



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Pat McCrory
Governor

Aldona Z. Vos, M.D.
Ambassador (Ret.)
Secretary, DHHS

Division of Mental Health, Developmental
Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services
3001 Mail Services Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-3001
Tel 919-733-7011 Fax 919-508-0951
Courtney M. Cantrell, Ph.D.
Director

Division of Medical Assistance
2501 Mail Services Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2501
Tel 919-855-4100 Fax 919-733-6608
Robin Gary Cummings, M.D.
Deputy Secretary for Health Services
Director, Division of Medical Assistance

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Date: March 5, 2015

To: LME-MCOs

From: Mabel McGlothlen, LME System Performance Team Leader, DMH/DD/SAS, and Kathy Nichols, Lead Waiver Program Manager, Contracts Section, DMA

Subject: NC Peer Support Specialist Program

This bulletin addresses changes in the process for becoming a North Carolina Peer Support Specialist. Certification is required by the Division of Mental Health Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS) and the Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) to work as a peer specialist. It also reviews the new requirements and timelines for implementation of the changes.

DMH/DD/SAS and DMA value the contribution that consumers/survivors bring to the process of helping others move toward recovery. Therefore, it is a priority of DMH/DD/SAS and DMA to build stronger peer-based services. Peer providers believe that a supported environment based on self-determination, empowering relationships and full participation in the community is essential to recovery.

“Peer services actively support persons with mental illness making meaningful choices about their treatment, housing, education, employment and social activities (*Emerging New Practices in Organized Peer Support*, National Association State Mental Health Program Directors, 2003)”. In order to be eligible for reimbursement, Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) must meet established standards for training, continuing education and supervision.

To ensure the success of the North Carolina program, DMH/DD/SAS, in partnership with DMA, has worked for several months with a group of CPSSs to review the North Carolina CPSS program. The group has worked with assistance from faculty and staff of the Behavioral Health Resources Program at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill School of Social Work. The goal of the new policy is to provide better service to and for peers throughout the state.

As a result of the recommendations from the CPSS Advisory Group, DMH/DD/SAS and DMA will be lifting the “hold” on new curricula submissions effective February 28, 2015. Additional program changes that will become effective February 28, 2015 are:

- A new course development protocol with added content areas has been approved. These new requirements should be incorporated into currently approved curricula by April 31, 2015 and in any new curricula upon submission. Developers will be expected to integrate the updated materials into previously submitted curricula.
- Developers requesting a new or updated approval of their training program will be asked to submit an application. Descriptions of approved curricula will be posted on the CPSS registry and will include a list of the approved trainers for each curricula. Each approved program must demonstrate that trainers include faculty with lived experience. The registry will also be a repository of course evaluation data.
- New trainer qualifications have been established that include participation in the trainer registry, a signed trainer code of conduct and documentation of Peer Support Specialist Certification.

Other Updates:

1. The North Carolina CPSS web page has been updated and print materials have been developed that will provide more information for developers, trainers, and individuals interested in Peer Support Certification. It will include information about the process of becoming a CPSS and opportunities available to CPSSs in North Carolina.
2. DMH/DD/SAS and DMA developed a quality improvement process and will appoint CPSSs to serve on the curriculum review team. Teams led by peers will periodically observe training in the field beginning in March, 2015.
3. To increase the number of veterans qualified as peer support specialists, CPSSs who served in the military will work with DMH/DD/SAS to improve the veterans peer specialty program. New guidance will be available in June, 2015.

Future Plans:

Planning and testing is underway for a Peer Support Specialist Certification exam to be implemented in 2016.

The applications, information about the registry, new curricula elements and other information for the new process can be found on the NC Certified Peer Support Web Page at program@pss.unc.edu, including implementation schedules and effective dates.

DMH/DD/SAS and DMA recognizes the work of the following Certified Peer Specialists and staff: Tommy Crawford, Cherene Allen-Caraco, Gin Monroe, Ken Blackman, Rosemary Weaver, Richie Tannerhill, Jimmy Cioe, Latoya Freeman-Harris Ron Mangum, Tara Lea Bohley, Emery Cowan, Wes Rider, and Joan Kaye.

Questions may be directed to Ron Mangum, Clinical Assistant Professor, 325 Pittsboro Street, Campus Box 3550, Chapel Hill, and NC 27599-3550. 919-843-7586. rlmangum@email.unc.edu

Previous bulletins can be accessed at: <http://jtcommunicationbulletins.ncdhhs.gov/>

Cc: Robin Gary Cummings, M.D., DMA
Dave Richard, DHHS
DMA Leadership Team
DMH/DD/SAS Leadership Team
Mary Hooper, NCCCP