Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**Welcome to the
Academy of Peer Services (APS) and the
Virtual Learning Community (VLC)!**
We hope you enjoy your experience with us.

https://www.academyofpeerservices.org/

2024 Calendar Term

Term 1: 1/15/24 – 4/12/24
Term 2: 5/23/24 – 8/09/24
Term 3: 9/09/24 – 12/6/24

APS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to review these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to better support your use of the Academy of Peer Services (APS). This document includes the questions we often answer when a technical support request is made by an APS learner.

If you have a question, it's a good idea to check this list before making a call or sending an email, but if you need immediate help (during business hours) you can contact APS User Support at **academyofpeerservicesnyomh@gmail.com**.

What are Peer Services?

Peer support services are non-clinical emotional and practical support provided by a person who is trained to use their 'lived experience' to offer hope and to help others. For an overview of peer services are and how they are offered in New York State, view these videos by respected peer leaders courtesy our colleagues at the Center for Practice Innovations and the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene.

- [An Introduction to Peer Services, with Celia Brown](#)
- [Peer Services in New York State, with Carlton Whitmore](#)

What is the Academy of Peer Services?

The APS is an open source, online, on-demand, training and testing platform funded and sponsored by the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYOMH). The courses include the 13 CORE courses required as a first step toward applying to become a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) in New York State.

There are over 50 other elective, continuing education (CE), and professional development courses as well as webinars on current issues and events for the peer support workforce also available in the Academy.

To view the latest course catalog, **click here.**

What are the APS Terms of Use?

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) provides funding to offer the course work and certification testing contained in the Academy of Peer Services (APS). Access to the APS imposes certain responsibilities and obligations. Appropriate use upholds the integrity and credibility of the New York State Peer Specialist Certification.

In order to participate in the Academy, learners must adhere to the APS Terms of Use. To review the current APS Terms of Use, **click here**.

Is there a fee for taking APS courses?

No. At this time, APS courses are free of charge and fully supported by the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH).

Do I need to live in New York State?

No. APS courses are available to anyone who can access the APS website. However, to become a Certified Peer Specialist in New York (NY-CPS), you must live or work in New York state and be approved by the New York Peer Specialist Certification Board.

What is the New York Peer Specialist Certification Board?

The New York Peer Specialist Certification Board (NYPSCB) establishes the requirements for certification, and it oversees the application and certification processes. The Board works collaboratively with the APS but is a separate and distinct group that makes all determinations about the Certified Peer Specialist certification.

For more information on certification, please visit the NYPSCB website: **http://nypeerspecialist.org**.

Are there other peer certifications in New York State?

Yes. There are separate certifications for substance use recovery support (CARC & CRPA) that are recognized by the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) and authorized through a separate New York Certification Board, which is managed by the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers of New York State (ASAP).

There are also certifications for youth peer advocates and family peer advocates managed by Families Together in NYS. Visit the **Peer Certifications in NYS** page on our Virtual Learning Community (VLC) to learn more.

What do I need to apply for the Peer Specialist Certification?

For the NY-CPS, completing the 13 Core Courses in APS is the first step in the process. You will submit proof of successful completion as part of your application.

To learn more about the requirements for different levels of certification and renewal, visit the NY Peer Specialist Certification Board NYPSCB website: **http://nypeerspecialist.org**.

For certifications other than the NY-CPS, you will need to check with the certification board/s that are authorized to approve the certification.

When are the APS courses offered each year?

APS courses are offered in three terms per year. Terms run from January to March, May to July, and September to December each year. For exact start and end dates, visit the APS homepage at **www.academyofpeerservices.org** and click on "About Us".

Terms are usually open for 12 weeks and then close for 4 weeks for regularly scheduled updates and maintenance.

When can I register for courses and when will I need to complete them?

You can register for courses at any time during the open Term. However, if you do not complete the courses (or do not pass the posttest) you have registered for in that term, there is no penalty. You will just need to register for them again when the new term opens. Completing a course means that you have passed the posttest and completed the course evaluation.

How do I register (enroll) in courses?

