



Floor Alert

To: Members, California State Senate
From: California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations
Date: June 22, 2020
Subject: **Support SB 803 (Beall) – Peer Support Specialist Certification Program**

What Does SB 803 Do?

- ➔ SB 803 establishes a statewide certification program for peer support specialists and provides the structure needed to maximize the federal match for peer services under Medi-Cal.

Why Support SB 803?

- ➔ Across California, peers are already providing peer support services. **However, there is no statewide scope of practice, standardized curriculum, training standards, supervision standards, or certification protocol.** The benefits of Peer Certification for peer support are obvious. Peer certification
 - Defines the service of peer support.
 - Provides a standardized scope of practice, values and ethics, and competencies
 - Assures that practitioners receive standardized training and demonstrate competency.
 - Ensures that service recipients will receive the same quality of services regardless of where in California they may live.
 - Allows for portability of Certification to other counties in the State.
 - *Is the basis for the ability to bill Medi-Cal for services provided.*
- ➔ **SB 803 offers essential support to Californians during the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath.** What people need now is connection and social support, and this is one of the unique services that peer support provides. Also, peers by their definition have gone through crisis, learned resiliency tools to gain their own mental wellbeing, and are trained to assist other in navigating and surviving crises. Peers bring the diversity of the community to the behavioral health workforce, especially important since the coronavirus has disproportionately affected people of color. Peers bolster the behavioral health workforce at a time when because of the pandemic mental health needs are exponentially increasing.
- ➔ **Research has demonstrated the benefits of peer support, which has been designated as a best practice.** 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.

Currently forty-eight states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs have implemented protocols to certify peer specialists. enabling these states to leverage Medicaid funds. *However, California has not acted and is therefore among a mere two US states that are at the tail end of progress. California continues to leave federal matching dollars on the table every year!*