promotes the experiential expertise of consumer/survivors to help shape Ontario's mental health system.

OPDI ensures that its members are informed of changes in legislation and policies.

OPDI works in partnership with other consumer/survivor organizations to share knowledge and strengthen our community as a whole.

"Without a provincial body such as OPDI amplifying our voice, our individual organizations would face challenges to advocate for ourselves and the people that are involved in the consumer/survivor movement. If it were not for OPDI, likely many of us would still be struggling to be heard at policy and legislation levels."

OPDI Member

"Peer support is a lighthouse of caring friends"



If you would like to learn more about OPDI or OPDI membership options, please contact:

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"These funded organizations were not to provide such services as counselling or case management in the way professional organizations did, but to build upon the culture of mutuality and experiential knowledge that is at the centre of self-help."

*Kirby Senate Committee Report on  
Mental Health in Canada*

