Community Support Advocate

TYPE OF POSITION:	Contract
REPORTS TO:	Drop-in Resource Centre Supervisor
CLOSING DATE:	Open until November 27th , 2026
RATE OF PAY:	$17.95/hour
Full-Time	10 hours per week

This job posting is for a current vacancy

Position Summary:

Start Me Up Niagara is a community-based organization dedicated to supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, poverty, unemployment, mental health challenges, substance misuse, and other barriers to stability and well-being. Through outreach, supportive services, employment programming, and community partnerships, Start Me Up Niagara works to create opportunities for individuals to improve their quality of life, build on their strengths, and achieve their personal goals.

Job Description:

The Community Support Advocate provides person-centered support to individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, substance misuse, and other barriers to well-being. Drawing on their own lived experience, they build trusting relationships, offer encouragement, and help individuals identify personal goals and connect with community resources. Using a trauma-informed, harm-reduction, and strengths-based approach, the Community Support Advocate meets people where they are at, promotes self-determination, and supports individuals with dignity, empathy, and without judgment.

Key Responsibilities

Peer Support and Relationship Building

- Provide compassionate, non-judgmental peer support to individuals experiencing homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, mental health challenges, substance misuse, and social isolation.
- Build trusting relationships using empathy, active listening, shared understanding, and lived experience.
- Meet individuals where they are, respecting their choices, dignity, and personal goals.
- Help individuals identify goals, build confidence, develop self-advocacy skills, and work toward greater stability and independence.
- Create opportunities to reduce isolation and strengthen belonging through informal conversations, community gatherings, peer support, and social activities.
- Collaborate with staff, community agencies, and service providers to coordinate support and improve access to resources.

Community Outreach and Basic Needs

- Conduct outreach throughout St. Catharines, Thorold, Merritton, and Port Dalhousie, connecting individuals with immediate and long-term community resources.
- Provide practical assistance, including bus passes, coffee or meal gift cards, clothing, hygiene supplies, and seasonal necessities.
- Distribute essential items through a mobile community support wagon and help reduce barriers to accessing services.
- Connect individuals with housing, health care, mental health and substance use services, income assistance, food programs, employment services, and other community supports.
- Provide referrals, follow-up, and assistance navigating service systems.
- Provide trauma-informed, harm-reduction-focused support that promotes safety, informed choice, wellness, and inclusion.
- Advocate alongside individuals to address barriers related to stigma, discrimination, homelessness, and poverty.
- Recognize urgent health and safety concerns and follow appropriate emergency procedures.

Documentation and Professional Practice

- Maintain confidential records, referrals, follow-ups, and required program reports.
- Follow organizational policies regarding confidentiality, consent, safety, and professional boundaries.
- Participate in supervision, training, and professional development while maintaining personal wellness.

Qualifications:

- High school diploma or equivalent preferred; relevant post-secondary education in social services, community development, mental health, addictions, or a related field is an asset.
- Peer support training or certification, such as peer support fundamentals, mental health peer support, or substance use peer support, is preferred.
- Training in trauma-informed care, harm reduction, mental health awareness, and crisis prevention is an asset.
- Current First Aid and CPR certification, or willingness to obtain it.
- Valid driver's licence and access to reliable transportation.
- Lived experience of mental health challenges, substance use, homelessness, poverty, social isolation, involvement with social service systems, or other experiences relevant to the population served.
- Ability to draw on personal experience in a purposeful, recovery-oriented, and professional manner to build hope, trust, and connection.
- Demonstrated understanding of the barriers people face when accessing community resources and support systems.
- Willingness to use lived experience appropriately while maintaining personal boundaries and respecting the experiences of others.

- Experience working or volunteering in community-based programs, outreach, peer support, advocacy, or social services is preferred.
- Knowledge of community resources, including housing, income assistance, health care, mental health and addictions services, food security, transportation, and legal supports.
- Ability to help clients understand service options, complete referrals, access benefits, prepare for appointments, and connect with appropriate agencies.
- Experience engaging people at community events, resource fairs, drop-in programs, and other informal community settings.
- Excellent interpersonal and relationship-building skills.
- Ability to manage multiple deadlines and priorities.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook.
- Knowledge of the nonprofit sector and charitable fundraising practices.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively.

How to Apply:

Applicants are invited to email a cover letter and resume to hr@startmeupniagara.ca with the subject line "Community Support Advocate"
We thank all applicants, however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Accommodation

Start me Up Niagara is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing employment in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Accommodations within reason due to a disability or medical need are available on request for candidates taking part in the recruitment process.