



About Kentucky Peer Support Specialist Training

Kentucky Peer Specialist Training is an initiative of the Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities in partnership with the Empowerment Team's peer support services in Northern Kentucky – Recovery Network and the P.I.E.R.

This is a five-day training program focusing on providing peer support for people mental disorders with an optional five day follow-up substance use disorder peer support training. The KY Peer Support Specialist Trainings are designed to prepare adults with psychiatric disabilities or adults with co-occurring substance use disorders to work as Peer Specialists in the Kentucky public mental health and state psychiatric hospital system. A Peer Specialist is an adult with a psychiatric disability or co-occurring mental and substance use disorder that completes the training program(s) provided by the Kentucky Division of Behavioral Health and passes both a written and an oral test. Kentucky Peer Specialists provide peer support, which is defined as the social and emotional support provided by persons with a mental health condition to others sharing a similar mental health condition to bring about a desired social or personal change.

The job of a Peer Specialist is not to replace current clinical mental health staff, but to offer additional and/or alternative options to help people in their efforts to recover.

Eligibility Requirements: The applicant must possess, at a minimum, a high school diploma or GED equivalent and meet the criteria listed below.

- * Have a primary diagnosis of mental illness for which he/she has received treatment and a strong desire to identify himself/herself as a person with mental illness (current or former consumer of mental health services). The primary diagnosis of any applicant may not be addictive disease, although addictive disease may be a secondary diagnosis.
- * Demonstrate strong reading comprehension and written communication skills as indicated by his/her responses on the short-essay form.
- * Demonstrated experience with leadership and advocacy in the field of mental health, as well as the ability to demonstrate efforts at self-directed recovery.

Recovery and Peer Support: Recovery from mental and substance use disorders is not only possible but expected. *The President's New Freedom Commission Report (2003) envisioned "a future when everyone with a mental illness will recover, a future when mental illnesses can be prevented or cured, a future when mental illnesses are detected early, and a future when everyone with a mental and/or substance use disorder at any stage of life has access to effective treatment and supports—essentials for living, working, learning, and participating fully in the community." The report also outlines a plan to transform mental health care in America to promote a recovery-oriented service system. Peer support is an important element in this transformation process.*

Peer support is the social and emotional support provided by persons with a mental health condition to others sharing a similar mental health condition to bring about a desired social or personal change. Peer support is an emerging evidence-based practice that helps people to recover from a mental and/or substance use disorder with assistance from someone who has experienced mental and/or substance use disorder and recovery.

Peer support:

- Is recovery-oriented and consumer driven.
- Provides significant benefits to peers receiving services, providing services and the mh systems that utilize peer services.
- Improves consumers' ability to live, work, learn and participate fully in their communities.
- Is cost effective and results in fewer hospitalizations, reduced substance abuse, increased rates of employment, and improved illness management.
- Creates a culture of recovery and improves the effectiveness of service outcomes.
- Provides a mechanism for outreach to individuals who have been alienated from traditional services.

The Peer Specialist Service is a structured and scheduled therapeutic activity with an individual client or group, provided by a trained, self-identified consumer of mental health services. A Peer Specialist guides clients toward the identification and achievement of specific goals defined by the client and specified in the Treatment Plan.

The Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) supports consumer-driven recovery-oriented services. DBH provides Kentucky Peer Specialist Training opportunities and has developed a committee to review and analyze data to evaluate current program effectiveness. DBH supports establishing a Medicaid-defined peer support service to be incorporated in the Community Mental Health Center Regulation and Incorporated Manual.

