Certified Peer Support Specialist curriculum and training modules

Module 8: Re-entry and resilient recovery



Washington State Health Care Authority

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Introduction

In this module, Certified Peer Support Specialists will explore how peer support plays a critical role in supporting an individual's transition back into the community after time spent in institutions such as jails, prisons, mental health hospitals, military service, and inpatient treatment centers.

Throughout this module, you will learn how to guide individuals in securing housing, employment, and rebuilding connections with family and natural supports. By leveraging your own lived experience, you can offer hope and practical support during this crucial period of reentry.

Learning objectives

- Define community transitions and identify the various types of transitions individuals may experience, including hospitalization discharge, substance use treatment completion, reentry after incarceration, and transitioning from military to civilian life.
- Recognize the common challenges and stressors associated with each type of transition and how they impact individuals' behavioral health and well-being.
- Identify and utilize community resources, support networks, and service providers that can support peers in transition.
- Support peers in navigating healthcare systems, social services, and other relevant organizations to access necessary support and resources.

Peer support roles

Certified Peer Support Specialists who support individuals transitioning from institutions to the community are sometimes referred to as **Peer Bridgers** or **Recovery Navigators**. In Washington State, both Peer Bridgers and Recovery Navigators play crucial roles in behavioral health services. Their functions and areas of focus differ in terms of scope, responsibilities, and the populations they serve. You may provide support to a peer when you are not specifically hired to be a Peer Bridger or Recovery Navigator.

As a Certified Peer Support Specialist, you may be supporting a peer through the complex process of community transitions. Each of these transitions brings its own set of challenges and adjustments. People can be vulnerable during these transitions, and they can benefit from empathetic and non-judgmental support. The role of the Certified Peer Support Specialist is to provide support to community members as they navigate these transitions.

A peer might encounter various significant life changes like **leaving a hospital or treatment center after a stay, re-entering the community following incarceration, or transitioning from active-duty service to civilian life** as a veteran.

Making the transition back to life in the community can bring a confusing range of emotions, from excitement and happiness to anxiety and fear. Leaving familiar routines and structures can easily cast some people adrift with a general feeling of uncertainty around next steps. Support from a Certified Peer Support Specialist in these situations is powerful.

While the focus is on the transition aspect, do not forget to **celebrate milestones** as people transition back into their communities.

Rebuilding lives and restoring connections

Support networks are critical to successful re-entry. The peer you are supporting may need a support network. See if there are friends or family who the peer considers helpful and available. Consider community resources that might fit a specific need: Does the peer have an interest that can be met in the community? If they love gardening and live in an apartment, connecting them with a community garden may be helpful. If they like to read, perhaps joining a book club feels right. Share how you connect in your community to offer the peer some ideas. Model self-advocacy skills, so that if people return to the hospital, they will have more confidence to speak up for themselves.

Types of transitions

As a Certified Peer Support Specialist, you will play a pivotal role in the navigation of transitions by providing emotional support, offering practical assistance, and modeling self-advocacy.

Whether a peer is transitioning from hospitalization, incarceration, military service, or another significant transition, you can serve as a trusted ally, offering empathy and validation while modeling a non-judgmental approach to this support. Your own experience and understanding of the challenges will allow you to connect with peers on a deeper level, fostering trust and rapport in your peer relationship.

Re-entry from inpatient treatment centers and psychiatric hospitals

Returning home after inpatient behavioral health stays can be challenging and overwhelming. Certified Peer Support Specialists play an important role in this transition. Some people work as Peer Bridgers, directly supporting peers before they are discharged and until they are established in their community.

A mental health advance directive is a document that tells hospitals what your wishes are if you get hospitalized. You might ask if the peer has one. If the person does not have one, you can support them in making one.

Six peer support values



Activity

Open-ended curiosity

Get into groups of three or four people. Read the scenario about Marcia. On your own, write three open-ended, curious questions to learn more about Marcia and what she wants to do next. Then, in your group, consider the questions at the end of the scenario. Keep in mind the peer support concepts you've learned to guide your questions.

Marcia's story

Marcia (she/her) has been in Western State Hospital for 18 months. She arrived at Western State Hospital after several extended stays in Evaluation and Treatment Centers, so she hasn't been in her own home for nearly two years.

