

## **Certified Peer Support Services Peers Helping Peers**



Nobody can relate to the challenges of a mental health diagnosis better than a person who has recovered from one. Recognizing the therapeutic value of shared mental health experiences, the Minnesota Department of Human Services was tasked by the state legislature to establish positions for Medicaid-covered Certified Peer Specialists.

Certified Peer Specialists are individuals who have experienced a mental illness themselves and are trained to provide mental health services. A peer support specialist validates the client experience, helps them to identify their strengths and walks side by side in their recovery journey.

The Certified Peer Specialist does not replace other mental health professionals, but rather it is a complement to an array of mental health support services.

### **Qualifications**

A qualified individual may be hired at an entry level as a Certified Peer Specialist Level I or at an advanced level as a Certified Peer Specialist Level II. The primary purpose of these tiered levels is to promote retention and career advancement in the field. Here are the job requirements for each level.

**Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Level I:** To be employed at this level, an individual must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be at least 21 years old.
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Have or have had a primary diagnosis of mental illness.
- Have received or is currently receiving mental health services.
- Be willing to share their experience of recovery.
- Have successfully completed the MN Department of Human Services'-approved Certified Peer Specialist training and certification exam.

### **Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Level II**

To be employed at this more advanced level, an individual must meet all of the qualifications of a Certified Peer Specialist Level I and:

- Be qualified at the Mental Health Practitioner level as defined by Minnesota Statute 245.462, subdivision 17.
- Have at least 6,000 hours of supervised experience in the delivery of peer services to persons with mental illness
- Have at least 4000 hours of supervised experience in the delivery of services to persons with mental illness and an additional 2000 hours of supervised experience in the delivery of peer services to persons with mental illness.

### **Certification**

Once earned, certification will remain valid for two years from the time of attaining certification. To retain certification, every two years, Peer Specialists must complete and provide documentation of 30 hours to DHS of continuing education in areas of mental health recovery, mental health rehabilitative services, and peer support.

Certified Peer Specialists often assist people in completing their own Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), therefore Certified Peer Specialists will eventually be required to complete a personal WRAP plan and participate in a WRAP facilitator training.

Learn More at the Department of Human Services website.