

## **Self-Care and Burnout Prevention Strategies for Substance Use Disorder Peer Support Workers**

Substance use peer support workers (PSWs) have lived experience in recovery and are trained to assist others in navigating care and recovery. Given the emotional and personally relevant nature of their work, PSWs are at increased risk for work-related burnout. We conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with 25 substance use PSWs in South Carolina to identify self-care practices and other burnout prevention strategies employed by PSWs. All interviews were conducted by researchers with training in qualitative methodology. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using a rapid qualitative analysis approach. When asked about burnout prevention strategies, participants shared that they relied on establishing work-life boundaries and benefited from work-related supervision. They also shared several self-care activities including attending individual therapy, attending meetings, meditating, engaging in hobbies, exercising, taking breaks, and reframing negative cognitions. These strategies helped to prevent burnout and support overall wellbeing amongst this sample of substance use PSWs. PSWs may benefit from implementing such strategies to reduce stress, encourage positive work experiences, and prevent burnout. In addition, organizations wishing to support PSWs should promote a culture and climate that is supportive of engaging in self-care practices. Organizations should provide opportunities for high-quality supervision, should promote PSWs taking time off when needed, and facilitate engagement in individual therapy. By providing these supports, organizations can better meet the needs of their PSWs and thus support the community they serve as well.