

Frequently Asked Questions

How is SHARE Peer Support Different from CMHC or Other Peer Programs?

Our SHARE Support Specialist peers fulfill a unique role on campus. SHARE peer support is non-hierarchical and non-clinical, differentiating it from peer mentorship and peer education. While those roles can have a positive impact on well-being, peer support is a complementary service that provides connection and empathy. It is not a substitute for clinical mental health services, which may be necessary for students dealing with more complex challenges. **To break it down further:**

Peer Educators	Peer Mentors	SHARE Support Specialists	Mental Health Professionals
Peer Educators (ex. Longhorn Wellness Peer Educators) plan health-related events and programs and facilitate educational workshops for classes and groups, but do not offer direct social or emotional support.	Peer Mentors (ex. FIG/TrIG Mentors or mentors in success programs) focus on supporting younger peers within a specific major or program to help with college adjustment and accessing resources.	SHARE Support Specialists facilitate support groups and sharing circles around mental health issues and other common concerns. Peers are trained in supportive skills, but they are not licensed professionals.	Licensed professionals diagnose and treat individuals with mental health concerns and may also lead therapy groups that help build clients' coping skills. CMHC is UT's resource for clinical mental health services.

What Training Do Peer SHARE Support Specialists Receive?

SHARE Support Specialists are UT Austin undergraduate and graduate students who have completed the Mental Health First Aid certification and a full semester of training in active listening, motivational interviewing, group facilitation and more. They are also well-versed in campus resources and can help their peers locate additional support options on campus if needed. SHARE Support Specialists are trained in peer support, but they are not licensed mental health professionals providing clinical services.

Are SHARE's Resources and Activities Confidential?

Our weekly SHARE Communities (peer support groups) are considered confidential, and we emphasize the importance of privacy and "what is heard here, stays here" when facilitating SHARE Circles for other groups across campus. Respecting and protecting privacy is essential in establishing trust, creating a comfortable environment, and reducing the potential for harm, and the Longhorn SHARE Project is committed to these goals.

In SHARE Communities, as with any other confidential setting, the only exception would be a situation in which a SHARE Support Specialist has reason to believe someone is at risk of imminent, serious harm to themselves or others. If they are unsure, Specialists consult with their Program Coordinator. Longhorn SHARE Project staff and students are committed to transparency and involving peers in decision-making wherever possible to maximize safety and autonomy for all.

Are SHARE Support Specialists Mandatory Reporters?

SHARE Support Specialists are not considered mandatory reporters under Title IX, and are therefore not required to submit reports to their office based on information shared by peers in SHARE spaces. However, students seeking support related to interpersonal violence are encouraged to connect with the Title IX Office, Student Outreach and Support, and/or Voices Against Violence clinical staff who have additional resources and training around these concerns.

How Can Students Become SHARE Support Specialists?

The Longhorn SHARE Project recruits a new cohort of SHARE Support Specialists once per academic year. The application window is open from October 1 – 31 and then applicants may be invited to participate in a group interview in November. Admission decisions are sent during Fall Break, and all admitted students must then register for the Spring peer training course HED 370K: Foundations of Peer Support and Social Wellness before the upcoming semester begins.

Application Requirements:

- UT Austin students from ANY major or degree plan – undergraduate or graduate – with at least 3 long semesters (Fall/Spring) before graduation are eligible to apply.
- There is no GPA requirement, but a GPA of 2.25 or higher is highly recommended.
- All applicants must submit an online application form, which asks
- Admitted students must commit to participate for at least the next three subsequent semesters including the training semester in HED 370K that Spring.
- *(Optional)* The core function of peer support involves sharing wisdom gained from participants' life experiences, so having some personal experience navigating mental health challenges/resources or other individual, interpersonal, or academic struggles would be helpful, but is not required.
- *(Optional)* Likewise, prior peer leadership or mental health support training is desirable, but not required.

How can my program or organization collaborate with SHARE?

Do you have an idea for a peer support-related project or initiative we could work on together? We are always open to new ideas and love to collaborate with campus partners! Send us an email at longhornshareproject@utexas.edu and a staff member will follow up with you in 2-3 business days.

Can SHARE Staff Provide Trainings for Groups of Staff, Faculty or Students?

Yes, we can help train staff, faculty and students at UT Austin! Longhorn SHARE Project staff facilitate the Longhorn Wellness Center's **Active Listening and Supportive Communication workshop**, and our Coordinator Adrian Lancaster is a trained **Adult Mental Health First Aid** instructor who has facilitated that course for many groups of staff and faculty across campus.

Note: MHFA is a full 8-hour course that offers a 3-year certification. There is no fee for the course itself, but the requesting group will be responsible for covering the cost of the participant training manuals (roughly \$19 per person). For more information about Adult Mental Health First Aid, see [their website](#).

Depending on availability, SHARE staff can **consult on training content for other UT peer programs** or **create one-off workshops** on a range of interpersonal communication, community-building, group facilitation, or related social-emotional skills. We also offer a 3-hour **SHARE Circle facilitator training** for groups of student leaders. Email us with your vision and we can follow up to discuss your needs: longhornshareproject@utexas.edu

Lastly, the [Longhorn Wellness Center's workshops page](#) also has information about many other workshop options that may meet your group's needs!

Does the Longhorn SHARE Project have an email listserv I can join?

Yes, we have an email listserv that sends program updates and a monthly newsletter written by the SHARE Student Advisory Group. Simply email longhornshareproject@utexas.edu and ask to be added to the listserv.