Marcia's first admission was involuntary, and during that stay she lost her apartment, belongings, and her cat. Upon discharge from Western, Marcia is planning to stay with a relative who lives in Lakewood. The relative has a furnished home and a room for Marcia to use; however, Marcia has no clothes of her own or toiletries. Marcia is afraid she won't remember how to live on her own.

A Certified Peer Support Specialist is assigned to meet with Marcia before discharge. They plan to continue supporting Marcia after returning to the community. The Certified Peer Support Specialist asks Marcia how she feels about being discharged, and where she'd like to start. Marcia replied, "I'm really ready to get out of here. But I'm nervous at the same time. I know my family will help me figure things out, but it feels like I have a lot to learn. First thing I want to do is adopt a cat!" The Certified Peer Support Specialist replies, "Cats are great companions! I bet you can have that conversation with your relative, see if they will allow a cat in their home. You know, I can work with you on other stuff too, like maybe getting more clothes." Marcia thinks about this and responds, "That's probably a better idea. I'll figure out the cat later. I just need to get moved first."

- If you were the Certified Peer Support Specialist assigned to work with Marcia, where would you start? What would you say if you are trauma informed?
- How would you choose part of your recovery story to share with Marcia?
- How would you offer hope?
- How might the culture in an institution influence a person's sense of self and autonomy, especially if they are there for years?
- How might the experience be different for a young person or someone that went in as a young person?

Discuss your answers with your group and be ready to share them with the rest of the class.

Re-entry from incarceration

Upon returning to the community after incarceration, peers may feel vulnerable and face barriers to establishing a healthy life outside of jail or prison. They may need access to health insurance, mental health and/or SUD services, medical care, employment, and housing, as well as family reunification.

Always ask what the peer would like or what they think they need. As Certified Peer Support Specialists, your role is to support the person's choices.

Video

Step Inside the Circle | Fritzi Horstman
www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVxjuTkWQiE&t=1s

According to SAMHSA, people who are or have been incarcerated are more vulnerable to mental health and substance use disorders and to violent and self-harm behaviors. Eighty-five percent (85%) of incarcerated people were either struggling with active substance use disorder themselves or were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of their crime (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2010).

Many individuals with substance use disorder return to their community and start using drugs again, not realizing they do not have the same tolerance they had before incarceration. This can lead to an increased risk of overdose, death, and potentially a relapse-driven return to incarceration. The risk of opioid overdose in the first two weeks following an individual's release from prison is 40 times higher than for the general population (Hanna et al., 2020).

Getting immediate needs met

Certified Peer Support Specialists play an important role in supporting peers as they re-enter the community from prisons and jails by addressing their immediate needs for employment, housing, and family reconnection. Peers exiting these facilities might experience stigma associated with being in prison, jail or a hospital.

- **Employment Assistance**: Certified Peer Support Specialists can help individuals secure employment by providing guidance on job search strategies, resume building, interview skills, and connecting with vocational training programs or job placement services. They can also offer encouragement and support during the job application process, helping individuals navigate any challenges or setbacks they may encounter.
- **Housing Support**: Certified Peer Support Specialists assist returning citizens in finding stable housing upon their release from incarceration. This may involve connecting them with transitional housing programs, supportive housing options, or rental assistance resources. Certified Peer Support Specialists can also provide guidance on navigating the housing application process, understanding tenant rights, budgeting for housing expenses, and Certified Peer Support Specialists might also support family reunification efforts.
- **Family Reconnection**: Certified Peer Support Specialists support individuals in rebuilding relationships with their families after incarceration. This may include facilitating communication between family members, providing education on healthy communication and conflict resolution skills, and offering emotional support as they rebuild trust and connection with their loved ones.
- **Peer Support and Advocacy**: Certified Peer Support Specialists offer peer support and advocacy throughout the re-entry process, helping individuals address their mental health and substance use needs, access treatment and support services, and navigate the complexities of the healthcare system. They provide a non-judgmental space for individuals to discuss their experiences, concerns, and goals, while offering practical guidance and encouragement.
- **Addressing Substance Use and Mental Health Needs**: Certified Peer Support Specialists play a crucial role in addressing the substance use and mental health needs of individuals re-entering the community. They can provide education on relapse prevention strategies, wellness improvement planning, and accessing treatment and support services. By sharing their own experiences and recovery journey, Certified Peer Support Specialists offer hope and inspiration to individuals facing similar challenges.
- **Overdose Prevention and Education**: Given the increased risk of overdose following release from incarceration, Certified Peer Support Specialists provide overdose prevention education and naloxone distribution to individuals at risk. They educate people on the signs of opioid overdose, how to administer naloxone, and the importance of seeking immediate medical attention in the event of an overdose.
- **Holistic Support and Empowerment**: Overall, Certified Peer Support Specialists provide holistic support that addresses the diverse needs of those individuals re-entering the community from incarceration. They empower returning individuals to advocate for themselves, make informed decisions about their health and well-being, and pursue meaningful goals that promote stability, recovery, and a sense of belonging in the community.