Visit the Academy of Peer Services main site **www.academyofpeerservices.org** and click the blue button labeled **Log in**. You will be prompted to either log in (for existing users) or to create an account. If you are a new user, fill out the registration form to access the site for the first time. You will receive a confirmation email that allows you to create your own password and activate your account. Please see the **APS User Guide** for detailed instructions and graphics.

What if I forget my username or password?

Please do NOT create a new account if you have forgotten your log in credentials. This is a violation of the Terms of Use that state learners should only have one account. If you create multiple accounts, your ability to apply for certification may be jeopardized and/or your progress toward course completion can be invalidated.

If you forget your username or password, there is a Forgot Password button on the Login screen that you can use to reset your password. You may need to check your spam or junk email for the message that is generated to reset your password. You can also contact APS user support to assist you in

resetting your password. The minimum length for a password is eight characters with at least one uppercase, one lowercase, one number, and one symbol. For step-by-step instructions to reset your password, visit the online **User Guide.**

You can also contact APS user support to assist you in resetting your password. Send email to: **academyofpeerservicesnyomh@gmail.com**

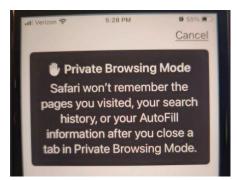**Do I need to create new accounts to access the APS from different computers or devices?**

No. You do not need to create a new account. Again, creating multiple accounts is a violation of the Terms of Use. Your existing account can be accessed from any computer, laptop, or mobile device (smart phone or tablet) by entering your Username and Password at the log in screen.

How do I request an official name change to my account?

The APS accepts any name used to create an account on our system. However, certification requires the use of your legal name for issuing your certification; that is the name on your legal documents. If you would like to request a name change for your APS account, you must complete the Official Name Change document and submit your supporting legal documents to confirm that your name has been legally changed.

Can I register for and take the courses on a mobile device (smart phone / tablet)?

The APS website and courses can be displayed on mobile devices. If you are using an iPhone, be aware that there are limitations to private browsing.

If you do encounter a problem, report it by email to the APS User Support Specialist who will assist you. Send email to: **academyofpeerservicesnyomh@gmail.com**

What are common technical issues learners experience?

When I try to start a course, nothing happens. What should I do?

First, make sure you are using the latest version of one of the approved web browsers: Microsoft Edge, Chrome, or Firefox (Safari is not approved and Internet Explorer is not supported).

You may also need to do one or more of the following things to set up your computer for the course to work correctly:

- Unblock pop-up windows. You can do this by adjusting the settings in your web browser. <u>Learn how to do this in the different browsers</u>.

- Check to see if a window has opened in another tab. You can hover (put your cursor over but don't click) the browser icon at the bottom of your computer screen.

- Make sure your internet connection is stable.

- Withdraw from the course and re-register (to reset the course). There is no penalty for withdrawing from a course. It will not appear on your transcript.

To learn more about accessing and completing courses, visit the online **User Guide**. For the steps to Withdraw and Register again, go to this section of the **User Guide**.

What if I still need help?

If you are still having difficulty opening a course, send an email, specifying the internet browser you are using and the course title you are trying to access to our User Support Specialist: **academyofpeerservicesnyomh@gmail.com.**

When I start a course only the first screen is visible. What should I do?

When the course opens, a Next button should appear at the bottom of the screen that will allow you to move through the course. If the Next button is not visible, reduce the screen size in your browser.

Here's how to resize your screen: There is an option in the upper corner of most browsers that allows you to increase or decrease the screen size in increments of 10%. Most browsers call this resize tool Zoom (not to be confused with the video meeting software). If that isn't available, you could try opening up the course in a different browser. For example, if you could not resize the window in Microsoft Edge, you could try Chrome. Remember, Safari and Internet Explorer are not supported browsers. If you still cannot see the Next button at the bottom of the course window, send email to our User Support Specialist: **academyofpeerservicesnyomh@gmail.com**

What resources are available to learners with sensory (sight, hearing, or learning) disabilities?
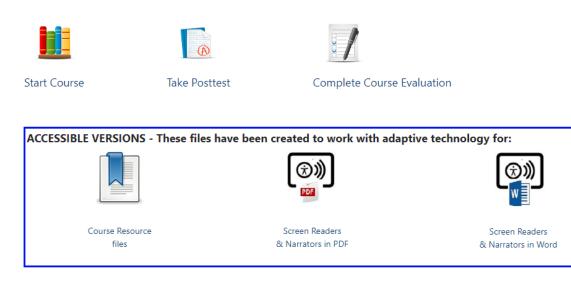
There are alternate versions of the courses available online that were created for users who have adaptive/assistive technologies, such as magnifiers to view an enlarged version of the course screens, transcripts for audio/video content in the courses, and text files for screen readers and automated narration devices for the course content.

