BACKGROUND

A peer provider is a person who draws on lived experience with mental illness and/or substance use disorder and recovery, bolstered by specialized training, to deliver valuable support services in a mental health and/or substance use setting. Across the nation, peer support programs have emerged as an evidence-based practice with proven benefits to both peers and the clients they assist. Peers can include people who have lived experience as clients, family members, or caretakers of individuals living with mental illness.

As noted by the California Mental Health Planning Council, California lags behind the nation in implementing a peer support specialist certification program. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and 48 states have a certification process in place or in development for mental health peer support specialists. Thirteen states have a certification process for SUD peer recovery coaches. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid released guidance in 2007 for establishing a certification program for peers to enable the use of federal Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) financial participation with a 50% match. Yet California has not acted.

The Working Well Together Statewide Technical Assistance Center, a collaborative of peer and client-oriented organizations, has done substantive work on this issue in California, culminating in a final report and recommendations.

Studies demonstrate that use of peer support specialists in a comprehensive mental health or substance disorder treatment program helps reduce client hospitalizations, improve client functioning, increase client satisfaction, alleviate depression and other symptoms, and diversify the mental health workforce.

Research is also clear that the use of a formal certification program to train peer supporters offers enormous benefits, including:

- Allowing providers to make use of the federal Medi-Cal match.
- Allowing for standardization of the peer support practice, to ensure the highest quality care.
- Establishing core competencies that allow certified peers to transfer skills across county lines.

Although the Department of Health Care Services anticipates there will be substantial growth in the demand for peer support specialists, there is no statewide scope of practice, training standards, supervision standards, or certification.

THIS BILL

SB 10, the Peer Provider Certification Act of 2019 has two primary goals:

First, it requires the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to establish a certification program for peer providers with four distinct certification categories: peer, parent, transition-age, and family support specialist. Among other things, the program defines the range of responsibilities and practice guidelines for peer support specialists, specifies required training and continuing education requirements, determines clinical supervision requirements, and establishes a code of ethics and processes for revocation of certification.

Second, the bill expresses the intent of the Legislature that the program will provide increased family support, a fuller continuum of wraparound services, and an individualized focus on clients to promote recovery and self-sufficiency.

SPONSORS

The Steinberg Institute
County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
MHSOAC

SUPPORT

ACCESS California
American College of Emergency Physicians
Anti-Recidivism Coalition
Arc of California
Association of California Healthcare Districts
Association of Community Human Service Agencies
Association of Regional Center Agencies
Bay Area Community Services
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives, Inc. (CAADPE)
California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH)
California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards & Commissions
California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
California Association of Veteran Service Agencies
California Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA)
California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC)
California Children’s Trust
California Coalition for Mental Health
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA)
California Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
California Hospital Association
California Society of Addiction Medicine
California State Association of Counties
Children Now
City of San Jose
City of Santa Monica
Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County
Community Mental Health Certificate Program at City College of San Francisco
Corporation for Supportive Housing
County Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA)
County of Santa Clara
County of Ventura
County Welfare Directors Association
Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc.
Daniel’s Place
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
Disability Rights California
Juvenile Court Judges of California
Innovations Health Systems
Manzanita Services
Mental Health America of California
Mental Health America of Los Angeles
Mental Health America of Northern California
Mental Health Association of San Francisco
NAMI Amador
NAMI California
NAMI Sacramento
National Association of Social Workers
Pacific Clinics
Peers Envisioning and Engaging in Recovery Services
Pool of Consumer Champions
Private Essential Access Community Hospitals
Project Return Peer Support Network
SEIU California
Seneca Family of Agencies
Telecare Corporation
The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration
The Psychiatric Occupational Therapy Action Coalition
United Cerebral Palsy California
Western Center on Law and Poverty

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Carrie Holmes
Office of Senator Jim Beall
(916) 651-4015
Carrie.Holmes@sen.ca.gov