



ALBERTA COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL WORKERS

Introduction to Peer Circles



Welcome to our presentation.

We are excited to launch our Peer Circles and thank you for your interest.



Session Objectives

- What is a Peer Circle
- Purpose of Peer Circles at ACSW
- History of Peer Circles with other Professions
- ACSW Peer Circle Project
- Next Steps

The goal of our presentation is to introduce you to:

- a) Peer circles
- b) Share our ACSW vision for peer circles
- c) How peer circles have been used by other regulators
- d) Share how we intend to establish peer circles in Alberta for social workers
- e) How to become involved



What is a Peer Circle?

In Person and Virtual Case-based learning facilitated by social workers for social workers.

The group discusses scenarios social workers may face in their practice.

"Meeting and collaborating with my peers, discussing relevant cases in day-to-day dental hygiene practice is beneficial to my learning style. I am the only RDH in the practice I work so this helps to maintain professional relationships."

"Finally, a safe space where we can discuss common topics and issues and not be judged or have fear of getting in trouble for not knowing something. Would do this every year!"

"I realize that we have all been missing gathering together and discussing our practice and workplace situations. This actually made me want to be a better hygienist and I felt safe to ask questions and clarify many things!"

The Ontario College of Registered Denturists describes peer Circles as an innovative peer-facilitated group discussion activity using hypothetical practice relevant cases. Facilitators guide a group of 8-10 participants through the discussion of cases that highlight challenging and complex practice issues. Group participants share their perspectives on how they would solve those complex issues during the guided group activity.

For ACSW, we are developing peer circles to:

- a) Explore ethical issues and apply decision-making frameworks.
- b) Share knowledge and collaborate on applying the ACSW Standards of Practice standards in current practice scenarios.
- c) Connect with peers across Alberta to reduce isolation and strengthen professional networks.
- d) Help meet competence requirements
- e) Contribute to Quality Assurance Program tools

On the slide are quotes from the dental hygienists in Ontario who participated in peer circles and they described the impact. Watch their video here:

<https://youtu.be/iWCHQ6MUOJY>



Why Peer Circles Matter for Continued Competence

- Facilitating engagement with peers
- Promoting reflective practice
- Providing practical learning
- Reduce professional isolation and foster community
- Sharpen understanding of ACSW practice standards and ethical principles
- Explore shared challenges and ethical decision-making
- Gain new resources and tools for everyday practice
- Aligned with adult learning theory

We heard from social workers that they want relevant, meaningful professional development opportunities. Peer circles cases are developed by social workers, facilitated by social workers and respect adults' needs to direct, shape and pace their own learning practically.

Evaluation of peer circles continue to show how valuable it is when professionals have a space to connect, reflect and learn alongside one another.

These types of activities reduce professional drift - the gradual—and often unintended—shift away from the established scope, standards, or core principles of a profession or professional role over time.

It usually happens subtly, not as a sudden decision, and can occur at the level of an individual practitioner, a team, or an entire profession and can reduce the risk of professional misconduct.

Under ACSW's Continuing Competence Program, social workers must demonstrate ongoing learning and professional engagement. Peer Circles directly support these requirements by:

Facilitating engagement with peers: Participants collaborate, share perspectives, and learn from diverse experiences.

Promoting reflective practice: Discussions encourage critical thinking about ethical dilemmas and standards.

Providing practical learning: Real-world cases help registrants apply theory to practice.

Participation in Peer Circles is voluntary and can be documented toward ACSW's professional engagement component.



Peer Circles

Phase I Introduction of Peer Circles

- Opportunities for social workers to connect & engage with each other and ACSW
- Discuss real life scenarios from diverse practice contexts
- Meet professional engagement requirements

Phase II Introduction of Peer Circles into ACSW Quality Assurance Program

- Use of practice scenarios to support:
 - ✓ Entry to the profession
 - ✓ re-instatement
 - ✓ re-entry to practice
 - ✓ Practice assessments in remediation situations

Phase III

Inclusion of Peer Circles as an alternate path to meeting the competence requirements with appropriate assessment components.

When we talk about Peer Circles, we're really talking about creating spaces where social workers can learn with—and from—each other, in ways that feel grounded in real practice.

Phase I – Connection

We started by creating opportunities for social workers to simply connect—across roles, settings, and communities. These circles invite honest conversations about real-life practice situations, and they recognize that professional growth happens best in relationship. They also give practitioners a meaningful way to meet professional engagement requirements while staying connected to the College.

