

Peer Support Specialist Certification Series

What is peer support?

How do I become a peer specialist?

What types of certification are there?

What is peer support?

1 A Peer Is...

In behavioral health, a peer is someone who shares the experience of living with a psychiatric disorder and/or an addiction.

2 Peer Support is...

The “process of giving and receiving encouragement and assistance to achieve long-term recovery.” Peers offer their unique lived experience with mental health conditions to provide support focused on advocacy, education, mentoring, and motivation.

Mead, 2003; Solomon, 2004

3 Peer Providers...

Peer providers can play many roles. They facilitate education and support groups. They work as a bridge linking people to services as they transition from hospitals or jails into the community. Peers also work one-on-one as role models, mentors, coaches, and advocates. They support people in developing psychiatric advance directives and creating Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP®).

4 Trained Peer Specialists...

May provide volunteer or paid peer support. Peers also use their expertise to work as supervisors, trainers, and leadership within organizations. Peer specialists have roles in government, policy, and insurance. Many peers run their own peer-run organizations.



How do I become a peer specialist?

To become a peer support specialist, you will need both:

Training

You will need adequate training to become a peer specialist. Requirements vary state-by-state. Doors to Wellbeing has a comprehensive list of requirements by state.



Learn more!

Certification

Certification varies across the US. Generally, certification programs have requirements such as hours of experience. There are several types of certification, which are described in the next section.

Check out this resource!

Detailed overview from MHA on how to become a Peer Support Specialist

What types of certification are there?

State Certification

State certification is the most common starting point for becoming a peer specialist.

State certification programs and requirements vary. Not all states offer certification. In some cases, it is offered at the county level.

Learn More Here!

National Certification

The National Certified Peer Specialist (NCPS) is a national, advanced certification developed by Mental Health America (MHA) and the Florida Certification Board.

This certification requires a higher level of skill, knowledge, and experience than any others.

State certification or 40 hours of training is required prior to obtaining NCPS certification.

Other Certification

Other types of certification for peers include veterans peer support, family peer support, and youth peer support.

Peers may also use their experience and training to support additional populations including:

- New and expecting mothers
- Individuals who are unhoused

Individuals involved in the criminal justice system

How do requirements differ between state and national certification?

State

< VS >

National

- Required training can be anywhere from 32 to over 100 hours.
- Experience requirements range from 0 hours to 2,000 hours.
- Some states require letters of recommendation
- Examination requirements vary around the country--some require it and others do not.
- Some certifications are operated under a formal certification board, while others are operated by state departments of mental health.

- To be eligible, peers must have a minimum of 40 hours of approved training or have completed state certification.
- Requires a minimum of 3,000 hours of experience providing paid or volunteer peer support in the past six years.
- Requires one professional and one supervisory letter of recommendation.
- Must pass an exam that covers six domains of practice.
- The NCPS does not create reciprocity across state lines, but demonstrates a high level of experience and knowledge for peer specialists.



Explore a roadmap to obtaining NCPS Certification!

Resources

How to Become a Peer Support Specialist

Guide to National Certified Peer Specialist Certification

National Certified Peer Specialist (NCPS) Credentials List

National Certified Peer Specialist (NCPS) vs State Certification Cheat Sheet

Roadmap to Obtaining NCPS Certification

Doors to Wellbeing Peer Specialist State Database

Interactive Map of Certification Programs by State

Brought To You By:



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