



Peer Support Specialists for Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Services

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Housekeeping

- All participants will be muted during the webinar.
- You may type your comments into the chat/questions box located on your GoToWebinar control panel throughout the presentation.
- If time allows, DHCS will respond to questions and comments from the chat box at the end of the presentation.
- Participants received a copy of the slides via email earlier this morning. Slides will also be posted on the [DHCS website](#).



Importance of Peers

- Peers have long acted as a part of the prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery process for individuals living with Mental Health (MH) conditions and Substance Use Disorders (SUDs).
- As individuals with either lived experience, or as the parents, caregivers and family members of individuals living with MH and/or SUD conditions, peers personally understand the experiences of the individuals they serve and can help clarify the most effective set of services for each individual's recovery needs.



Importance of Peers

- 48 states have certification programs and include peers as part of their Medicaid behavioral health network. DHCS has learned from other state's efforts while also adapting to the unique needs of California.
- Medicaid peer certification programs ensure consistent and high-quality care, underscore the importance of peer support services, and respect the work peers have been doing in the field for many years.



Importance of Peers

- Throughout the process of developing certification standards, DHCS has engaged peer workers, organizations, and associations to provide feedback and recommendations.
- DHCS would like to thank all of the peers that have shared their personal stories and vast experience with the department. The personal experiences of peers has shaped this draft guidance and will continue to impact the rollout of this important effort in California.



SB 803 Overview

By July 1, 2022, DHCS shall:

- Establish statewide requirements to use in developing certification programs
- Define the qualifications, range of responsibilities, practice guidelines, and supervision standards for peer support specialists
- Determine curriculum and core competencies required for certification, including areas of specialization
- Specify peer support specialist employment training requirements
- Establish code of ethics
- Determine continuing education requirements



SB 803 Overview

By July 1, 2022, DHCS shall (continued):

- Determine process for initial certification
- Determine process for investigation of complaints and corrective action
- Determine process for an individual employed as a peer support specialist on January 1, 2022, to obtain certification
- Determine requirements for peer support specialist certification reciprocity between counties and out of state
- Seek any federal approvals deemed necessary to implement SB 803



Statute Limitations

- Statute does not authorize an individual that holds a Medi-Cal peer support specialist certification to diagnose an illness, prescribe medication, or provide clinical services.
- Statute also does not impact peer programs under other funding sources. Counties may continue to seek reimbursement for peer support services through other funding streams.



DHCS Peer Certification Timeline

January 2021	Peer Support Listening Session #1 • <i>Materials are available on the DHCS website</i>
March 2021	Peer Support Listening Session #2 • <i>Materials are available on the DHCS website</i>
April 2021	Behavioral Health Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting • <i>Materials are available on the DHCS website</i>
July 2021	Disseminate initial BH Information Notice on Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Standards
August-December 2021	State technical assistance for Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Standards available to counties (<i>more information to come</i>)
January 2022	Seek federal approvals deemed necessary to implement SB 803



What is a BHIN?

- [Behavioral Health Information Notices](#) (BHINs) provide state policy and standards for California's behavioral health programs.
- BHINs provide standardized information that entities must utilize when implementing Medi-Cal behavioral health programs.
- In 2020, DHCS released [BHIN 20-056](#) detailing funding sources for peer services.
- This webinar runs through the **draft** content of the BHIN for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Programs.



Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Standards BHIN

Topics Covered in July 2021 Peer Support Specialist BHIN

1. Certification guidelines:
 - Standards for Initial Certification
 - Biennial Renewal
 - Lapsed Certification
 - Areas of Specialization
 - Grandparenting
 - State/County Reciprocity
 - Complaints and Corrective Actions
2. Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Plan Submission Requirements
3. [Medi-Cal Code of Ethics for Peer Support Specialists in California](#)
4. Practice Guidelines
5. Supervision Standards
6. Reporting Requirements



Topics Not Addressed in July BHIN

These policy items will be addressed in future BHIN and state policy documents:

1. Compliance and quality activities (periodic reviews)
2. Rates and rate setting
3. Peer support specialist benefit
4. Complaints



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July 2021 Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification BHIN



Standards for Initial Certification

For an initial certification of a peer support specialist, a DHCS approved Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must:

1. Ensure a candidate agrees to adhere to the Medi-Cal Code of Ethics for Peer Support Specialists;
2. Ensure a candidate has completed the training curriculum that includes 80 hours of training - including didactic learning; and,
3. Ensure the candidate has passed the initial certification exam.



