

FAQS About Being a Certified Peer Specialist (CSP)

Who is qualified to be a CPS?

Qualified candidates must meet all of the following:

- Self-identifies as a person with “lived experience” with mental illness and recovery. “Lived experience” refers to the direct personal experience of a mental illness, either currently or in the past. Family members do not qualify as CPSs.
- Must be at least 18 years old, and have a high school diploma or equivalent. Additionally, the provider must be at least three years older than a consumer under the age of 18.
- Certification in the State of Kansas to provide the service, which includes criminal, abuse/neglect registry and professional background checks, and successful completion of a statewide examination that measures the specific skill set.

How do you inquire if a job applicant is a consumer during the hiring process?

When interviewing for a position that requires the candidate to be a person with “lived experience,” a recent USPRA conference recommends using this language: “Are you comfortable self-identifying as a person with a serious mental illness who has received mental health services?” Self-identifying as a person with mental illness who has received services should be included in the job description and/or requirements with a clear explanation of what the term means. If you have any questions about the “lived experience” qualification, please contact beth.filson@wichita.edu.

A frequently used interview question that has proved successful in other states is, “Tell us about your recovery experience.” Persons who relate a primary experience of substance abuse are not eligible for certification as Peer Specialists. Dual diagnosis (mental illness and substance abuse) meets eligibility requirements so long as the person understands that they will work out of their primary experience with a severe and persistent mental illness.

You cannot ask, “Have you had a mental illness?” You are prohibited from asking about the presence or severity of any disability condition. In that case, if they are not hired, it could be construed that the hire was not made due to the presence of a mental illness (of one type or another).

For those who fear that an otherwise qualified person who does not have a mental illness would have a complaint against the agency for not hiring him or her – this is not the case. Everyone has a race, age, gender or sexual orientation and as such those are protected against discrimination. Not everyone has a disability. Therefore, people without disabilities are not protected – they cannot successfully claim to be

discriminated against because they did not get a job opened only to people with disability.

What training is required for certification as a Peer Specialist (CPS)?

There are two ways to become certified:

- The qualified person can complete the Certified Peer Specialist Five Day Basic Training sponsored by the Wichita State University Center for Community Support and Research. If you are hired as a CPS, you will need to complete your training and pass examination within six months of your hire date. The registration process and information are available on this site.

Or

- The qualified person can complete the University of Kansas Consumers As Providers (CAP) training program. For more information about CAP go to <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/projects/SEG/cap.html>. CAP training can take place prior to hiring or within six months of the hire. CAP graduates are encouraged to attend the CPS Five Day Basic Training but are not required to do so. CAP will be offering regional “CAP Enrichment” courses for graduates. Go to the website above for more information.

Examination for both Five Day Basic Training participants and CAP grads is required. Participants from both trainings take the same exam. The paper exam is offered throughout the year at locations around the Kansas. Please check www.trainingteams.org for information on dates and locations.

Who can participate in the CPS Five Day Basic Training?

Anyone who qualifies to be a Certified Peer Specialist can attend the 5 Day Basic Training. Applicants who are already hired by a Medicaid provider will have priority for seating.

- Must be at least 18 years old, and have a high school diploma or GED equivalent. Additionally, the provider participant must be at least three years older than a consumer under the age of 18.
- Certification in the State of Kansas to provide the service, which includes criminal, abuse/neglect registry and professional background checks, and completion of a state approved standardized basic training program. This is typically part of the Mental Health Center hiring process.
- The CPS provider must self identify as a present or former primary consumer of mental health services.
- The maximum number of participants at any training is 25 trainees.
- A Basic Training class slot is guaranteed within the first six months after being hired.

How do I apply for the CPS Five Day Basic Training?

- A paper application is required for all potential participants of the training. The paper application can be printed out from <http://www.trainingteams.org> - CPS Download Application link, or you can call Center for Community Support & Research at 1-800-445-0116 or email beth.filson@wichita.edu

When and where will CPS Basic Training be provided?

