

The Peer Specialist Certification Process in New York State



Office of Consumer Affairs Webinar Series

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Joseph Swinford, Deputy Director

NYS OMH Office of Consumer Affairs



What is Peer Specialist Certification?

- ▶ Process for acknowledging skills acquired by peers that qualify them to assist another in their recovery journey
- ▶ Includes standards for training and experience
- ▶ Promotes a skilled workforce
- ▶ Allows funding from new sources
- ▶ Establishes the qualifications for “professional” recognition for individuals working in the mental health system based on “The Shared Personal Experience” paradigm



Historical Background

- Traditionally persons providing peer to peer services did not require certification
- Training and skill development was left up to individual organizations providing services
- Many individuals also sought training through specialty advocacy programs or program such as WRAP, DBSA, etc.
- Funding was primarily through Block Grant or other funding under the control of mental health authorities (State)
- New funding sources such as Medicaid began to require standardization of training and experience

The National Landscape

- ▶ Georgia is widely recognized as the first state to certify peer specialist for Medicaid in 2001
- ▶ In 2007 CMS issued a State Medicaid Director Letter clarifying:
 - ▶ States may opt to provide peer to peer services through Medicaid
 - ▶ The following items must be addressed:
 - ▶ Care-Coordination - Within the context of a comprehensive, individualized plan of care that includes specific individualized goals
 - ▶ Supervision – By a competent mental health professional (as defined by the State)
 - ▶ Training and Credentialing – Must be defined by the State, providing peer support providers with a basic set of competencies necessary to perform the peer support function, and include continuing educational requirements
- ▶ In 2013 iNAPS issued a draft National Practice Standards
- ▶ As of September 2012 there were 36 states that offered a certification program for peer specialist

The New York Experience

- A rich history of providing peer to peer services through various non - Medicaid funding sources
- A diverse array of quality training through out the state
- One of the first states to develop a civil service job class for peer specialist working in OMH facilities
- Between 1997 and 2000 with funding from CMHS New York peers developed a process for Accreditation of peer run programs
- In 2011 the New York State made the decision to move all mental health services into Medicaid Managed Care
- To insure continued opportunities for peer services OMH is developing a Peer Specialist Certification process in conjunction with peer leaders

Issues Related To Certification

- Required areas of competency
- Acceptable training
- Practical experience
- General qualification
 - Education
 - Writing skills
 - Recovery philosophy
 - Personal recovery support
 - References
- Code of ethics
- Continuing Education/Recertification



Who Must Become Certified?

- ▶ Anyone working in an OMH facility as a peer specialist (both state employees and contractors)
 - ▶ Peer specialist who provide services that are paid for by Medicaid Managed Care
 - ▶ Persons who provide Peer Support Services under the 1915i wavier AKA the H.A.R.P plans
 - ▶ Peer specialist who work for the VA
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Requirements for Certified Peer Specialist



General Qualifications

- ▶ 18 years of age or older
- ▶ Have a high school diploma or GED
- ▶ Publicly self identify as a person who has direct personal experience living a life of recovery, overcoming the challenges resulting from a diagnosis of mental illness
- ▶ Have sufficient knowledge of recovery, overcoming the challenges resulting from a diagnosis of mental illness to assist others with recovery
- ▶ Current or former recipient of mental health, or dual disorder services
- ▶ Not currently hospitalized



Formal Training

- ▶ Provide a level of knowledge and understanding in the following areas:
 - ▶ General Professional Skills such as:
 - ▶ Advocacy
 - ▶ Values
 - ▶ Ethical balance
 - ▶ Basic Technical Skills such as:
 - ▶ Active Listening
 - ▶ Strategic Disclosure
 - ▶ Recovery Support Tools and Goal Setting
 - ▶ General Mental Health Knowledge such as:
 - ▶ General knowledge of mental illnesses
 - ▶ General knowledge of treatment of mental illness

Training Options

➤ 2 Options For Training:

- **Option 1** – Online training through the Academy of Peer Services (APS) website
- **Option 2** – Skills training obtained through other programs or on- the- job training must pass the competency test for each of the classes for the “Core Courses” on the APS website. Examples of other trainings include:
 - In person training offered by various peer run agencies (i.e. MHEP, HTH, etc.)
 - Peer support trainings through national programs (i.e. Self-Help Clearing House, DBSA, etc.)
 - On the job training through a peer run agency
 - Self taught through various activities and experiences

Practical Experience

- ▶ In addition to Formal Training, practical or field experience of applying the skills of Peer Support is required:
 - ▶ A minimum 2000 hours of either in a paid or volunteer experience doing the following types of activities:
 - ▶ Providing peer support either 1-1 or in a group setting
 - ▶ Documentation of activities
 - ▶ Writing plans for interactions including assisting others in setting and pursuing goals
 - ▶ Working a member of a team
 - ▶ Coordinating with traditional service providers
 - ▶ Utilize recovery tools to assist others
 - ▶ Coach through role modeling
 - ▶ Benefits advisement
 - ▶ Utilizing personal recovery tools and activities to maintain one's own recovery
 - ▶ Maintaining the shared personal experience approach to working with others regardless of setting

Practical Experience (cont.)

- ▶ Practical or field experience must include supervision which involved:
 - ▶ Guidance in working with individual based on the shared personal experience of recovery
 - ▶ Appropriate role modeling
 - ▶ Guidance in using recovery tools (Supervisor must be trained and experienced in these themselves)
 - ▶ Implementing trauma informed approaches
 - ▶ Consultation and debriefing on specific cases and issues
 - ▶ Supervision must have been from someone who has a clear understanding of the shared personal experience approach related to recovery (including the values and ethics) with knowledge of how to avoid cooptation
 - ▶ If direct supervisor was someone other than an experienced peer specialist, then the documentation must include how an experienced peer specialist was involved in the supervision of the programmatic elements of peer support.