Critical transition period: Reducing overdose and recidivism after release

Some peers experiencing SUD may return to their community and begin drug use once more not realizing they have lost tolerance for drugs. This leads to an increased risk of overdose, death, or recidivism. **The first 24 to 48 hours after release are the most critical hours for peers transitioning out from an institution.** The Certified Peer Support Specialist will want to meet as soon as possible when the peer they are working with gets released.

Differences between men and women re-entering the community

Note: This section generalizes gender as male or female as it applies to the judicial processing system. We acknowledge that this does not represent the scope of gender identities; this information is not meant to marginalize or leave out any community but rather to give an overview of general issues consistently observed by those re-entering their communities after being incarcerated in a male-based prison system or a female-based prison system.

When people leave prison, they face many challenges, but these challenges can look different for men and women. Statistically, women often deal with more emotional struggles, especially if they have children. After being away for years, many women feel guilty about their inability to be present for their kids and worry about how to reconnect with them. Women also tend to face more stigma from society because people sometimes judge them more harshly for being in prison.

Women are also more likely to have experienced trauma, like abuse or violence, before or during their time in prison. This can make the stress of re-entry even harder to manage. They also might need help finding housing and jobs that feel safe and supportive. In many cases, women face barriers like limited work experience or gaps in their resume from time spent in prison.

Men, on the other hand, may focus more on finding work quickly or rebuilding their role as providers for their families. While men also experience stigma, it often looks different from what women face. Both men and women need strong support systems, but women may need more emotional and mental health support as they adjust to life outside prison.

These challenges encompass a range of barriers, including limited access to education and employment opportunities, healthcare disparities, housing instability, and the complexities of family reunification. Addressing these issues is crucial for facilitating successful reintegration and reducing recidivism rates among women.

Educational and employment barriers

A significant number of incarcerated women lack formal education; approximately 44% do not possess a high school diploma or equivalent. This educational deficit severely limits their employment prospects upon release, as many jobs increasingly require postsecondary education or specialized training. Moreover, vocational programs available during incarceration are often limited and gender-stereotyped, focusing on areas such as sewing or cosmetology, which may not align with current labor market demands. This mismatch leaves many women ill-prepared for sustainable employment post-release.

Even when qualified, formerly incarcerated women often face significant stigma due to their criminal records. Research indicates that job applicants with a criminal history are 60% less likely to receive a callback from potential employers. This discrimination is more pronounced for women, particularly women of color, further hindering their ability to secure stable employment.

Healthcare challenges

Access to adequate healthcare during incarceration is often limited, and this disparity continues post-release. Many people reentering society struggle with untreated mental health issues, substance use disorders, and chronic health conditions. The lack of continuity in care and difficulties in obtaining health insurance exacerbate these problems, impeding their ability to achieve stability and well-being.

Housing instability

Securing stable housing is a critical yet challenging aspect of reentry for women and men alike. Many face homelessness or housing insecurity upon release, which can be attributed to factors such as limited financial resources, discrimination based on criminal history, and estranged family relationships. Without stable housing, women are at a higher risk of recidivism and encounter additional obstacles in accessing employment and healthcare services.

Family reunification and parenting

The majority of incarcerated women are mothers, and reuniting with their children is often a primary concern upon release. However, they frequently encounter legal and systemic barriers that complicate family reunification, including challenges in regaining custody and reestablishing parental rights. Additionally, the trauma of separation and the stigma associated with incarceration can strain familial relationships, making the reunification process emotionally challenging for both mothers and children.

