

# DMH PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Applicant shall comply with the Peer Support Specialist Professional Principles of Ethical in addition to the ethical conduct as described in the Department of Mental Health Operational Standards for Mental Health, Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Disorders Community Service Providers Chapter 14, Rule 14.3 – Ethical Conduct.

- 1) Are guided by the principle of self-determination for all. Peer Support Specialist Professionals have a primary responsibility to help support peers achieve their own needs, wants and goals.
- 2) Advocate for the full integration of individuals into the communities of their choice and promote the inherent value of these individuals to those communities. Certified Peer Support Specialist Professionals will be directed by the knowledge that all individuals have the right to live in the least restrictive and least intrusive environment.
- 3) Advocate for those they serve so that individuals may make their own decisions in all matters when dealing with other professionals.
- 4) OPENLY share their stories of hope and recovery and are able to identify and describe the supports that promote recovery and resilience.
- 5) Conduct themselves in a manner that fosters their own wellness.
- 6) Keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to recovery, and openly share this knowledge with other Peer Support Specialist Professionals. Peer Support Specialist Professional will refrain from sharing advice or opinions outside their scope of practice with individuals receiving services.
- 7) Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct.
- 8) Never intimidate, threaten, harass, use undue influence, physical force or verbal abuse, or make unwarranted promises of benefits to the individuals they support. Peer Support Specialist Professionals will not engage in psychological abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- 9) Never engage in exploitive and/or sexual/intimate activities with the individuals they serve. Peer Support Specialist Professionals will not enter into a relationship or commitment that conflict with the support needs of the individuals they serve.
- 10) Will not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or state.
- 11) Respect the privacy and confidentiality of those they serve. Peer Support Specialist Professionals have a duty to inform service recipients when first discussing confidentiality that contemplated or actual harm to self or others cannot be kept confidential. Peer Support Specialist Professionals have a duty to accurately inform service recipients regarding the degree to which information will be shared with other team members, based on their agency policy and job description. Peer Support Specialist Professionals have a duty to inform appropriate staff members immediately about any person's possible harm to self or others or abuse from caregivers.
- 12) Provide service and support within the hours, days and locations that are authorized by the agency with which they work.

- 13) Do not loan money; receive money or payment for services to, or from, individuals receiving services; or exchange gifts of significant value.
- 14) Will not abuse substances under any circumstances.
- 15) Strive to create a professional, safe and healthy work environment through words and action.
- 16) Utilize supervision and abide by the standards for supervision established by their employer.

There are seven general principals of ethical and professional conduct intended to provide guidelines for Certified Peer Support Specialists who, in good faith, seek to make reliable ethical judgements. They are:

### **Principle I: Professional Responsibilities**

1. Individuals holding a current credential from the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) must be employed by a program which receives funding from or is certified or operated/administered by the DMH.
2. Individuals who hold a DMH professional credential must notify the Division of Professional Licensure and Certification upon any change affecting credential status, especially a change in employment or change in name.
3. Individuals holding a DMH professional credential must represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, supervised experience or other relevant professional experience.
4. Individuals holding a DMH professional credential must provide services only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, supervised experience or other relevant professional experience. Services provided must be based on the most current information and knowledge available within the scope of services of DMH.
5. DMH-credentialed individuals do not diagnose, treat or otherwise provide services which are outside the recognized boundaries of their competencies.
6. Individuals who hold another professional credential shall abide by all principles contained herein.
7. The principles do not alleviate the individual's responsibility to other ethical, programmatic or professional guidelines. Rather, the principles must be adhered to in addition to other applicable ethical, programmatic and professional criteria.
8. Individuals holding a DMH professional credential strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions.
9. DMH-credentialed individuals must, at a minimum, complete the required continuing education component respective to their DMH professional credential. DMH-credentialed individuals monitor continually their effectiveness as professionals and take measures to improve when necessary.
10. DMH-credentialed individuals monitor themselves for signs of impairment from their own physical, mental/behavioral, substance use or emotional problems and refrain from offering or providing services when impaired.

11. DMH-credentialed individuals identify their professional credentials in an accurate manner which is not false, misleading, deceptive or otherwise fraudulent. DMH credentialed-individuals only attest to certifications/licensures which are valid and in good standing.

12. DMH-credentialed individuals maintain accurate and adequate service provision records and other related records in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. DMH-credentialed individuals are honest, accurate and objective in reporting their professional activities and assessments to appropriate third parties, including but not limited to, courts, health insurance companies and other third-party payment sources.

13. When providing services, DMH-credentialed individuals strive to use techniques, processes and modalities which are evidenced-based and/or which are otherwise scientifically-grounded.

14. DMH-credentialed individuals who verify an applicant's submitted work experience for DMH professional credentialing must meet the definition of "Qualified Supervisor" for the respective DMH professional credentialing program and must have engaged in "active supervision" (as defined in the 'Glossary' section of this document) of the submitted work experience.

15. DMH-credentialed individuals who verify an applicant's submitted work experience for DMH professional credentialing should only endorse/recommend the applicant for certification/licensure when they believe that the applicant is qualified for the endorsement/recommendation.