Standards for Initial Certification: Code of Ethics

The Medi-Cal Code of Ethics for Peer Support Specialists will be included in the BHIN and is posted on the [DHCS Peers webpage](#).

DHCS will update the Code of Ethics as appropriate and certification programs must ensure that candidates agree to adhere to the most recent version posted.

The training curriculum must incorporate the following core competencies:			
1.	The concepts of hope, recovery, and wellness.	10.	Conflict resolution.
2.	The role of advocacy.	11.	Professional boundaries and ethics.
3.	The role of consumers and family members.	12.	Preparation for employment opportunities, including study and test-taking skills, application and résumé preparation, interviewing, and other potential requirements for employment.
4.	Psychiatric rehabilitation skills and service delivery, and addiction recovery principles, including defined practices.	13.	Safety and crisis planning.
5.	Cultural and structural competence trainings.	14.	Navigation of, and referral to, other services.
6.	Trauma-informed care.	15.	Documentation skills and standards.
7.	Group facilitation skills.	16.	Confidentiality.
8.	Self-awareness and self-care.	17.	Digital literacy.
9.	Co-occurring disorders of mental health and substance use.		



Standards for Initial Certification: Certification Exam

- Upon a candidate's completion of the training, a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must administer an examination that has been approved by DHCS.
- The Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must provide reasonable accommodations to candidates taking the examination, as needed, including verbal testing and testing in prevalent languages.



Standards for Biennial Renewal

A Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must:

- Provide a process for biennial certification renewal for certified peer support specialists:
 - 20 hours of continuing education every two years.
 - Updates on applicable laws and evidence-based best practices.
- Ensure that certified peer support specialists reaffirm in writing the most recent version of the Medi-Cal Code of Ethics for Peer Support Specialists in California every two years.



Standards for Lapsed Renewal

For peer support specialists whose certification lapsed but is still within six years of when certification renewal was due, a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must allow certification if the candidate:

- Completes 40 hours of refresher training;
- Passes the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program examination; and
- Affirms, in writing, the most recent version of the Medi-Cal Code of Ethics for Peer Support Specialists in California.



Standards for Areas of Specialization

- A Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must implement a curriculum in the area of specialization for “Parent, Caregiver, and Family Member Peers” upon implementation of the Peer Support Specialist Certification Program.
- The following three areas of specialization must also be implemented by January 1, 2023:
 - Crisis Services
 - Forensic (Justice Involved)
 - Homelessness



Standards for Areas of Specialization

- These areas of specialization must be developed in addition to the requirements for certification in the core competencies, and DHCS must approve the curriculums.
- DHCS will continue to collect information on areas of specialization that may be added at a later date. DHCS must approve any additional areas of specialization.



Standards for Grandparenting and State/County Reciprocity

For individuals who are employed as a peer as of January 1, 2022, and seek Medi-Cal certification, or those individuals certified out-of-county or out-of-state and seeking to certification under these standards, a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must grant certification if the individual has:

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Standards for Grandparenting and State/County Reciprocity

For individuals who are employed as a peer as of January 1, 2022, and seek Medi-Cal certification, or those individuals certified out-of-county or out-of-state and seeking to certification under these standards, a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must grant certification if the individual has:

Either

1 year of paid or unpaid work experience (1550 hours) as a peer specialist AND 20 hours of continuing education (CEs), including law and ethics. CEs can be in relevant professional competencies obtained via relevant in-state, out-of-state, or national educational forums.

Or

1550 hours in 3 years, with 500 hours completed within the last 12 months, working as a peer specialist AND 20 hours of CEs, including law and ethics. CEs can be in relevant professional competencies obtained via relevant in-state, out-of-state, or national educational forums.

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Standards for Grandparenting and State/County Reciprocity

AND has all the following:

- Completion of one or more peer training(s)
- 3 Letters of Recommendation as outlined:
 - One from a supervisor
 - One from a colleague/professional
 - One self-recommendation describing their current role and responsibilities as a peer support specialist
- Pass the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Exam

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Standards for Grandparenting and State/County Reciprocity

- As with the initial certification, the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must provide reasonable accommodations to the candidate as requested, including verbal testing and testing in prevalent languages.
- Peers employed as a peer as of January 1, 2022 and seeking certification through the grandparenting process must complete or begin the process by December 31, 2022. After this date, peers seeking certification under a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must complete the initial certification process. Peers with out-of-state certification seeking reciprocity have no sunset date to seek certification.