Trauma and mental health

Many incarcerated women have histories of trauma, including experiences of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other forms of victimization. These traumatic experiences contribute to mental or behavioral health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The reentry process can trigger these conditions, especially when adequate mental health support is lacking, thereby hindering successful reintegration.

The reentry challenges faced by formerly incarcerated women are multifaceted and deeply interconnected. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive, gender-responsive approaches that consider the unique needs of women. This includes expanding access to education and vocational training, improving healthcare continuity, ensuring stable housing, supporting family reunification efforts, and providing trauma-informed mental health services. By implementing such strategies, we can enhance the prospects for successful reintegration and reduce the likelihood of recidivism among women reentering society.

Culturally responsive strategies for reentry programming may enhance success for justice-involved women

According to the article Five Things to Know About Women and Reentry (**nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/resources/five-things-know-about-women-and-reentry**) by the National Institute of Justice, some preliminary studies suggest that culturally responsive programs — those that consider race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other identities — may be more effective than traditional programming in reducing recidivism and improving program engagement. Accordingly, gender-responsive reentry programming may be improved by also using culturally responsive strategies that consider the person's characteristics and intersecting identities. However, more rigorous research is needed.

Current promising women's re-entry programs:

- **Forever Free (crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/40)**: The first comprehensive, in-prison, residential substance use disorder treatment program designed for incarcerated women. In one quasi-experimental study, the intervention group reported fewer arrests during parole, less drug use, and more employment at follow-up than the comparison group.
- **Gender-Specific Drug Treatment Court (crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/747)**: A drug court program that provides treatment services to women on probation to reduce their risk of reoffending. The program gives preference to women who have higher need and risk profiles, are mothers, and have substance use problems. In one quasi-experimental study, women in the treatment group were statistically significantly less likely to have a new conviction after two years when compared with a control group.
- **Moving On (crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/476)**: A curriculum-based, gender-responsive intervention addressing incarcerated women's different cognitive-behavioral needs. Based on one quasi-experimental study, the program significantly reduced recidivism (as measured by rearrests and reconvictions), but it did not significantly affect reincarcerations for a new offense or technical violation revocations.
- **"Seeking Safety" for Incarcerated Women (crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/424)**: A cognitive-behavioral intervention for incarcerated women with co-occurring post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use disorders. In one quasi-experimental study, results suggest it significantly reduced PTSD and depression scores in program participants.

Re-entry from active-duty military to veteran status

Transitioning from active duty to veteran status is a significant life change that can bring both excitement and challenges for service members. Transitioning from active duty to veteran status involves adjusting to a new identity, lifestyle, and set of challenges.

For many service members, leaving the structured environment of the military can be daunting, and they may struggle to find employment, housing, healthcare, and social support in the civilian world. Certified Peer Support Specialists can support service members to understand and navigate these challenges by providing emotional support and connection to resources.

⚖ Ethical considerations

A Veteran Certified Peer Support Specialist might provide support to a peer who needs support with their family. Is it okay if a peer you are seeing brings a family member to a peer support session to reach their goal of family reunification after being deployed for three years?

Advice for a successful transition



1 Start preparing early
Ensure you have the time required to understand and navigate the process.



2 Have a transition plan
Don't start without a plan that you can update as you learn and progress.



3 Build your network
Reach out to veterans and non-veterans and learn from their experience.



4 Learn to translate your skills
Showing how your military skills align with an organization and add value are critical to success.



5 Be patient
Understanding and adapting to civilian life requires time.

Content for this graphic sourced from:
military-transition.org/dashboard

A Certified Peer Support Specialist who is also a veteran can provide invaluable support to peers transitioning out of the military by sharing lived experience, empathy, and insight into the unique challenges of civilian life. They can help a peer navigate the complex VA systems, assist with tasks like connecting to healthcare services, accessing housing support, and understanding educational or job training programs available to veterans.

By sharing their own experiences, a Veteran Certified Peer Support Specialist can also provide guidance on reestablishing relationships with family and friends, exploring a new sense of purpose, and finding community connections to replace the camaraderie of military life.