If you need more information about these alternate versions of the courses or require a special accommodation to complete the posttest and course evaluation, send email to our User Support Specialist: **academyofpeerservicesnyomh@gmail.com**

When you access the course, you will be led to the course page, which includes a section for accessing the accessible versions, as shown below:

After working through this online module, you will need to complete a **posttest** and a **course evaluation** in order to print your **completion certificate**.

Start Course   Take Posttest   Complete Course Evaluation

ACCESSIBLE VERSIONS - These files have been created to work with adaptive technology for:

Course Resource files   Screen Readers & Narrators in PDF   Screen Readers & Narrators in Word

What is the APS Policies Course (Required)?

The APS Policies course is a required course for all APS users to learn about the Terms of Use for using the Academy of Peer Services platform. There are several actions that can lead to a suspension or termination of privileges to use the Academy of Peer Services. This course was developed to ensure that all users understand their rights and responsibilities. Completion of the course and an attestation (and course evaluation) are required prior to registering for courses.

What pre-requisites are required for each of the courses?

When you register for a course, there is an "i" button that takes you to a full description of each course and its prerequisites. The online course catalog also contains a full description of each course with information about prerequisites.

What are the Core Course Pre-Requisites?

For the Core courses (required to apply for the NY-CPS certification) three courses have prerequisites that need to be completed before the course will be accessible.

Table 1: Core Course Prerequisites

Before you can take this:	You need to pass this:
Introduction to Person Centered Principles (*PR)	The Goal is Recovery
Olmstead: The Continued Mandate for Deinstitutionalization (*PR)	The Rehabilitation Act and ADA
Peer Delivered Service Models (*PR)	The Historical Roots of Peer Support Services

*PR next to the title in the Course Catalog indicates that the course has a pre-requisite.

Under the course description you can find the name of the course you need to pass before taking the one with a pre-requisite.

These *PR (pre-requisite required) courses also appear in the Dashboard under "Pending Courses." Once the pre-requisite course has been completed you will be able to register and take the *PR course to remove it from the Pending section.

What are the Elective Course Pre-Requisites?

Table 2 shows the pre-requisites for Elective courses in the Academy.

Table 2: Elective Course Prerequisites

Before you can take this:	You need to pass this:
An Overview of Peer Wellness Coaching (*PR)	Introduction to Person Centered Principles
Community Organizing (*PR)	Development of Community Assets
Integrated Treatment (*PR)	Harm Reduction

Motivational Interviewing (*PR)	Essential Communication Skills
Peer Leadership (*PR)	Peer Delivered Service Models
Psychiatric Advance Directives (*PR)	Human and Patient Rights in New York
SPS101 – Introduction to Supervising Peer Specialists: Situations and Strategies (*PR)	SPS100 Introduction to Supervising Peer Specialists – Key Concepts

As with the Core courses, the prerequisite is listed in the description section of the Course Catalog. Once the pre-requisite is completed each *PR Elective course will be available for you to register and take.

What do I need to do to pass a course?

There is a difference in passing score between the different types of courses.

- 75% is the passing score for **Core, Elective, and Supervision** courses.
- 80% is the passing score for **CE (Continuing Education)** courses.
- Development courses are non-credit, so there is no test or certificate.

Core, Elective, and Supervision courses

For each **Core, Elective, and Supervision Track** course, you must successfully complete a posttest with a passing score of 75% or higher. Two attempts to pass the posttest are allowed per term.

If you do not achieve a passing score in two attempts, you can review the material as often as you would like, but you will not be able to take the posttest again until the next term the Academy is open. Then you can register for the again course and you will have two more attempts to pass the posttest. Calendar term start and end dates are posted on the Academy of Peer Services [About Us](#) page.

