



## 1. What is State Certification?

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A State Peer Specialist Certification is a formal State Program that typically designates the State Department of Mental Health or another agency to establish certification components including:

- Lived experience required
- Work experience
- Responsibilities and practice guidelines
- Curriculum and core competencies
- Training, testing and continuing education requirements
- Code of ethics
- Supervision
- Billing as unique peer provider & service

## 2. Does California have State Certification?

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No, not yet. Most counties employ/contract for peer, parent/family support specialist providers, but 58 counties in California have 58 different ways of using peer/family support specialists. Many counties require no training or require no training standardized to the role of peer/family/parent support specialist. If training exists it is mostly provided by clinicians/trainers not familiar with peer practices. Most have no appropriate supervision requirements don't allow peer providers to bill under existing codes.

## 3. How have California stakeholders advocated for California Certification?

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Working Well Together, a former collaboration of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), United Advocates for Children and Families (UACF), the California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations (CAMHPRO) and the California Institute for Behavioral Health Services (CIBHS), worked on this issue from 2011 to June, 2014 to investigate, research and develop certification standards. This process has included an extensive stakeholder process (over 500 stakeholders) across the state that developed a consensus set of seventeen (17) recommendations on Peer Support Certification.

## 4. What is SB 614?

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California Senate Bill 614 (SB 614) "Medi-Cal: mental health services: Peer, parent, transition-age, and family support specialist certification program" is a bill that reflects most of the 17 stakeholder recommendations for State Certification it and was introduced last year in the California Senate. It passed the Senate unopposed, and was about to pass the Assembly when government agencies influenced it to be ordered into the 'inactive' file.

## 5. What are the benefits of passing SB 614/State Certification and who benefits?

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Everyone benefits. Just like with other practitioners, certification of Peer Support Specialists provides a standardized scope of practice, values and ethics, and competencies that ensure that service recipients will receive the same quality of service regardless of where in California they



## Frequently Asked Questions

may live. Counties could draw down more funding with Medi-CAL billing codes for peer support services. Certified individuals could move to any county in the state for employment with recognized credentials.

### 6. Do other states have State Certification?

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Yes, currently forty-two (42) states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs have implemented protocols to certify peer specialists, and four (4) additional states are in the process of creating certification programs.

- California is one of only four (4) states in the country without state certification protocol.
- In 2007, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) sent a guidance letter to all State Medicaid Directors encouraging states to establish a state certification process for training, credentialing, supervision and care coordination.

### 7. We already have invested a lot of time and money in training Peer Support Specialists, including the development of curricula. What would happen to those efforts?

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The Stakeholders are very aware of the efforts of individual counties who have Peer Support Specialist training programs. The recommendation is to approve a number of different training programs and curricula as long as they meet standardized content guidelines.

### 8. How do other providers fit into this discussion, such as forensic services, Community Health Workers, Promotoras, or Recovery Coaches in drug and alcohol services?

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- All could become Certified Peer Support Specialists, if they are in recovery of mental health/substance use challenges or are a family member, and undergo the training and exam requirements.
- Promotoras are cultural-specific peers and do not necessarily have the lived experience of a behavioral health challenge.
- One of the recommendations is to have a specialization of Peer Support Services regarding co-occurring disorders as well as forensics.

### 9. Would people already providing Peer Support services be required to get certification?

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The recommendation from the stakeholders and the bill is to have a grandfathering in process.

### 10. Would there be one statewide training entity?

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No. The recommendation from the stakeholders and the bill allow for multiple training entities