“I appreciate the support I received from the peer support program. It made all the difference. Nursing and medical stuff is just not something you can share with everyone, and it was good to be able to share my unexpected feelings with you. Thankfully I’m doing ok now. I’m so thankful to be a part of UW Medicine…I’m so grateful for the UW team.”

-Peer Supportee
Overall program growth continues in 2021, with an increase in formal peer support referrals compared to 2020.
2021 TOTAL PROGRAM USAGE

364 total requests for peer support

Including 37 informal peer support interactions

During quarterly Community of Practice meetings, we have learned that our Peer Supporters are providing informal daily support that is not being tracked or reported, leading to a large undercounting of peer support interactions that is reflected in the slight decrease of overall usage across many sites.
Hardwiring peer support into the existing event review process at Seattle Children’s Hospital led to an immense increase in referrals while all other site saw a slight decrease in referrals, in part due to an undercounting of informal peer support encounters in 2021 compared to 2020.
Stress and anxiety remain the top reason for seeking peer support while death of a patient, patient adverse event, and conflict with a patient increased as reasons for peer support referrals from 2020 to 2021.
“It has been a true gift to feel the level of trust in these moments, to see the immense strength that vulnerability often requires. I ask myself, how I can be better? How can I better model acceptance of others, right where they are in the moment, in all interactions, even difficult ones? How can I provide better psychological safety in my day-to-day work? How can I make it "OK" for others to be human, to stop, to cry or be angry, to feel pain, to advocate for their own needs, to honor their own experience? Supporting others adds such deep richness of meaning and purpose to life.”

- Heidi Denn, Staff, Harborview Medical Center
We see a distribution of utilization that is representative of the population within our system including a very diverse set of staff roles seeking peer support.
“As nurses we have been on a rollercoaster of emotions over the last two years. I have felt my strengths and my vulnerabilities in a more authentic way than I ever have in the past. As nurses we are capable of extraordinary things, we are also human, we need to take care of ourselves and each other.”

- Sydne Mead-Smith, RN,
- UW Medicine Montlake
The increase in the proportion of colleague referrals from 2020 to 2021 (61% to 85%) is in part due to entities starting to automate the referral process.
Physicians and Registered Nurses make up the largest portion of formal peer support referrals and share similar referral trends.
The increase in incomplete referrals was in part due to entities starting to automate the referral process to an “opt-out” rather than an “opt-in” approach to peer support across UW. Casting a wider net ensures that no one slips through even though many are receiving support within their units and do not feel the need to respond to our outreach.

*Not added as an options until November 2021
The majority of self-referrals are leading to peer support interactions.
Encounter Status for Faculty Self-Referrals (n=12)

100% of faculty self-referrals are leading to peer support interactions
Faculty use of the peer support program grew by nearly 20% from 2020 to 2021 (100 to 119 faculty referrals) in large part to the increased usage by Seattle Children’s Hospital.
Peer Support was consistently utilized throughout 2021 with a predictable downturn in August during the summer break.
The peer support program touched a wide variety of roles across UW Medicine with Registered Nurses and Physicians continuing to make up the majority of peer support use.

*Some records recorded more than one role*
Our Peer Supporters dedicate a significant amount of time to supporting their peers and giving back to their community, reinforcing the value of the peer support program and the impact it’s having.

*Data not recorded for all records*
Referrals to External Services (n=79*)

- Spiritual Care: 1
- Psychiatry - COVID Support: 1
- Employee Health: 1
- Emergent Mental Health/Suicide Prevention: 1
- Bereavement Support Services: 1
- Urgent Mental Health: 2
- Employee Relations (HR): 2
- Support Specialist/Site Coord: 6
- Clinical Psychologist or Psych: 7
- Manager/Supervisor: 12
- Employee Assistance Program/Carelink: 25
- Other: 20

*Data not recorded for all records

Other referrals included risk management, future peer support, union representatives, and legal/attorney resources.