After achieving a passing score, you will need to fill out a Course Evaluation (required). After about an hour after passing the test and completing the Course Evaluation you will be able to print a certificate from the Dashboard in the "Completed Course" section.

If you do not complete the Course Evaluation, the system will not register the course is complete or issue a certificate, so be sure to fill out the course evaluation! Once you have passed the posttest and completed the course evaluation, you may need to allow approximately one hour for the completed course to appear in your Dashboard. Once it does, you can download the certificate of completion.

CE Courses

For each course in the **CE (Continuing Education)** category, you must successfully complete a posttest with a passing score of 80% or higher.

If you do not achieve a passing score, you can review the material and continue to attempt the test often as you would like until you are successful. These courses remain open year-round and you have up 10 attempts to pass the posttest.

As with the Core and Elective courses, after achieving a passing score, you will need to fill out a Course Evaluation (required). After about an hour after passing the test and completing the Course Evaluation you will be able to print a certificate from the Dashboard in the "Completed Course" section.

Development Courses

Development courses are non-credit, so there is no test or certificate.

How can I study for the posttest?

There is a Resource file for every course that contains the objectives for the course and an outline of the course. The test questions are based on the learning objectives and designed to verify that you've successfully met the learning objectives. The best way to study is to review the learning objectives and make sure you can answer them, based on what you learned in the course.

After your first attempt at taking the posttest, there is a review feature that allows you to view the answers you provided in the previous attempt so that you can study for a second attempt to take the test.

Because this is a test for a workforce certification, printing posttest items and/or answers is prohibited, and the ability to do so has been disabled in the system.

Sharing answers to test questions with others enrolled in the Academy is a direct violation of the [Terms of Use](#) and subject to disciplinary action including loss of privileges to take courses in the Academy and may be reported as misconduct under the [Certification Board Code of Ethical Conduct](#).

Why can't I see the right answers to the questions I missed on the posttest?

APS posttests are used to determine whether an individual has gained the foundational skills, knowledge, and common language to begin to provide peer support services in mental health settings. Unlike informal quizzes or knowledge checks, such as those that are embedded within the courses, the certification "posttest" requires the learner to demonstrate they have gained the foundational skills and knowledge to be employed in the field. Answers are not provided to certification tests (in any employment field).

All posttest items are reviewed between terms using a statistical item analysis

process to determine the difficulty index of every item. Test items are adjusted accordingly to ensure fairness. Learners who feel a particular test is unfair can challenge a test question and answers.

However, the vast majority of APS learners successfully complete courses and pass the certification posttests on the first or second attempt.

The APS will not provide the correct answers to posttests. This policy is in effect to maintain the integrity of all tests and to ensure equity among APS learners.

What else can I do to learn about using the APS site?

For step-by-step instructions related to registering for, withdrawing from, or otherwise managing your courses and certificates, visit the **User Guide**.

The User Guide can also be access by clicking on the "Getting Started" tab on the APS Home Page before you Login.

What is the APS Virtual Learning Community?

The Virtual Learning Community is a project of the Academy of Peer Services intended to create a bridge from knowledge gained in the online courses to connecting with others to apply skills to practice peer support and supervision in the current workforce.

To learn more about the Virtual Learning Community, you can explore the website: https://aps-community.org.

What if I Still Have Questions?

New York Peer Specialist Certification Board (NYPSCB)

There is often confusion between the NYPSCB, which manages the full certification process and the Academy of Peer Services which offers certificates and a transcript of individual courses successfully completed toward certification. The Academy is a completely separate entity from the Certification Board.

A separate FAQ related to certification is on the NYPSCB website, http://nypeerspecialist.org and they can also be contacted by email at info@nypeerspecialist.org.

Academy of Peer Services User Guide

If you have questions about logging in, taking courses, or printing certificates in the Academy of Peer Services, review the step by step instructions in the **APS User Guide**.

APS Virtual Learning Community

If you want to know about current events, research, training opportunities, job openings, or see a webinar on a topic of interest to the peer support workforce, sign up and watch for the monthly [Virtual Learning Community newsletter](#) or explore the [VLC website.](#)

APS User and Technical Support

For other questions related to accessing and managing the courses, call 917-837-1957 or send email to: [academyofpeerservicesnyomh@gmail.com.](#)