



Peer Consultation: a Matter of Principle

The AMHA principle: “**Mental health professionals shall create an interdisciplinary community that promotes and supports sound, ethical practice.**” is realized by participation in peer consultation.

AMHA-OR Bylaws require all members to either belong to a **Peer Consultation Group** or to have formal consultation or supervision. The expectation is that consultation meetings will be at least once a month. AMHA members can choose to meet with a single peer consultant. AMHA-OR Members value consultation and several have more than one consultation process.

Peer consultation has multiple benefits.

First it creates and supports professional community. **Second** it encourages ethical practice and provides networking opportunities.

Professional community supports AMHA-OR members as they provide quality care to clients.

Professional community supports counseling and therapy services through appropriate referrals and improved decision making capabilities.

Professional community helps prevent therapist burnout by decreasing the isolation therapists can experience in private practice.

Professional community allows mentoring opportunities in therapy skills and business practices.

Professional peer consultation is our quality assurance strategy. When we present our practices to the public, when we market contracts for services the fact of our peer consultation is an assurance to clients of our well developed skills and our clinical depth.

Peer group consultation and Peer supervision is a growing standard of practice across the country. In many cases, peer supervision is a required standard of behavior.

Here are three more reasons why professionals start, join or formalize their consultation groups:

(1) **Less Risk and Lower Liability.** Licensing Boards and Courts are ruling more favorably on the part of professionals who demonstrate their dedication to clients and patients. Simple participation in a peer or supervision group can be enough to demonstrate your commitment and that you care about such matters.

(2) **Save Time and Money.** Groups provide a place to ask routine questions about treatment and assessment issues as well as running and organizing your practice. You can save time and money in the long run.

3) **Professional Growth.** Groups are excellent ways to improve your skills as a practitioner, discuss real or hypothetical cases, and to obtain inexpensive and rewarding continuing education.

A professional should join or create a peer group if they answer **Yes** to any of these questions:

- ✓ Do I represent my self as an expert without having a certification to that effect or without additional training that a court of law would automatically consider evidence of expert skill?
- ✓ Do I work with challenging patients including personality disorders, self-harming, abused or potentially dangerous people?
- ✓ Do I sometimes wish I had an opportunity to explore and discuss treatment issues on a real or hypothetical level?
- ✓ Do I sometimes feel isolated and overwhelmed by the work I do?

Or if they answer **No** to this question:

- ✓ Could I identify and describe in detail the practice patterns, values and standards of care used by other professionals who have similar practices?