Standards for Complaints and Corrective Action

A Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must also submit a process for reviewing complaints and corrective actions, including the suspension and revocation of certification, as well as the appeals process for DHCS approval.

DHCS will approve processes that include the following:

- Specifications for the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program to investigate submitted complaints within a specified timeframe;
- A disciplinary process for substantiated allegations that requires either education hours, suspension, and/or revocation; and
- An appeal process.

Monitoring of the program will be incorporated into DHCS' current processes, including DHCS' triennial audits and the EQRO quality improvement program efforts.



Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Plan Submission Requirements

CalMHSAs, on behalf of represented counties, and other counties who seek to implement a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program, must submit a plan for DHCS approval of how the certification program will meet all federal and state requirements for the certification and oversight of peer support specialists (W&I Code 14045.14 (a)(1)).

The plan must include the following:

- Initial certification policies and procedures
- Certification exam
- Biennial certification renewal policies and procedures



Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Plan Submission Requirements

(Plan Submission continued:)

- Training curriculum for:
 - Peer Support Specialist
 - Parent, Caregiver and Family Member Peers
 - Peer Supervisors
- Certification fee schedule
- Grandparenting/reciprocity process
- Complaints/corrective actions process
- Reporting process



Practice Guidelines

Counties must use the practice guidelines developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, [*What are Peer Recovery Support Services?*](#)



Supervision Standards

DHCS acknowledges the efficacy and evidenced-based practice of certified peer support specialists as supervisors of other peers. DHCS highly encourages the employment of peers as peer supervisors.

However, due to the variability of counties and availability of the peer workforce, DHCS will allow the utilization of other behavioral health professionals as follows:

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Supervision Standards

Peer Support Specialist Supervisors must meet at least one of the below qualifications:

1. Have a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program certification; have two years of experience working in the behavioral health system; and have completed a DHCS-approved peer support supervisory training curriculum.
2. Be a non-peer behavioral health professional (including registered and certified SUD counselors) who has worked in the behavioral health system for a minimum of two years, and has completed a DHCS-approved peer support supervisory training;

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Supervision Standards

3. Have a bachelor's degree in sociology, social work, psychology, gerontology, anthropology, political science, history, criminal justice, theology, counseling, education, public health, or a related field from a program that is accredited by an agency recognized by the USDOE or the CHEA,

or

an equivalent degree from a foreign college or university approved by the USDOE; and four years of behavioral health direct service experience that may include peer support services;

and

have completed a DHCS-approved peer support supervisory training curriculum;



Supervision Standards

4. Have a high school diploma or GED, four years of behavioral health direct service experience that may include peer support services; and have completed an approved peer support supervisory training curriculum.



Reporting Requirements

Reports must reflect information on certifications occurring within a fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) and are due to DHCS by the December 31st following the end of the fiscal year. DHCS may add additional reporting requirements in subsequent years. Reports must contain the following information:

1. Number of Peer Support Specialists certified
2. Number of applicants that did not receive certification
3. Number of applicants employed in peer services prior to certification
4. Number of applicants certified in an area of specialization
5. Number of certified peers that renewed certification
6. Number of peer supervisor trainings provided
7. Number of applicants that received certification through grandparenting process (for FY 2021-2022)
8. Number of applicants that received certification through county reciprocity
9. Number of applicants that received certification through state reciprocity



Timeline & Next Steps

Next Steps

Proposed Dates	Step
June – July 2021	Feedback will be solicited through July 9, 2021 , via peers@dhcs.ca.gov regarding DHCS' final policy recommendations to be considered in the July Certification BHIN
July 2021	State guidance on the Medi-Cal peer support specialist certification program will be published via Behavioral Health Information Notice
July 2021 and beyond	Interested counties will have the opportunity to opt in to Medi-Cal peer support specialist services
2022 (Upon CMS approval)	Medi-Cal peer support specialist services under State Plan DMC, SMHS, and/or DMC-ODS would be billable



Next Steps

- Please provide feedback on policy items in the peer support services BHIN by **July 9, 2021**, to peers@dhcs.ca.gov in order to ensure consideration for the July 2021 Certification BHIN.
- All other comments and feedback related to the implementation of Medi-Cal peer support services can be submitted at anytime to peers@dhcs.ca.gov.
- DHCS will release more information in the coming months related to items not detailed in the Certification BHIN. The [peers website](#) will remain updated with new information throughout this process.