16. When applicable, DMH-credentialed individuals plan, design, conduct and/or report research in a manner consistent with applicable ethical principles, federal and state laws, institutional/programmatic rules and regulations and scientific standards governing research.

17. Individuals holding a DMH professional credential must comply with all applicable sections of the *DMH Operational Standards for Mental Health, Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Disorders Community Service Providers*, as appropriate (including, but not limited to, the *Operational Standards'* sections pertaining to confidentiality, ethical conduct and the rights of individuals receiving services).

## **Principle II: Confidentiality**

1. Individuals holding a credential from DMH have an obligation to respect the confidentiality rights of the individuals with whom they work and must take reasonable precautions to preserve confidentiality.

2. The individual receiving services (or person(s) legally authorized to consent on his/her behalf) and other interested parties should be informed at the outset of service provision of the nature of confidentiality and the possible limits to confidentiality.

3. Members of a treatment team or those collaborating on the care of an individual shall maintain confidentiality within the parameters of the treatment setting.

4. The confidentiality rights of individuals must be maintained at all times across situations and locations, such as in waiting areas to which the public has access, while speaking on the telephone or in conversing with colleagues.

5. Confidential information may only be disclosed with appropriate valid consent from the individual receiving services or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of the individual.

6. All information collected for the purpose of service delivery must be kept confidential and released only when authorized by disclosure, consent or state (or federal) law.

7. DMH-credentialed individuals take precautions to ensure the confidentiality of all information transmitted through the use of any medium.
8. Individuals involved in family, couples, marital or group counseling must be informed of their individual right to confidentiality.
9. DMH-credentialed individuals must preserve the confidentiality of information shared by others, as well as agency policy concerning the disclosure of confidential information and must explain such policy to the individual receiving services.
10. When consulting with colleagues, DMH-credentialed individuals do not share confidential information which could lead to the identification of an individual who is receiving services with whom they have a confidential relationship unless they have obtained the prior consent of the person. Information may only be shared to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of consultation.
11. When DMH-credentialed individuals are required by law, institutional/programmatic policy, or extraordinary circumstances to serve in more than one role in judicial or administrative proceedings or in the service provision environment, they clarify role expectations and the parameters of confidentiality with the individuals they serve and with their professional colleagues.
12. Permission for the use of electronic recording of interviews must be secured, prior to the interview, from the individual receiving services or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of the individual receiving services.
13. Confidentiality may be waived if disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to oneself or other identifiable person or when laws or regulations require disclosure without an individual's consent.
14. The confidentiality privilege for the individual receiving services is waived if the individual brings charges against a DMH-credentialed individual.
15. Confidentiality may be waived in compliance with appropriate statutes.
16. DMH-credentialed individuals must respect the confidentiality of individuals' case records and related documentation. Compilation, storage and dissemination of individual case records, including related documentation, must be in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and the *DMH Operational Standards for Mental Health, Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Disorders Community Service Providers*, as applicable. This provision includes both paper case records and electronic health records or electronic filing.
17. In all instances, individuals who hold a credential from DMH should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose.

### **Principle III: Respect for Individual's Rights and Dignity**

1. Individuals who hold a credential from DMH have a primary responsibility to the individual to whom they provide services. The respect of the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all people is of the utmost importance.
2. DMH-credentialed individuals must be aware of and accept the cultural, individual and role differences which occur in the service delivery environment.

3. DMH-credentialed individuals do not discriminate against any individual because of race, color, creed, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability or political affiliation.
4. DMH-credentialed individuals actively work to eliminate the effect of bias on service provision, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone discriminatory practices.
5. DMH-credentialed individuals must be respectful of and responsive to individuals with cultural needs.
6. DMH-credentialed individuals must practice appropriate, relevant and sensitive interventions which enable effective work in cross-cultural situations.
7. DMH-credentialed individuals must maintain a fundamental respect for the beliefs, customs, institutions and ethnic heritages of all individuals served.

#### **Principle IV: The Service Provision Relationship**

1. DMH-credentialed individuals obtain appropriate, valid informed consent to service provision and related procedures and use language which is clear and understandable to the individual. When persons are legally incapable of giving informed consent, DMH-credentialed individuals obtain informed permission from a legally-authorized person, if such substitute is legally permissible.
2. The specific content of the informed consent may vary depending upon the individual and the plan of care; however, informed consent generally requires that the individual receiving services: a) has the capacity to consent; b) has been adequately informed of significant information concerning service provision processes/procedures, including the purpose of the services; c) has been adequately informed of potential risks and benefits of service provision; d) has been informed of the requirements of a third-party payer and relevant costs; e) has been informed of reasonable alternatives; f) has been informed of the individual's right to refuse or withdraw consent and the time frame covered by the consent; g) has been informed of the limits of confidentiality; h) has freely and without undue influence expressed consent; i) has provided consent which is appropriately documented; and, j) has been provided with an opportunity to ask questions.
3. DMH-credentialed individuals are aware of their influential positions with respect to the individuals and family members they serve and avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. DMH-credentialed individuals should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit an individual to further their own interests.
4. DMH-credentialed individuals should avoid conflicts of interest which interfere with the exercise of professional and impartial judgement. DMH-credentialed individuals should inform individuals receiving services when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and should take reasonable steps and precautions to resolve the issue in a manner which, first and foremost, protects the individual receiving services and the individual's interests.
5. DMH-credentialed individuals should make every effort to avoid dual or multiple relationships with individuals receiving services and/or their immediate family members which could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation or potential harm to the individual receiving services and/or his/her immediate family members. Dual or multiple relationships occur when DMH-credentialed individuals relate to the individuals they serve in more than one relationship, whether professional, social or business. Such relationships include (but are not limited to) business or close personal relationships with an individual receiving services and/or the individual's immediate family members. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively.
6. DMH-credentialed individuals who anticipate a potential conflict of interest with an individual who is receiving services should clarify their role with the individual; take appropriate action to minimize any