However, this transition can come with significant barriers, many of which a Certified Peer Support Specialist can help address.

- Veterans may struggle with feelings of isolation, PTSD, or other mental health concerns that make reintegration challenging
- Civilian life might feel disorienting, with cultural differences and a loss of structured routine contributing to stress and uncertainty
- Veterans may feel bored due to lack of stimulation at home, or conversely, have heightened anxiety because they can't interpret the "signals" at home

The Certified Peer Support Specialist can help bridge these gaps by providing consistent emotional support, creating a safe space for discussing difficulties, and offering coping tools. They can advocate for the peer in accessing benefits and resources, reducing bureaucratic obstacles that may otherwise seem overwhelming.

Through steady guidance and shared understanding, a Veteran Certified Peer Support Specialist can make this significant life change feel more manageable and hopeful.

💬 Discussion questions

The impact of military cuture on reintegration

- How might the peer's unique military culture play a role in transitioning into society outside the military?
- Will the peer feel differently about the suggestion to seek connections with veterans in the community if they have a dishonorable discharge?

Stigma and re-entry: How Peer Support can help

Certified Peer Support Specialists play a powerful role in supporting people reentering society after jail or prison, hospitalization, and active duty. They can do this by sharing their own lived experiences and creating safe, brave spaces for peers. When Certified Peer Support Specialists offer understanding, advocacy, and firsthand insights, they can make the reentry process smoother and help reduce societal and self-stigma.

There are many steps Certified Peer Support Specialists can take to ease the transition and diminish stigma.

Challenging labels, stereotypes, and social stigma

- **Redefining identities**: Certified Peer Support Specialists know firsthand the impact of being labeled by a past experience, and they can work with individuals to help them build new identities centered around resilience, growth, and hope. Certified Peer Support Specialists help **individuals define themselves by their strengths and aspirations, rather than by a diagnosis or crisis history**. They offer encouragement and tools for self-empowerment, helping people reclaim control over their personal narrative.
- **Reframing perceptions**: By sharing their own stories of transformation, Certified Peer Support Specialists can help shift the narrative away from labels like "ex-con" and "offender." They encourage individuals experiencing re-entry to **define themselves by their future goals rather than past mistakes**.
- **Building trust and acceptance**: Certified Peer Support Specialists bring empathy to their interactions, fostering trust and creating safe spaces where individuals feel respected and understood rather than feared or dismissed.

Support in employment challenges

- **Advocating for fair opportunities**: Many Certified Peer Support Specialists have also experienced job search struggles, making them strong advocates for fair employment. They can support individuals by helping them craft resumes that highlight strengths and by role-playing interviews to build confidence.
- **Offering encouragement and motivation**: Certified Peer Support Specialists can share their own stories of perseverance, demonstrating that, despite setbacks, securing employment and stability is possible. This encouragement helps individuals stay motivated and focused on achieving their goals.
- **Addressing skill gaps**: Certified Peer Support Specialists can connect individuals to job training programs and resources that help them bridge skill gaps whether through their own networks or community partnerships.

Navigating housing discrimination

- **Breaking down housing barriers**: Certified Peer Support Specialists understand how crucial safe and stable housing is to recovery and reentry, and they can guide individuals to housing options that may be more accepting of diverse backgrounds.
- **Strengthening self-advocacy skills**: Through peer support, Certified Peer Support Specialists empower individuals to confidently advocate for themselves, whether it's through practicing conversations with landlords or learning about their rights and available resources.

Addressing legal and structural barriers

- **Navigating systemic challenges**: Some Certified Peer Support Specialists understand firsthand how overwhelming legal and structural barriers can be. They provide practical support and connect individuals to legal resources or advocacy groups, helping them reclaim rights or access services.
- **Reducing parole and probation stigma**: Certified Peer Support Specialists can help **shift perspectives on probation or parole, focusing on it as a pathway to freedom and success**. By sharing stories of perseverance during these phases, they provide hope and guidance for those navigating similar journeys.

