

Becoming a Certified Peer Counselor

Frequently asked questions

What are the Health Care Authority's (HCA's) requirements to qualify as a Certified Peer Counselor (CPC)?

Certification has four steps:

1. Submit your application (now online at the Peer Support website) with your online training certificate for approval;
2. Be accepted to a training;
3. Successfully complete a 40-hour approved training; and
4. Pass the state exam.

You will need to complete the online class and send in a completion certificate with your application before being invited to a training.

Upon passing the CPC test, you will receive a letter confirming that you have met certification requirements. If you do not pass the test, you may request a retest. Many employers also require credentialing from the Washington Department of Health as an Agency Affiliated Counselor after being hired. This credential is only required if your Agency is providing Medicaid billable services.

What are the application requirements?

Applicants must:

1. Self-identify as a person with lived experience with mental health or substance use services or be a parent or legal guardian of a child with lived experience with mental health or substance use services.
2. Be 18 or older.
3. Be in mental health or substance use disorder recovery for at least one year.
4. Demonstrate qualities of leadership.
5. Demonstrate proficiency in reading comprehension and writing skills.
6. Be willing to share your personal story of recovery.

Where do I find an application?

The training application is available at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/billers-providers-partners/behavioral-health-recovery/peer-support>

The application includes an **instructions page**, which should be followed carefully.



How do I apply for training?

When CPC trainings are posted on the peer support webpage, you may send your application (and completion certificates for the online class). Once your application is received, it will be reviewed and scored. Applications which are incomplete or do not meet training qualifications will be returned.

When do I complete the online training?

- The online training must be complete before being considered for an in-person training.
- The course takes about 10-12 hours to complete.
- You will want to read carefully and take notes as some information is included on the test and not covered in the training.

What can I do if my application is not approved?

You may send a request to DBHR to have your application reconsidered. You may also send a new application.

How are training participants chosen?

When trainings are scheduled, participants are invited using various criteria, such as those already employed, those living in the area of the training, or those scoring highly on their applications. Applicants generally must be interested in becoming CPCs for Medicaid billing agencies, as our funding usually does not allow training for other professional development or personal growth. There are usually far more training requests than there are training spaces. Applicants will be notified whether they have been selected to attend the requested training.

Is there a waiting list?

Yes, for most trainings. If you are already employed as a peer counselor you have higher priority.

Trainings and Tests

What types of training are available?

There are currently three CPC trainings available:

1. Standard training;
2. Family and Youth training; and
3. Bridge training. This training is for CCAR certified recovery coaches who meet our other eligibility requirements.

All trainings result in the same certification. There is a box on the application form to indicate preferences. Trainings may be sponsored either by the State of Washington or a Managed Care Organization (MCO) or BH-ASO. All known training dates and locations are listed on the website. Trainings sponsored by agencies other than DBHR may limit trainings to participants in their region or other specific criteria.



What is the Family/Youth training?

DBHR has a unique curriculum for the Family and Youth CPC training. This training, while covering the same topics as the Standard training, is specifically designed to prepare parent and youth CPCs. Parents and youth often benefit from learning with a larger group of their peers. . **The ability to form true “peer” relationships is essential.** Parents and youth are welcome to take the Standard training as well and adults can attend the Family/Youth training as space allows.

What is the application process?

Applicants complete the application on the Peer Support [website](#), carefully following all instructions. Applications are reviewed by DBHR, and after evaluation, a confirmation letter will be emailed to you.

How much does training cost?

There is no cost for the peer counseling training, training materials, or the test. Trainings that are offered regionally provide snacks and lunch, while statewide trainings also provide lodging and all meals.

Is there funding for travel expenses?


Most CPC trainings are regional and there is no travel funding available. DBHR offers a few statewide trainings, with lodging and meals provided. For the Youth/Family trainings there are limited travel funds available primarily for people coming from long distances within the region. Youth/Family applicants can contact the WISe Workforce Collaborative at wisewc.com for more information. If you apply for a statewide training and you are invited, a trainer will contact you about your needs.

What is the training like?

All trainings are 36 hours in length and typically occur over five days. The CPC test is usually scheduled the last afternoon of the training. Students primarily study the peer counselor manual, which includes many individual and group activities. Trainings are interactive, with students expected to participate in activities and discussions. To receive a training completion certificate, participants must also pass skill checks during the training.

What is the certified peer counseling test like?

The test is administered through a testing proctor. The test will be held either at the training location during the week, or near the training location at a different date. The test has a written multiple choice section and an oral section involving a small panel.



Applicants have five attempts to pass the test. They may then request re-training, but this opportunity is not guaranteed.

Who should I contact for more information?

Peer Support Program
HCA Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery
Email: peersupportprogram@hca.wa.gov
Fax: (360) 725-1385
Mailing Address: PO Box 42730, Olympia WA 98504