Phase II – Support and Assurance

As Peer Circles evolve, we hope to begin integrating them into ACSW's Quality Assurance work. Using practice scenarios, circles can support people at key moments—like entering the profession, returning after time away, or working through remediation. While peer engagement remains central, and the focus supportive and reflective, Phase II introduces greater structure and consistency, ensuring alignment with regulatory standards and public protection while still maintaining the relational and reflective strengths of peer-based learning.

These first two phases allow ACSW to carefully establish peer circles as a credible, supportive, and standards-aligned approach, setting the foundation for future consideration of expanded uses.

Phase III

Looking ahead, we see Peer Circles as one potential flexible, relational pathway to meeting competence requirements—paired with appropriate assessment.

Peer Circles: Case Writing



- Case Writing is a process of developing case scenarios that represent the continuum of social work practice.
- Work is done by practicing social workers in groups of 3-4 and work is completed during meeting time.

We are seeking 20 case writers who would join us for a two day, in person case writing workshop followed by two virtual case writing workshops. Support with travel, accommodation and meals will be provided.

In-person Commitments:
February 20 & 21, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Commitments:
March 11 & March 18, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

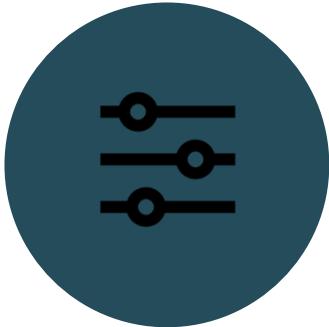
We are seeking 20 registered social workers interested in becoming case writers. These social workers work collaboratively with ACSW staff to develop and review the cases that are used for Peer Circles.

The first stage of case development will take place at an in-person workshop in Edmonton on Friday February 20 and Saturday February 21st followed by 3 hour virtual commitments on March 11th and 18th.

In person travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed.

You must currently hold an active practice license in Alberta and be registered in good standing with ACSW (not currently subject to any disciplinary proceedings).

Peer Circles: Case Review



- Case review is a process of reviewing the cases and if needed, refining them, not starting over and re-writing but refining them to ensure they are clear in content and are linked to the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.
- Work is done by practicing social workers in groups of 3-4 and work is completed during meeting time.

We are seeking 20 case reviewers who have not been involved in the case writing to join us for two virtual meetings

In-person Commitments:
None

Virtual Commitments:
April 8 & April 15, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

After case writers develop first drafts of case scenarios, reviewers will meet online to review and provide feedback on cases.

We are seeking 20 registered social workers interested in becoming case writers. These social workers work collaboratively with ACSW staff to develop and review the cases that are used for Peer Circles.

Case reviewers must attend 3 hour virtual commitments on April 8 and April 15.

You must currently hold an active practice license in Alberta and be registered in good standing with ACSW (not currently subject to any disciplinary proceedings).

Peer Circles: Peer Circle Facilitation



- Peer group facilitators are individuals who guide a structured, collaborative group process where peers come together to learn from one another, solve problems, and provide mutual support. Their role focuses on process, not on being a content expert.
- We are seeking 20 peer circle facilitators from across the province working in different practice settings to join us for peer circle facilitation training in Edmonton. Support with travel, accommodation and meals will be provided.

In-person Commitments:
May 1 & 2, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Commitments:
May 11 & 15, 2026
9:00am - Noon

Peer facilitators guide conversations and promote reflective dialogue while upholding diverse experiences and knowledge.

We are seeking 20 registered social workers interested in becoming peer facilitators. Trained peer circle facilitators will be expected to facilitate a minimum of 3 in person and/or virtual peer circles following the training starting in June 2026. ACSW staff will work with you to develop a schedule. We aim to have peer circles occur during the day, evening, and weekend.

Peer facilitation training will take place in-person in Edmonton on Friday, May 1 and Saturday, May 2 followed by 3 hour virtual commitments on May 11 & 15.

In person travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed.

You must currently hold an active practice license in Alberta and be registered in good standing with ACSW (not currently subject to any disciplinary proceedings).



Summary

Case Writing

In-person in Edmonton

Commitments:

- February 20 & 21,
9:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Commitments:

- March 11 & 18
9:00 - noon

Case Review

2 virtual meetings via Zoom

April 8 & April 15
9:00 - noon

Peer Circle Facilitation

In person in Edmonton

Commitments:

- May 1 & 2
9:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Commitments:

- May 11 & 15
9:00 – noon

Summary of the in person and virtual commitments.

In person travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed.



Next Steps & Implementation



- If you would like to join us in launching peer circles, please complete the brief survey.
- We plan to launch our first peer circles in June 2026
- We will be working with our facilitators to develop a schedule and will advertise on the ACSW website once the schedule has been developed

Please see our website for the survey link.

Thank you for your interest and email practice.consultation@acsw.ab.ca for further inquiries.