conflict of interest/potential for professional judgement impairment and/or risk of exploitation; and, should document appropriate precautions taken.

7. DMH-credentialed individuals avoid entering into nonprofessional relationships with current/former individuals receiving services, their significant others, and/or their immediate family members when the interaction is potentially harmful to the individual receiving services. This interaction applies both to in-person and electronic interactions or relationships.

## **Principle V: Technology-Assisted Service Provision and Social Media**

1. DMH-credentialed individuals recognize that service delivery takes place through an increasing number of technological formats. DMH-credentialed individuals strive to understand the growing and changing nature of technology and the provision of services via electronic means. DMH-credentialed individuals seek to understand the evolving benefits and concerns related to the use of electronic/digital service delivery techniques and the use of technology in service provision. In accordance with applicable laws, rules/regulations and policies, DMH-credentialed individuals make every effort to ensure confidentiality and to meet ethical, legal, and institutional/programmatic requirements for the use of technological resources. DMH-credentialed individuals who use technology-driven resources in the course of service provision develop the necessary skills and technical proficiency for the use of such resources.

2. DMH-credentialed individuals who maintain a **personal** social media presence should strive to maintain professional boundaries with regards to their personal social media use. Thus, DMH-credentialed individuals should take care to avoid any **purposeful** overlap between personal social media activities and professional activities.

3. DMH-credentialed individuals take precautions to avoid disclosing confidential information through public social media.

## **Principle VI: Reporting Abuse and Ethical Misconduct**

1. DMH-credentialed individuals must meet reporting requirements as outlined by the Vulnerable Persons Act and the Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting statutes.

2. Individuals holding a DMH credential who witness or have knowledge of unethical or discriminatory practices of other individuals who hold a DMH credential are obligated to report such practices to the Division of Professional Licensure and Certification.

3. DMH-credentialed individuals do not harass or seek retaliation against a colleague or employee who has acted in a responsible and ethical manner to expose inappropriate, unethical or discriminatory practices.

4. DMH-credentialed individuals, as needed and as requested, willingly cooperate with the PLACE Review Board's complaints evaluation and investigation process, along with any resultant disciplinary hearings.

## **Principle VII: Sexual Harassment/Misconduct/Drug-Free Workplace**

1. Sexual harassment/misconduct is considered to be any unwelcome solicitation, physical advance or verbal or nonverbal conduct which is sexual in nature.

2. Sexual harassment/misconduct can consist of a single onerous act or multiple persistent or pervasive acts.

3. Individuals who hold a credential from DMH will not knowingly engage in behavior which is sexually harassing or demeaning to persons with whom they interact within the service delivery environment.
4. Any behavior that could be construed as sexual harassment during the DMH-credentialed individual's function of providing services for a program which is certified, funded, and/or operated/administered by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health shall be subject to disciplinary action.
5. The Department of Mental Health adopted written policy in Section 71-7-1 through 71-7-31 of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated* which outlines state policy regarding a Drug-Free Workplace. Programs funded/certified/administered and individuals who hold a DMH credential are expected to abide by this provision.
6. Individuals shall refrain from the use of alcohol/illegal substances in the work environment (including any and all such locations/venues where service provision takes place).
7. DMH-credentialed individuals should not engage in any behavior in the service delivery environment which is considered to be harassing, demeaning, bullying, or otherwise disrespectful or derogatory in nature; this tenet extends to all individuals with whom the DMH-credentialed individual interacts within the service delivery environment, both individuals receiving services/family members as well as colleagues/co-workers.





**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DMH CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT  
SPECIALIST PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES OF  
ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

By signing below, you understand that you are required to follow the professional standards of conduct detailed in the Mississippi Certified Peer Support Specialist Professional Principles of Ethical and Professional Conduct. Your signature is required in this section.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Mississippi Certified Peer Support Specialist Professional most current Principles of Ethical and Professional Conduct and will be responsible for obtaining all future amendments and modifications thereto.

I further acknowledge that I have read and understood all of my obligations, duties and responsibilities under each principle and provision of the Mississippi Certified Peer Support Specialist Professional Principles of Ethical and Professional Conduct and will read and understand all of my obligations, duties and responsibilities under all future amendments and modifications to the Peer Support Specialist Professional Principles of Ethical and Professional Conduct.

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Print Full Name Date

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Signature Date