

Final Stakeholder Recommendations regarding Certification of Peer Support Specialists

Recommendation 1

Develop a statewide certification for Peer Support Specialists, to include:

- Adult Peer Support Specialists
- Young Adult Peer Support Specialists
- Older Adult Peer Support Specialists
- Family Peer Support Specialists (Adult Services)
- Parent Peer Support Specialists (Child/Family Services)

- 1.1 Require Peer Support Specialists to practice within the adopted Peer Support Specialist Code of Ethics.
 - 1.1.1 Seek final approval of Peer Support Code of Ethics by the Governing Board of Working Well Together.
- 1.2 Develop or adopt standardized content for a state-wide curriculum for training Peer Support Specialists.
- 1.3 Require a total of 80 hours of training for Peer Support Specialist Certification.
 - 1.3.1 55-hour core curriculum of general peer support education that all peer support specialists will receive as part of the required hours towards certification.
 - 1.3.2 25-hours of specialized curriculum specific to each Peer Support Specialist category.
- 1.4 Require an additional 25 hours of training to become certified in a specialty area such as forensics, co-occurring services, whole health and youth in foster care.
- 1.5 Require six months full-time equivalent experience in providing peer support services.
 - 1.5.1 This experience can be acquired through employment, volunteer work or as part of an internship experience.
- 1.6 Require 15 hours of CEU's per year in subject matter relevant to peer support services to maintain certification.
- 1.7 Require re-certification every three years.
- 1.8 Allow a grandfathering-in process in lieu of training.

- 1.8.1 Require one year of full-time equivalent employment in peer support services.
- 1.8.2 Require three letters of recommendation. One letter must be from a supervisor.
The other letters may come from co-workers or people served.
- 1.9 Require an exam to demonstrate competency.
 - 1.9.1 Provide test-taking accommodations as needed.
 - 1.9.2 Provide the exam in multiple languages and assure cultural competency of exam.

Recommendation 2

Identify or create a single certifying body that is peer-operated and/or partner with an existing peer-operated entity with capacity for granting certification.

Recommendation 3

Include Peer Support as a service and Peer Support Specialist as a provider type within a new State Plan Amendment.

- 3.1 Seek adoption of the definitions of Peer Support Specialist providers and Peer Support services by the Governing Board of Working Well Together for use within the State Plan Amendment.
- 3.2 Maintain the ability for people with lived experience to provide services as “other qualified provider” within their scope of practice, including but not limited to rehabilitation services, collateral and targeted case management.
- 3.2 Acknowledge that there are important and non-billable services that Peer Support Specialists can and do provide.

Recommendation 4

Include in the State Plan the ability to grant site certification for peer-operated agencies to provide billable peer support services.

- 4.1 Allow for peer-operated agencies to provide other services billable under “other qualified provider” within their scope of practice, including but not limited to rehabilitation services, collateral and targeted case management.

Recommendation 5

Address the concern that current practice of documentation for billing may not be aligned with the values and principles of peer support and a wellness, recovery and resiliency orientation.

- 5.1 Engage with partners such as Department of Health Care Services and the California Mental Health Director's Association in order to develop an action plan to advocate for the use of CMS-approved recovery/resiliency-oriented language in documentation.

Recommendation 6

Investigate the options for broadening the definition of "service recipient" to include parents and family members of minors receiving services so that peer support services can be accessed more easily.

Recommendation 7

Convene a working group consisting of Working Well Together, the Mental Health Directors, the Office of Statewide Healthcare Planning and Development (OSHPD) and the Department of Health Care Services to develop buy-in and policies that will create consistency of practice regarding peer support services across the state.

Recommendation 8

Develop standards and oversight for the provider/entity that provides training of Peer Support Specialists.

- 8.1 Allow for multiple qualified training entities.
- 8.2 Training organizations must demonstrate infrastructure capacity that will allow for peer trainers.
- 8.3 Training must be provided by either individuals with lived experience or by a team that includes individuals with lived experience.

Recommendation 9

Establish qualifications for who may supervise Peer Support Specialists.

- 9.1 Engage with the Mental Health Directors to develop a policy that outlines key qualifications necessary for the supervision of Peer Support Specialists.
- 9.2 Preferred supervisors are those individuals with lived experience and expertise in peer support.
- 9.3 Due to capacity issues, supervisors may include qualified people who receive specific training on the role, values and philosophy of peer support.
- 9.4 Recognize and define the specific qualities and skills within supervision that are required for the supervision of Peer Support Specialists. These skills should align with the values and philosophy of peer support.

Recommendation 10

Develop a plan to provide extensive and expansive training on the values, philosophy and efficacy of peer support to mental health administration and staff.

Recommendation 11

Develop a plan to ensure that welcoming environments are created that embrace the use of multi-disciplinary teams that can incorporate Peer Support Specialists fully onto mental health teams.

Recommendation 12

Develop a policy statement that recognizes and defines the unique service components of peer support as separate and distinct from other disciplines and services in order to maintain the integrity of peer support services.

Recommendation 13

Develop a policy statement and plan that supports the professional development of Peer Support Specialists that allows the practitioner to maintain and hone his/her professional values, ethics and principles.

Recommendation 14

Develop a plan for funding the development of certification.

- 14.1 Work with the Office of Statewide Healthcare Planning and Development to utilize

state-wide monies from the MHSA Workforce, Education and Training fund.

14.2 Investigate other potential funding sources.

14.3 Develop recommendations for funding of components of certification such as financial assistance with training, exam and certification fees.

Recommendation 15

Seek representation on committees and workgroups that are addressing civil service barriers to the employment of Peer Support Specialists.

Recommendation 16

Work with Mental Health Directors to seek agreement on a desired workforce minimum of Peer Support Specialists within each county to more fully actualize the intent of the MHSA.

Recommendation 17

Develop state-wide models that can inform county leadership on the development of career ladders for Peer Support Specialists that begin with non-certified Peer Support Specialists and creates pathways into management and leadership positions.