

# WHAT IS A Certified Peer Support Specialist?



A Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) is a family member and/or individual who has self-identified as having received or is presently receiving behavioral health services. Additionally, a CPSS has successfully completed formal training recognized by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) and is employed by a DMH Certified Provider.

These individuals use their lived experience in combination with skills training to support peers and/or family members with similar experiences. CPSSs support their peers both individually and in groups. Under general supervision, a CPSS performs a wide range of tasks to assist individuals to regain control of their lives and their own recovery and resiliency journey. CPSSs provide varying supports, some of which might be offered by others in the behavioral health system, but CPSSs contribute something unique. They are living proof that recovery is possible. CPSSs share lived experiences and are willing to share their stories to benefit others.



## Certified Peer Support Discovery Guide

The job of peer support specialist is to help instill the hope of recovery, in part by being able to demonstrate or model recovery skills they have learned. In Mississippi, a person wanting to become a peer support specialist must complete the CPSS training and pass a written exam, but the “expertise” a peer has comes not from a book or training program, but from having “walked the walk.”

A peer specialist must be aware of, able to publicly describe and role model to others the things that they learned that helped them to recovery.

To help decide if you are ready to participate in the peer specialist training, please check the boxes that are a “YES” answer. This means you are willing and prepared to give a detailed response.

- Are you willing to disclose to individuals receiving services, staff and the general public that you have been diagnosed with a mental illness and/or addition disorder?
- Can you describe in detail what has helped you to move from where you were to where you are now? What did you do? What did others do?
- Can you describe what you have had to overcome to get where you are today?
- Can you describe what you have learned about yourself and what we call recovery? Can you describe some of the strengths you have developed?
- Can you describe some of the things that you do daily to keep yourself on the path of recovery?
- Can you describe what your diagnosis means, how it impacted your life and what things you did to change that?
- Can you describe the purpose of your medications, any side effects you experienced and plans you developed to deal with them? (If you do not take medication leave blank)
- Do you have any type of written wellness plan? Can you describe what it was like to put one together and how it has helped you?
- Can you describe some of the beliefs and values you have or have developed that helps to strengthen your recovery and why do you believe they do?
- Do you believe that you could talk to a person to help them understand that recovery is possible?
- Can you describe some of the things you have found helpful in combating negative self-talk?
- Can you describe the role that a sense of hope and resiliency played in your life, your recovery?
- Can you describe some of the community supports you have and how they help you in your recovery?
- Can you describe how you deal with crisis? With recurrence of your symptoms? With relapse?
- Have you ever led a support group? Can you describe what you liked about it?
- Have you actively participated in a community based support organizations like, NAMI-MS, Mental Health Association, Alcoholics Anonymous 12 Step Program? Can you discuss how they supported/helped your recovery efforts?
- Have you attended and/or spoke at any conferences on mental health and/or addictions in the last three years?
- This training is highly interactive and requires activities that involve small groups, role-playing, and reading to the group. Are you comfortable with this kind of participation?
- You may hear recovery stories of others in the training. Sometimes these stories may be uncomfortable for you, particularly if they touch upon one of your “triggers.” Are you okay with this?

**If you answered YES to seven (7) or more questions, you may be ready to participate in the peer specialist training at this time.**

For more information, please contact the Mississippi Department of Mental Health at 601.359.1288 or 1.877.210.8513. If you did not answer YES to seven or more questions, you may not be ready to participate in the training at this time. We suggest you learn more about peer supports on the internet and check out the recovery programs available at your local community mental health center, NAMI, Mental Health Association, Arc of Mississippi, Mississippi Families as Allies, and other groups.