Building and rebuilding relationships

- **Reconnecting with loved ones**: Certified Peer Support Specialists understand the importance of relationships in recovery. They can model healthy communication and share strategies for rebuilding trust, often by sharing examples from their own lives.
- **Engaging in community integration**: Certified Peer Support Specialists often work within the same communities as those reentering, helping individuals feel accepted and understood. Through group sessions and community events, they facilitate connection and belonging.

Addressing self-stigma and internalized shame

- **Promoting self-compassion**: Certified Peer Support Specialists are trained in techniques that promote self-compassion and self-acceptance, which they can pass on to others. They help individuals recognize their strengths and **celebrate their progress, fostering a sense of worth**.
- **Providing hope through lived experience**: When individuals see Certified Peer Support Specialists who have gone through similar challenges and found stability, they gain hope. This connection helps them **reframe their experiences as strengths**, inspiring them to view their journey as a story of resilience.

Healthcare access and advocacy

- **Connecting to mental health support**: Certified Peer Support Specialists are often familiar with local healthcare resources, and they can guide individuals to accessible mental health services, helping them navigate stigmatizing systems.
- **Reducing stigma in healthcare settings**: By accompanying individuals to appointments or helping them advocate for themselves, Certified Peer Support Specialists support equitable treatment in healthcare. They can help individuals feel valued and respected within these environments.

Certified Peer Support Specialists promote self-acceptance and encourage resilience for individuals navigating life after a mental health crisis or hospitalization.

Throughout re-entry and transition back into a community, Certified Peer Support Specialists offer both empathy and practical support for peers, meeting them where they are with the understanding that only lived experience can bring. The Certified Peer Support Specialist role is essential to break down barriers, reduce stigma, and support long-term recovery and reintegration into society.

Skill check

Applying Peer Support skills

Read the stories of Nate, Mike, and Emily. Then, form three groups and have each group focus on one of the stories. For 15 to 20 minutes, discuss and answer the questions below, and be ready to present your ideas to the rest of the class. Remember to keep the six values of peer support in mind.

1. What open-ended questions can you ask for each of the six competencies?
2. How will you ensure your approach is trauma-informed?
3. What part of your own story could you share to build connection? (This question should be answered individually.)

Nate's story

Nate (he/him), an Air Force veteran discharged in 2007, found the transition to civilian life challenging and felt that the support services offered by the Air Force fell short. Hesitant about entering the VA system, he connected with other veterans for guidance, relying on their recommendations for resources in education, mental health, and housing, especially during a period of homelessness.

His anxiety increased when his long-time primary care physician left, but his new provider encouraged him to join their Peer Support Program. Initially resistant to seeking help, Nate realized he needed support to cope with his experiences. He found a supportive peer group at the VA that truly cared about his well-being, a bond he attributes to their shared service background. Now, with two master's degrees, Nate aims to assist fellow veterans facing similar challenges during their transitions and recoveries.

Mike's story

Mike (he/him), an Army veteran with 27 years of service behind him, is often seen as a tough individual, having completed Ranger school, multiple special forces training programs, and various deployments, along with a 5K in just 16 minutes. However, after nearly three decades in the military, he struggled to adjust to civilian life. He described the transition as disorienting, noting the absence of military courtesies that he had grown accustomed to, which contributed to anxiety that impacted his personal relationships.

Despite feeling embarrassed about needing help, Mike reached out for mental health support through a peer support program, and he quickly recognized its value. He credits the encouragement and mentorship from his peers for helping him persist in college, encouraging him to tackle one assignment and one class at a time. He likens the isolation he faced to a poison, stating that Peer Specialists play a crucial role in guiding veterans out of darkness and motivating them to succeed by fostering understanding and connection.

Emily's story

Emily (she/her), a junior in college and an Army Reserves member, received a 10-day notice for deployment to Iraq. After nearly two years of service, she returned to the U.S. but struggled to process her experiences. She sought support from the VA. Upon moving to another state in 2014, Emily found a transformative peer support group led by the Wounded Warrior Project, which provided a safe space for veterans to share their struggles and support one another. Emily found the meetings beneficial for her recovery, as they allowed her to express her feelings in a judgment-free environment.

The peer support group not only offered her a platform to share her experiences but also fostered a sense of community and understanding. The facilitator of the support group emphasized the importance of creating a comfortable atmosphere for attendees, noting that some veterans may initially feel closed off. The gradual process of sharing their stories helped her feel less isolated and more connected, making the peer support group a critical first step in her healing journey.

