



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



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DIRECTOR

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DATE: March 9, 2022

Behavioral Health Information Notice No: 22-006

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: Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist county requirements for new and updated certification entities

PURPOSE: To provide guidance for counties planning to designate and/or change a certification entity for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists and to share requirements for training entities.

REFERENCE: [Welfare and Institutions Code \(W&I\) section 14045.13](#); [BHIN 21-041](#)

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. SB 803 also directs DHCS to develop state standards for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Programs that may be implemented by counties or county-contracted entities opting to provide these programs. This certification is required for Medi-Cal reimbursement of peer support specialist services.

Certification is not required for peer programs operating under other funding sources. Additional guidance is forthcoming on the implementation of the Peer Support Services Medi-Cal benefit.

POLICY:

This BHIN differentiates between a “certification entity” and a “training entity.”

A “certification entity” is the county or an agency representing the county that certifies peer support specialists as Medi-Cal providers for a specified county. A county shall only designate one certification entity to certify their Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists, across all relevant Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems (i.e., State Plan Drug Medi-Cal, Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System, and Specialty Mental Health Services).

A “training entity” is an organization that provides the required training curriculum established under the core competencies in BHIN 21-041. A certification entity must develop a process, approved by DHCS, as part of its certification plan to evaluate all training entities that apply to provide the required training curriculum. The evaluation shall determine whether the proposed training curriculum meets the core competencies. The process shall also include an annual evaluation by the certification entity of all approved training entities to ensure the training curriculum continues to meet the core competencies. Additionally, a certification entity’s process must allow new training entities to apply on an annual basis.

Starting in January 2023, if a county intends to change their certification entity for the coming Fiscal Year, the county shall notify DHCS of the intent to change entities by May 1 by submitting an email to peers@dhcs.ca.gov. This email communication from the county to DHCS shall specify which certification entity the county is selecting. Counties shall not change their certification entity during the Fiscal Year. Counties with no changes in a certification entity do not need to contact DHCS.

If a county elects to operate their own Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program, or choose a new entity not currently approved by DHCS, the county shall submit a Certification Program plan for approval to DHCS that is compliant with specifications outlined in BHIN 21-041 by May 1.

Questions regarding the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program may be submitted via email to peers@dhcs.ca.gov.

Sincerely

Original signed by

Marlies Perez, Chief
Community Services Division