



# Implementation of the PeerOnCall apps: Insights from the Fire Sector



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## Introduction

- Peer support is a highly sought-after resource within the fire sector to manage mental health challenges and occupational stress.
- Given the significant variances in the fire service structure across Canada (volunteer, paid, or composite), peer support availability and variations are vast.
- The PeerOnCall and PeerOnCall Support paired peer support apps have been developed to increase access to peer support and reduce barriers such as limited or no access to peer support, stigma, and privacy concerns.

## Goals

- This study aims to evaluate the implementation, use, and impact of the PeerOnCall apps within the fire sector.

## Methods

### Sample

- Fire services (both paid and volunteer) across Canada were recruited to participate in a 6-month study of the apps.

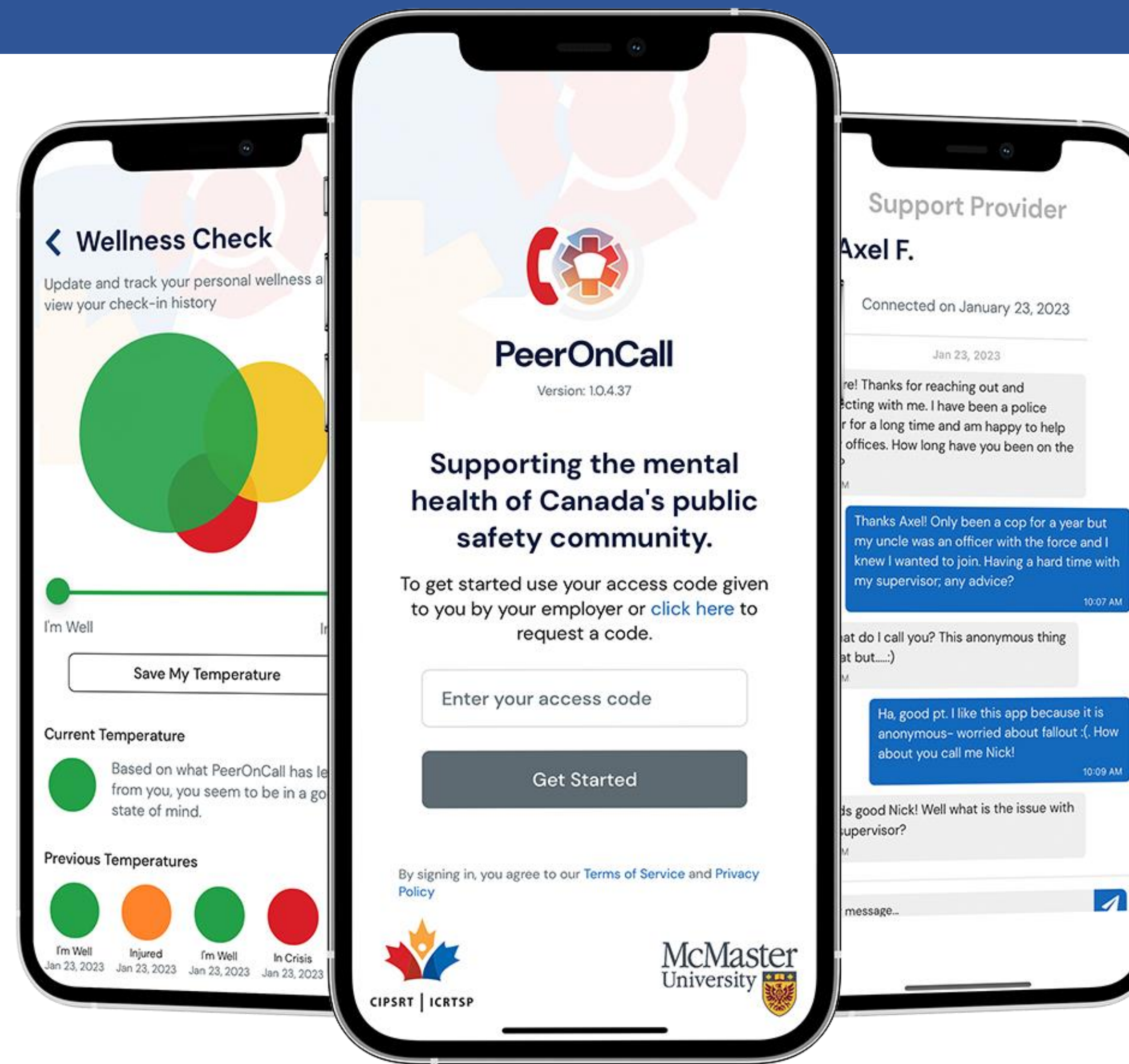
### Data Collection and Analysis

- Field notes from initial presentation meetings with fire services were used to gather preliminary information.
- Baseline semi-structured interviews with organizational champions from fire services participating in the 6-month study.
- The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research's (CFIR) 5 domains of *Innovation*, *Inner Setting*, *Outer Setting*, *Individuals*, and *Implementation Process* are used to explore the fire services' decision-making process and identify the barriers and facilitators that impacted their participation in the app's implementation study.

## Preliminary Results

### Study Sample

- Initial presentation meetings (n=25 fire services):
  - 7 career, 14 volunteer, 4 composite
  - 1 BC, 5 AB, 12 ON, 5 NL, 2 NS
- Six-Month Study (n=9 fire services; n=11 organization champions)
  - Geography: 5 Ontario, 4 Newfoundland
  - Type: 8 Volunteer, 1 Composite
  - Size: 6 Small (n=1-49); 3 Medium (n=50-199); 0 Large (n=200+)



## Key Findings

### Barriers

- Concerns of privacy
- Sustainability of the app
- Future costs associated with the app
- Technology literacy
- Capacity and resources
- Bureaucracy
- Lack of peer support infrastructure

### Facilitators

- Free access
- Inherent beliefs in the usefulness of peer support
- Co-design process
- Established relationship with the research team
- Simplicity of technology
- Trust between leadership and peer supporters



## Next Steps

- Complete the 6-month implementation study.
- Examine feedback obtained throughout the 6-month study to improve the apps' functionality.

## Innovation

- Design:** Being co-designed by public safety personnel to address unique needs including addressing privacy/confidentiality concerns, contextually relevant, and trauma-informed.