- Will your offer of support be different, why, or why not?
- How might military culture influence a person's sense of self and autonomy, especially if they are enlisted for years?

Module 8 summary

Re-entry and resilient recovery

This module covered how Certified Peer Support Specialists can support people who are leaving places like jails, prisons, or psychiatric hospitals and inpatient treatment centers. We considered ways Certified Peer Support Specialists can support people making big life changes, like starting a new job after being on disability, and retiring or moving from military life to civilian life. Each of these reentry experiences can be challenging, and many people feel uncertain, nervous, or even afraid about what's next.

Certified Peer Support Specialists play an important role in making these changes easier, helping people feel supported and hopeful as they build a new path forward. Certified Peer Support Specialists will look for all ways to **celebrate milestone transitions**, walk side by side with people to **navigate these changes**, offer guidance on finding resources, connecting with services, and setting personal goals. For example, a Certified Peer Support Specialist might support someone coming out of jail to find housing or employment programs, or they might assist a veteran in connecting to community support and healthcare services.

Certified Peer Support Specialists also learn to **provide emotional support**, listening to their peers' concerns so they can build confidence. By learning these skills, Certified Peer Support Specialists can make a big difference for people successfully reentering their communities and create positive, lasting changes in their lives.

Key terms and resources

Resources are available digitally at **hca.wa.gov/assets/program/82-0657-certified-peer-support-specialist-curriculum-resource-list.pdf**.

Accommodations: Adjustments or modifications that make it easier for individuals to work, study, or perform tasks, especially those with disabilities.

Benefits counseling: Guidance provided to individuals receiving benefits (like SSI/SSDI) to help them understand how employment, education, or other life changes might affect their benefits.

Camaraderie: A sense of friendship and trust, often developed in team or group settings, such as the military. It is common for individuals transitioning from these environments to seek similar connections in civilian life.

Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS): A person with lived experience of mental health challenges, substance use, or significant life transitions who is certified, trained, and credentialed to support others in similar situations.

Civilian life: A term used by military personnel and veterans to describe non-military life. Transitioning to civilian life often involves adjusting to different routines and social structures.

Community resources: Programs, services, and organizations within a community that provide support, such as housing, employment, healthcare, and education assistance.

Cultural transition: The process of adjusting to a new culture or way of life. For veterans, this often means shifting from a structured, military culture to a more flexible civilian environment.

Disability to work transition: The shift from relying on disability benefits to engaging in employment or education. This transition often involves benefits counseling and support for finding suitable accommodations.

Emotional support: The process of providing comfort, encouragement, and validation to others, often during times of change or stress.

Jail/prison re-entry: The process of leaving incarceration and re-entering the community. This transition may require support in finding housing, employment, and social services.

Life skills: Practical skills necessary for managing daily life, such as budgeting, job searching, and managing time. These skills can be especially useful during major life transitions.

Military to civilian transition: The process of moving from military service to a civilian lifestyle. This often includes adjusting to new routines, accessing veteran resources, and finding community support.

Older-age transition: The process of adjusting to life changes associated with aging, such as retirement, changes in physical abilities, and shifts in social roles. Support can include connecting to senior services and social groups.

Peer Support: Assistance provided by someone with similar life experiences, offering understanding and guidance to those going through similar challenges.

Psychiatric hospital re-entry: The transition process for individuals leaving a psychiatric hospital and returning to their community. This often involves planning for mental health services, housing, and support services.

Re-entry: The process of returning to a community or new life role after a significant time away or after a major life event, such as incarceration, hospitalization, or retirement.

Resources: Services, tools, and supports available to help individuals achieve their goals or address their needs, including housing, employment, mental health, and healthcare resources.

Ticket to work: A free program provided by the Social Security Administration to help individuals receiving SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance) explore work or education options with reduced risk to their benefits.

Transition planning: The process of preparing for a major life change by setting goals, identifying resources, and developing strategies to ensure a smoother shift into a new role or community setting.

Veteran support services: Programs and resources specifically designed for veterans to assist with their transition into civilian life, including healthcare, housing, job training, and peer support.