

Substance Use Peer Support Services Implementation

August 13, 2019

History of Medicaid Certified Peers in Washington State

Washington State offers Certified Peer Counseling (CPC) trainings. CPC providers either have lived experience or are the parents of children with experience in behavioral health recovery.

Washington State started offering CPC trainings in 2005. And prides itself as one of the first 11 states to deliver peer service, using Medicaid funding

Initially, peer support services were authorized for mental health treatment system of care only. The expansion of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) peer support services will allow access to peer services for people in recovery from substance use disorders as a Medicaid benefit. Licensed community behavioral health agencies who provide substance use treatment can now offer peer support services under the Medicaid State plan as of July 1, 2019.

Peer services explained

Certified Peer Counseling (CPC) is an approved Medicaid service in Washington State. CPC pairs individuals in recovery with trained counselors who share their life experiences. Peer counselors work with their peers (adults and youth) and the parents of children receiving behavioral health services. CPCs draw upon their experiences to help their peers find hope and make progress toward recovery.

CPCs assist individuals and families in developing their own recovery goals. They provide individual or group peer support, in treatment centers and within the community. CPCs work in various settings, such as behavioral health agencies, substance use treatment programs, hospitals, and crisis teams. CPCs provide services to Medicaid-enrolled individuals under the consultation, facilitation, or supervision of a Chemical Dependency Professional

or Mental Health Professional who understands rehabilitation and recovery.

CPCs provide scheduled activities that promote recovery, self-advocacy, development of natural supports, and maintenance of community living skills. Services provided by CPCs to the individual are ordered in the persons' Individualized Service Plan. This plan delineates specific goals that are flexible, tailored to the individual, and attempt to utilize community and natural supports. Progress notes document the individuals' progress relative to the goals identified in the Individualized Service Plan.

Receive Medicaid reimbursement for SUD Peer Services

As of July 1, 2019, peer support services are now included in both the mental health and substance use sections of the Medicaid State Plan. This allows appropriately licensed behavioral health agencies to provide peer support services for both mental health and substance use disorders and request Medicaid reimbursement.

Contracting to provide SUD Peer Services

In order for a behavioral health agency to be reimbursed for SUD peer services provision of these services would need to be included in their contract with the Managed Care Organization (MCO), Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) or Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization (BHASO).



Department of health agency licensure

[Department of Health](#) (DOH) has oversight of licensed behavioral health agencies and has been in discussions with the Health Care Authority to prepare for the added benefit of SUD peer services. At this time, SUD peer support services is not an existing certification available through DOH licensing and certification and, therefore, DOH would not require this certification to be reflected on a behavioral health agency license.

All agencies must adhere to regulations for all employees to assure that these employees adhere to the staffing standards in Chapter 246-341 WAC such as background checks, annual trainings, signed confidentiality commitment statements, and tuberculosis screenings. If agencies do not follow those requirements, citations may be issued.

Find more information on DOH behavioral health agency licensing and certification on the [DOH website](#), or contact: (360) 236-4700

American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) fee-for-service

AI/AN fee-for-service providers can find information on SUD peer services billing on the [HCA website](#).

For additional information on service encounter reporting please see the [SERI Interim Guidance](#).

DBHR Certified Peer Counselor program

Under the Medicaid State Plan, Medicaid-reimbursable peer support services may only be provided by Certified Peer Counselors working for contracted behavioral health agencies. The Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) certifies peer counselors who have met the state requirements, taken the approved class, and passed the state test. To qualify as a peer counselor a person must have lived experience as a consumer of behavioral health services (mental health or substance use treatment) or be the parent or legal guardian of a child who has received behavioral health services.

The process to become a Certified Peer Counselor:

1. Complete an [online prerequisite course](#) and receive a course completion certificate.
2. Submit [an application](#) for approval, along with the certificate of completion of the online course to DBHR Peer Support Program.
3. Complete the required in-person training.
4. Pass an oral and written exam.
5. Become credentialed as an Agency-Affiliated Counselor (or other counselor credential) through DOH.

For more detailed information on the DBHR peer certification and training program, please visit our [HCA/DBHR peer support program website](#).

CPC curriculum

The [CPC curriculum](#) has been revised to effectively train peers throughout the behavioral health system, including mental health and substance use peers. The standard and the youth and family CPC trainings are 36-40 hours of in person training. The trainings cover topics such as recovery principles, telling your story, trauma informed peer support, ethics and boundaries, cultural competence, goal setting, and documentation.

CPC bridge training for recovery coaches who would like to be Certified Peer Counselors

Through the Access to Recovery Grant, many people in the community have successfully completed the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery training (CCAR). The CCAR training is similar to the CPC training. In order to utilize recovery coaches in the behavioral health workforce, there is a modified "bridge training" available for recovery coaches who also have lived experience or are parents of a child who has received behavioral health services. A recovery coach who takes the bridge training will qualify to test for the CPC certification.



DBHR certification

Peers who have completed the online and in person training requirements qualify to take the written and oral CPC state exams. Qualified applicants then receive a letter of certification from the DBHR peer support program. Once employed, the CPC will provide the letter of certification to their employer and apply to DOH for an Agency Affiliated Counselor credential.

Operationalizing Peer Support (OPS)

Technical assistance training and toolkits are available to behavioral health agencies who are interested in adding SUD Peer Services. Operationalizing Peer Support is funded through Substance Abuse Block Grant and is offered at no cost to agencies. Technical assistance is tailored to the needs of each organization and may include topics such as; peer services implementation, hiring practices, supervision or documentation. For more information on OPS [click here](#).