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DIRECTOR

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
Department of Health Care Services



GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

DATE: October 14, 2022

Behavioral Health Information Notice No: 22-055

TO: California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators  
California Association of Alcohol & Drug Program Executives, Inc.  
California Association of DUI Treatment Programs  
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies  
California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals  
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies  
California Hospital Association  
California Opioid Maintenance Providers  
California State Association of Counties  
Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Associations  
County Behavioral Health Directors  
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California  
County Drug & Alcohol Administrators

SUBJECT: Peer Services Funding Sources

PURPOSE: This Behavioral Health Information Notices (BHIN) provides guidance for county Mental Health Plans (MHPs), Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS), and DMC State Plan counties regarding funding sources for peer services.

REFERENCE: [Behavioral Health Information Notice 20-056](#); [Behavioral Health Information Notice 22-005](#)

BACKGROUND:

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 803](#), chaptered in 2020, authorized DHCS to seek federal approvals to add Peer Support Specialists as a Medi-Cal provider type and Peer Support Services as a distinct service type in counties opting to participate in this program. DHCS obtained these federal approvals through the Medicaid waiver and State Plan Amendment processes.

DHCS has implemented statewide certification program standards consistent with SB 803. Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Programs can be established either by counties, or a county selected agency representing counties. Every fiscal year, counties, or an agency representing counties, can select an entity to implement a Medi-

Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program subject to DHCS approval. Currently, the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is the only entity that has been selected by counties to implement a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program.

CalMHSA is administering Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Exams as a component of their [Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program](#). The initial administration of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Exam has concluded as of 10/14/2022 for early test takers who met certification requirements and elected to participate in the initial administration phase of the exam. The Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam will be made available for all test takers starting December 2022. Due to the delay of the availability of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam, DHCS is highlighting the existing variety of funding sources available to support training and the delivery of peer services until MHPs, DMC-ODS, and DMC counties that have opted in to cover Peer Support Services are able to submit claims for Peer Support Services delivered by certified Peer Support Specialists.

**POLICY:**

Effective July 1, 2022, counties that opt-in will be able to implement Peer Support Services within DMC, DMC-ODS and/or the SMHS delivery system. Peer Support Specialists are individuals with a current Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program certification and must meet ongoing education requirements.<sup>1</sup> Due to the delay in the availability of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam, DMC, DMC-ODS, and SMHS counties may not bill through the Medi-Cal program for Peer Support Services if the peer has not yet acquired a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist certification.

A variety of funding streams other than the Medi-Cal Peer Support Services benefit are available to support training and the provision peer services for all population types within county-run peer programs, regardless of a peer's certification status. For example, peers may provide certain SMHS if the county MHP has found the peer to be qualified and all other federal and state requirements are met. Individuals identifying as

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<sup>1</sup> State Plan Amendments (SPAs) 20-0006-A, 21-0058, 21-0051, and 22-0024. As described in [BHIN 22-026](#), Peer Support Specialists providing services to the parents/legal guardians of a beneficiary 17 years of age and younger must have a "Parent, Caregiver, and Family Member" Peer Support Specialist Certification specialization and, per [federal guidance](#), "should be self-identified consumers who are in recovery from mental illness and/or substance use; or a parent of a child with a similar mental illness and/or substance use disorder, or an adult with an ongoing and/or personal experience with a family member with a similar mental illness and/or substance use disorder."

peers may meet the definition of "Other Qualified Provider"; as established in the California's Medicaid State Plan,<sup>2</sup> the definition of "Other Qualified Provider" is "an individual at least 18 years of age with a high school diploma or equivalent degree determined to be qualified to provide the service." MHPs have the authority to determine, in accordance with any applicable state and federal requirements, whether an individual such as a peer meets the Other Qualified Provider criteria and is able to provide covered SMHS as specified in [Supplement 3 to Attachment 3.1-A](#) in the State Plan.<sup>3</sup> Claiming for covered SMHS services when delivered by peers who are Other Qualified Providers is only an option for SMHS, and does not apply to covered DMC or DMC-ODS services delivered by peers.

Counties may choose to support training and services delivered by peers by leveraging eligible funding streams other than Medi-Cal within their behavioral health delivery system, as outlined in [BHIN 20-056](#), including but not limited to the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG) and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG).

MHBG funding may be used to fund peer support services, including training and peer salaries. Services must be provided through appropriate qualified community programs which may include community mental health centers, child mental health programs, psychosocial rehabilitation programs, mental health peer-support programs, and mental health primary consumer-directed programs.

[BHIN 22-005](#) outlines that effective January 1, 2022, DMC-ODS counties are no longer able to submit claims for peer support services as a component of Recovery Services and therefore must leverage other eligible funds within their SUD prevention and treatment system, including but not limited to the SABG. SABG funding has always been available to be utilized for peer support services by DMC/DMC-ODS programs and is intended to address shortfalls in county SUD budgets. If counties that are opting in to cover Peer Support Services have unexpended or available SABG funding, DHCS encourages these counties to use SABG funding to support peer support services until the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam is made available to all test

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<sup>2</sup> [California State Plan, Supp. 3, Att. 3.1-A, p. 2p](#); [Supp. 2, Att. 3.1-B, p. 17](#).

<sup>3</sup> Other Qualified Providers may deliver Targeted Case Management, Mental Health Services, Day Rehabilitation Services, Day Treatment Intensive Services, Crisis Intervention, Targeted Case Management, Adult Residential Treatment Services, Crisis Residential Treatment Services, Psychiatric Health Facility Services, Intensive Care Coordination, Intensive Home-Based Services, Therapeutic Behavioral Services, and Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) Services (provided the individual is a resource parent who has completed TFC training). Please refer to Enclosure 1 in [BHIN 20-056](#), [Supplement 3 to Attachment 3.1-A](#), and [Supplement 1 to Attachment 3.1-A](#) in the State Plan for more information.

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takers and counties are able to bill and claim for Medi-Cal Peer Support Services delivered by certified Peer Support Specialists.

Please refer to [BHIN 20-056](#) and enclosures for more information regarding these and additional available funding sources and permissible expenditures for peer services until DMC State Plan counties, DMC-ODS counties, and MHPs are able to deliver claims for covered Peer Support Services delivered by certified Peer Support Specialists.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Ivan Bhardwaj, Acting Chief  
Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Division