How To Become Certified

- ▶ Submit an application packet that includes:
 - ▶ An essay showing a minimum of 12 months of ongoing successful recovery covering the following areas:
 - ▶ Concise overview of the applicant's personal recovery story
 - ▶ Tools and activities utilized by the applicant to achieve and maintain their personal recovery
 - ▶ Description of how the applicant discloses they have been diagnosed with a mental illness for the purpose of education, role modeling and providing hope to others about the reality of recovery
 - ▶ Agreement to abide by the Peer Specialist Code of Ethics
 - ▶ 3 letters of reference supporting the individual's ability to assist others based on "The Shared Personal Experience" paradigm
 - ▶ Documentation of required training and practical experience
- ▶ Approved applications will be granted one of 2 certification types

Certification TYPES

- ▶ Certification will be available in one of the following levels:
 - ▶ **Level 1** – “*Provisional Certification*” available to persons who meet the general requirements, having completed training but do not have the required supervised practical experience. This will be good for one year with the opportunity for a onetime renewal to extend the time for a maximum of 2 years. During this time the individual must complete the supervised experienced requirements to become eligible for a level 2 certification
 - ▶ **Level 2** – “*Professional Certification*” available for those who meet the general requirements, has completed the required training and has the required supervised practical experience. This type of certification is good for 3 years and the individual must complete the recertification requirements for renewal.

Recertification Requirements

- ▶ 10 hours of approved CEUs per year. These may be continuing education trainings, seminars, workshops, APS courses or college courses.
 - ▶ CEUs must be related to mental health or dual diagnosis recovery
 - ▶ At least 1 CEU credit per year must cover each of the following
 - ▶ Ethics and boundaries
 - ▶ Trauma Informed Approaches
 - ▶ Peer support skill development
 - ▶ CEUs must be within the current certification period and cannot be carried forward to other periods
 - ▶ Each Certified Peer Specialist is responsible for documenting and reporting their CEUs for recertification.
 - ▶ Failure to report required CEUs will result in a certificate being listed as inactive for up to 1 year. If CEUs are obtained and reported then the certificate can be reactivated, if not the Certified Peer Specialist will need to submit an application for a new certificate



DRAFT Code of Ethics





Draft Code of Ethics

- ▶ The primary responsibility of a Certified Peer Specialist is to help the individuals they assist to understand recovery and achieve their own recovery needs, wants, and goals. Certified Peer Specialists will be guided by the principle of self-determination for each person they assist with recovery.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will conduct themselves in a manner that fosters their own recovery and will maintain personal standards that are respectful to self and community.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists shall establish and maintain professional relationships characterized by respect and mutual support
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will be open to share with persons whom they assist with recovery, coworkers, and the general public their stories of hope and recovery as appropriate for the situation. Certified Peer Specialist will likewise be able to identify and describe supports that promote their recovery and resilience.



Draft Code of Ethics (cont.)

- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will at all times will respect the rights and dignity of persons whom they assist with recovery and protect the welfare of all persons served by their agency by ensuring that nothing in their conduct constitutes physical or psychological abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Certified Peer Specialists will approach all interactions with persons whom they assist with recovery in a trauma informed manner.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will never intimidate, threaten, harass, use undue influence, physical force or verbal abuse, or make unwarranted promises of benefits to the persons they assist with recovery.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, disability, other preference or personal characteristic, condition or state, or any other category protected by state and/or federal civil rights laws.

Draft Code of Ethics (cont.)

- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will advocate with persons whom they assist in recovery so that individuals may make their own decisions when partnering with professionals. Certified Peer Specialists are to be knowledgeable of the tools used to achieve and promote the choices of the persons they assist with recovery.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will, at all times, respect the rights, dignity, privacy and confidentiality of persons whom they assist in recovery. Certified Peer Specialists are to be knowledgeable of the importance of personal confidentiality, confidentiality of clinical records, and the procedure to help the persons whom they assist with recovery to access their clinical records.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists have a duty to inform persons whom they assist in recovery, when first discussing confidentiality, that contemplated or actual harm to self or others cannot be kept confidential. Certified Peer Specialists have a duty to accurately inform persons whom they assist with recovery regarding the degree to which information will be shared with other team members, based on their agency policy and job description.

Draft Code of Ethics (cont.)

- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists have a duty to inform appropriate staff members immediately about a person's possible harm to self or others or abuse from caregivers.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to recovery, and openly share this knowledge with their coworkers and persons whom they assist with recovery. Certified Peer Specialists will refrain from sharing advice or opinions outside their scope of practice with persons they assist with recovery.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will not accept gifts of money or items of significant value from those they assist with recovery. Certified Peer Specialists do not loan or give money to persons they assist with recovery.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will utilize supervision and abide by the standards for supervision established by NYS OMH and/or their employer. The Peer Specialist will seek supervision to assist them in providing recovery oriented services to persons they assist with recovery.



Draft Code of Ethics (cont.)

- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists shall only provide service and support within the hours, days and locations that are authorized by the agency with which they work.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will never engage in any sexual/intimate activities with persons whom they assist in recovery. While an individual is being assisted in recovery by a Certified Peer Specialist, the Certified Peer Specialist will not enter into a relationship or commitment that conflict with the interests of the persons they assist with recovery.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will not use illegal substances or misuse alcohol or other drugs (including prescription medications).



Draft Code of Ethics (cont.)

- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists will be directed by the knowledge that all individuals have the right to live and function in the least restrictive and least intrusive environment, and promote and support services that foster full integration of individuals into the communities of their choice.
- ▶ Certified Peer Specialists shall not offer services outside the boundaries of the CPS competencies unless otherwise educated and trained, licensed or certified to do so.