- CPS training will be provided in a retreat setting to allow for full day and evening activities including opportunities for peer support, and to build a network of other CPSs statewide.
- Applications can be sent to the Center for Community Support & Research at any time. Information about where to send the application is contained on the application form.

The Certified Peer Specialist Five Day Basic Training schedule for the year beginning July 2009 through June 2010 can be found on the applications form <http://www.trainingteams.org> - [CPS Download Application link](#)

The CPS Basic Training is conducted over five consecutive days in a retreat setting. Why?

The experience of other states who have instituted a CPS program shows that the bonding and empowerment that takes place during an intensive five day training curriculum is crucial to success of the program. Participants describe the training as a transformative experience, and administrators and policy makers describe those who have completed the intensive five day training program as uniquely qualified to provide CPS services in a recovery-based, consumer-driven environment.

Who provides CPS Five Day Basic Training?

Wichita State University Center for Community Support & Research (Formerly Self-Help Network) provides CPS Five Day Basic Training. The Basic Training is conducted by mental health consumers who are CPSs and have undergone facilitator training under the direction of Appalachian Consulting Group, Inc.

What does CPS Basic Training cost?

The cost for the week-long training, including transportation, meals and roommate accommodations is supported by SRS.

When and how does a qualified person take the CPS Certification Exam?

You will receive information about the exam, dates, and locations on the last day of your training. Your first opportunity to take the exam will be approximately one month after your training. The exam is **not** administered at the end of the training week.

What if the qualified person completed CAP prior to July 2007 - will he/she be qualified to work as a CPS?

Consumers who graduated from the CAP program prior to July 1, 2007 may be considered qualified to take the exam for certification as Peer Specialists once they complete a one-day CAP refresher course. Contact CAP at <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/projects/SEG/cap.html>.

What is the difference between CPS and peer support traditionally provided by a Consumer Run Organization (CRO)?

Peer support in a CRO occurs naturally when consumers provide encouragement and support that aids in recovery as they share their life experience. It is a social relationship.

Certified Peer Specialists provide encouragement and support and life experiences as a specifically defined professional service provided by the mental health system, is deemed medically necessary, and is directed by Medicaid for the delivery of peer support services.

Will CPS be allowed to do one-on-one work with consumers?

Yes. CPS will do both one-on-one work and group work with consumers.

There is a requirement that Certified Peer Specialists must be supervised by a qualified Peer Support Supervisor. How do we meet this requirement?

At this time there is no statewide definition for qualified Peer Support Supervisor. The most promising practice would be that Certified Peer Specialists are supervised by a peer with peer support experience and receive assistance in developing supervisory skills. Clinical supervision must be provided by a Qualified Mental Health Professional or PAHP designated Licensed Mental Health Professional with experience regarding the specialized mental health service.

Is Certified Peer Specialist the only position available to consumers in the mental health system?

No. Consumers can apply for any competitive mental health center position for which they are qualified. This is a right guaranteed by the American with Disabilities Act.

Should Certified Peer Specialists be assigned to work on case management teams or should they work on separate CPS teams?

Supervision among peers is expected while Certified Peer Specialists will participate as full members of treatment teams. Please contact beth.filson@wichita.edu for more information and assistance as you implement peer support services in your agency.

What is the role of the Certified Peer Specialist in treatment planning and the 90 day reviews?

Involvement of a Certified Peer Specialist is expected in the treatment planning process for every SPMI individual (including SED transitional youth) – based on medical necessity and with the consumer's consent. A CPS can help individual consumers articulate in their own words their personal life goals and aspirations in the development and achievement of their individualized plan.

Involvement in the 90 day review depends on agency procedures.

Can CPS services be billed at the same time as Case Management during the treatment planning process?

The term Case Management can no longer be used in a generic way as it has in the past. CPS can be provided at the same time Targeted Case Management is occurring. CPS cannot be provided at the same time CPST is being provided

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