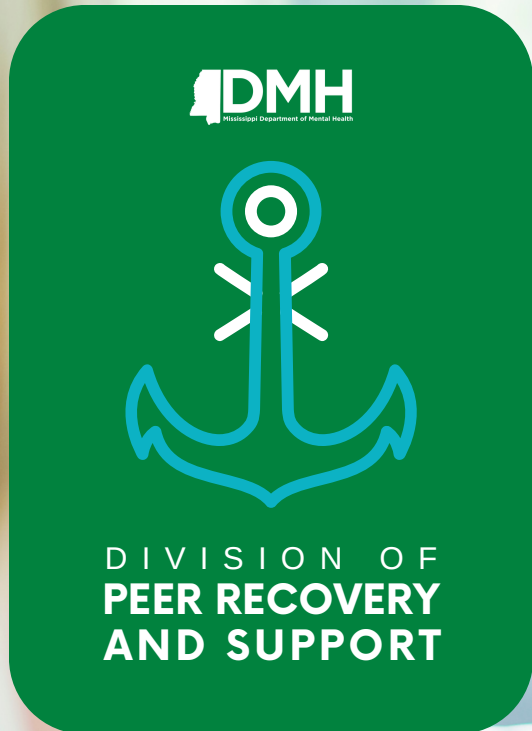




Certified Peer Support Specialist

PROVIDER TOOL KIT

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Introduction

Peer support has long been a valuable part of mental health services, originating in clubhouses, drop-in centers, and consumer-run organizations.

Since the 1990s, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of including "consumers as providers" in mental health settings.

A Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) is a trained individual who has lived experience with behavioral health challenges. CPSSs must complete formal training recognized by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) and be employed by a DMH Certified Provider. They use their personal recovery experiences combined with specialized skills to support peers and family members in their recovery journey.

CPSSs offer both individual and group support under general supervision. They help individuals regain control of their lives, providing unique, evidence-based care through shared lived experiences. As models of personal recovery and coping, CPSSs demonstrate that recovery is possible and provide inspiration to others.

A CPSS is trained to help others in many ways. The exact tasks and responsibilities of a CPSS depend on the needs of the employer and the CPSS's personal experiences. It's important to remember that peer support means working directly with individuals, either one-on-one or in groups. If a CPSS is given a task that doesn't involve working with peers, it's not considered peer support.

How CPSS Support Recovery:



- Using personal recovery experiences to support and guide others.
- Serving as role models, mentors, and encouragers.
- Educating families and communities about recovery and mental health.
- Connecting individuals to community resources like housing, education, and health services.
- Leading recovery education and facilitating peer support groups.
- Helping individuals create Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) for goal-setting, crisis planning, and relapse prevention.
- Reaching out to those with frequent hospitalizations or difficulty engaging with the behavioral health system.
- Assisting with person-centered service plans, intake, and discharge processes.

Helping
people
on their
recovery
journey.

“Peer support workers are people who have been successful in the recovery process who help others experiencing similar situations. Through shared understanding, respect, and mutual empowerment, peer support workers help people become and stay engaged in the recovery process and reduce the likelihood of relapse. Peer support services can effectively extend the reach of treatment beyond the clinical setting into the everyday environment of those seeking a successful, sustained recovery process.” - SAMHSA

CPSS ROLE

A Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) plays a unique and vital role in supporting individuals on their recovery journey. They offer guidance, encouragement, and practical support based on their own lived experience. While CPSSs are not professional clinicians, their contributions are essential in fostering hope, independence, and empowerment for those in recovery. Below is an overview of what a CPSS is and does, as well as what they are not and do not do.



A CPSS IS/DOES

- A person in recovery who shares lived experience
- A role model who motivates through hope and inspiration
- Sees individuals holistically, considering their roles, family, and community
- Supports diverse pathways to recovery
- Advocates for individuals both within and outside the program
- Fosters independence and teaches how to access resources
- Uses language rooted in common experiences
- Encourages, supports, and praises
- Helps set personal goals and provides one-on-one recovery support

A CPSS IS NOT/DOES NOT

- A professional clinician who gives clinical advice
- An expert or authority figure
- Focused on diagnoses or viewing individuals as cases
- Motivating through fear or negative consequences
- Recommending a single recovery pathway
- Representing the program's perspectives
- Providing basic needs like housing or money
- Using clinical or formal language
- Offering case management services
- Diagnosing, assessing, or treating
- Mandating tasks or controlling recovery choices

Training



The CPSS training certifies peers to support individuals with mental health, substance abuse, and family challenges, promoting hope, empowerment, and self-determination in their communities.

General requirements for participation and completion of CPSS Training:



Residency

Applicants must be Mississippi residents.



Self-Disclosure

Applicants must identify as current or former recipients of mental health or substance abuse services.



Employment

Applicants must be employed in Mississippi's mental health system or plan to be after completing training.



Education

Applicants must have at least a high school diploma, GED, or be 16+ years old and enrolled in a GED program or school.



Ethics

Applicants must agree to follow the DMH Peer Support Specialist Code of Ethics.



Experience

Applicants must have 250 hours of experience (paid or volunteer) in the past 3 years supporting individuals with serious mental illness or substance abuse. College credits may substitute.



Exam/Training

Applicants must successfully complete the DMH-approved CPSS training and pass the exam with a score of 75%.



References

Two reference forms are required to verify the applicant's ability to perform as a CPSS.

Challenges

While Peer Support Services have proven to be highly valuable in the behavioral health community, CPSSs may face some challenges in their roles. If any of the following hurdles arise, it is recommended that CPSSs discuss them with their supervisors:

- **Difficulty Integrating with the Clinical Team:** CPSSs may lack experience working within a team, and clinical staff, like case managers and therapists, may be hesitant to fully embrace CPSSs as team partners.
- **Being the Only CPSS in the Agency:** Ideally, agencies should employ multiple CPSSs. However, if only one CPSS is present, it is important to regularly connect with other CPSSs for support, reflection, and shared learning.
- **Difficulty Gaining Staff Trust:** CPSSs may initially face resistance from staff, even with proper preparation. It's important to work closely with supportive team members and patiently wait for others to join in once they see the value of peer support.
- **Overextended Participation on Committees:** CPSSs are often asked to represent peers on various committees. While this is valuable, it can become a challenge if it interferes with their ability to interact with individuals or provide direct support services.





**We thank you for your
continued support in our
efforts to provide
Certified Peer Support
Specialists in the
community.**



Scan QR Code to learn more

Contact

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