- Complexity:** Technology is easy to use and content is co-designed by public safety personnel.
- Adaptability:** Ability to add local resources and make content locally relevant for each fire service.
- Cost:** Cost was a significant factor in decision-making. Most participating fire services are volunteers and have limited budgets. Ongoing costs associated with future use of the app are also concerns. Fire services were given a stipend to offset the costs associated with participation in the implementation study phase which was helpful for some.

## Outer Setting

- Local Attitudes:** An inherent belief in the usefulness of peer support was critical for participating in the study.
- Local Conditions:** A good working relationship between senior leadership and the peer support team increased the likelihood of participating in the study.
- Partnerships & Connections:** Word of mouth by fire services participating in the study increased the likelihood for neighbouring fire services to also be interested in participating.
- Financing:** Free access to the app and continued sustainability were primary considerations for participating.

## Inner Setting

- Relational Connections:** There was a higher likelihood of fire services participating in the study if they had an already established connection to one of the research team members. Additionally, **Culture:** Most participating fire services are volunteer-based. Bureaucracy and multiple levels of approvals were a barrier to participation.
- Available Resources:** Many fire services needed to create their peer support team and infrastructure—this was a barrier for some of the fire services' study participation.

## Individual Characteristics

- Early Adopters:** Organizational champions (peer support leads and/or fire leadership) tended to be "early adopters" and more willing to participate in an implementation study. They were eager to find an innovative tool for peer support.

## Implementation Process

- Engaging:** Requirement for 1-2 organizational champions to assist with implementing PeerOnCall within their fire service. Fire services with organizational champions with mental health and peer support as a priority were more likely to engage in the study. Buy-in from senior leadership was critical in the engagement process.
- Planning:** Most fire services needed to establish a peer support team prior to participating in the study. The research team worked with these fire services to help establish their peer support infrastructure. This helped establish a more familiar connection between fire service peer support team and the research team.

## Acknowledgements



Financial contribution from



## References

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