



Texas Certified Peer Specialist Program
Policy and Procedure Manual
Effective March 1, 2016



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Introduction

Peer Support and Peer Support Services

One definition of peer support is the act of people who have had similar experiences with mental health challenges giving each other encouragement, hope, assistance, guidance, and understanding that aids in recovery. It can be done anytime or anywhere when two or more peers are in a mutual, supportive relationship.

Peer support services are programs, discussions, events, groups, etc. within the mental health system that are led by people in recovery and based on the philosophy of peer support. They typically take place within the structure of an agency or organization and are provided as a service by a trained peer specialist.

Certified Peer Specialists

A Via Hope Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is an individual who has progressed in their recovery, has taken training, and passed a certification exam demonstrating that she or he has mastered a set of competencies related to peer support. A CPS has been trained to effectively share his or her lived experiences in order to support the recovery of other individuals. Certified Peer Specialists may work in any organizational setting – public or private mental health, peer-run organization, criminal justice, education, juvenile corrections, or veterans services for example – although the majority of the CPSs trained in Texas work for either community mental health centers or state hospitals.

As in many other professions, once an individual becomes a Certified Peer Specialist, he or she is expected to take additional training in one or more areas of specialization (referred to as Endorsements) to continue developing his or her skills in those areas. A list of endorsement trainings is found in the Continuing Education section of this manual.

Program Administration

Program Authority

Via Hope is a training and technical assistance resource for individuals in recovery, family members, youth with an interest in mental health, organizations, and mental health professionals. Our mission reads:

“We provide education, training, and consultation to empower individuals, families, and youth to develop resilience, achieve recovery, and further mental health system transformation.”



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Via Hope was created as part of the Texas mental health transformation process. Consequently, all of our training and technical assistance is intended to promote system transformation, and empower individuals in recovery, family, and youth voice in that system transformation. Via Hope is funded by grants from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and by registration fees from our trainings.

Some of our training, such as that for peer specialists and family partners, is designed to help individuals seeking to enter or advance in the workforce. Via Hope is currently the only organization that administers a training and certification program for peer specialists that is recognized by the Department of State Health Services.

Contact Information

Contact Via Hope at:

- Mail: Via Hope Texas Mental Health Resource
4604 South Lamar Blvd Unit E-102
Austin, TX 78745
- Phone: 512-953-8160 or 844-300-2196
- Email: Info@Viahope.org
- Website: www.viahope.org

Application Process

Qualifications for Acceptance to Training

Working as a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) can be an immensely rewarding occupation--it is a way for individuals who are in recovery to help others experience recovery. It is not the right job for everyone, however, and individuals need to be sure they want continued employment as a peer specialist before investing their time and resources in attending the certification training.

Individuals are strongly encouraged to work or volunteer as a peer specialist for at least a few months prior to applying to attend the certification training. The selection criteria described below for applications to the certification training is heavily weighted towards individuals with prior experience providing peer support services.

To be eligible to attend the Certified Peer Specialist training, an individual must:

- Be age 18 or older,
- Be a high school graduate or have completed a G.E.D.
- Self-identify as a person who has direct personal experience living in recovery from mental health challenges.
- Have a primary diagnosis of a mental health condition or dual diagnosis, rather than just a substance abuse diagnosis, or have experienced emotional distress which significantly disrupted one's life
- Have significant experience working on his/her own recovery and an ability to manage his/her own wellness.
- Have a desire to use her/his experiences to help others with their recovery.
- Be willing to publicly identify as a person living in recovery for the purpose of educating, role modeling, and providing hope to others about the reality of recovery.

Steps in the Application Process

Applicants must complete the written application found on the Via Hope website at www.viahope.org, and provide two letters of recommendation. Applications must be received by the deadline for the next available class and must be completed in their entirety. Incomplete or illegible applications are not considered. Applications are submitted by mail, email, or fax to:

Via Hope Texas Mental Health Resource
4604 South Lamar Blvd Unit E-102
Austin, TX 78745

Email: info@viahope.org

Fax: 1-512-953-8199

Applicants may also be asked to participate in a telephone interview process. The purpose of the interview is to obtain a sense of the applicant's interpersonal skills (verbal communication and interaction with others during a discussion) and whether the individual's skills are developed enough to become an effective certified peer specialist.

Registration Fees

There is a registration fee for the training which is discounted from the full cost of the training and offsets the cost of the trainers, the printed materials, lodging, and meals provided as part of training. If an individual is accepted for the training, he or she is sent an invoice which must be paid (by the individual or his/her employer) prior to the training.

Individuals or their employers are responsible for arranging and paying for their own transportation to the training site and for their evening meals. Some limited scholarship assistance is available for individuals who do not have an employer that can cover the cost of these expenses. Scholarship assistance must be requested prior to the training and is not guaranteed.

Scoring System for Applications

Enrollment is limited to a class size of twenty participants. Via Hope typically receives many more applications than there is space for in each training, and a scoring rubric is used to review and rank applications. The scoring system considers factors such as:

- Employment or volunteer experience as a peer specialist
- Understanding of the role of a peer specialist
- Whether the person has developed a WRAP or is a WRAP facilitator, and
- Answers to a series of questions about the individual's recovery experience and prior training.

Of all the factors, the one that is weighted most heavily is prior paid or volunteer experience providing peer support services, particularly in a peer-operated organization, community mental health center, or state hospital. Without some amount of experience, it is difficult to be accepted for the training.

Self-Care

Employment as a certified peer specialist can be stressful work, so good self-care is important. For this reason, individuals interested in becoming a CPS are strongly encouraged to develop a self-care plan such as a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). WRAP is a simple self-help system for individuals to identify personal resources and then use those resources to maintain wellness.

Overview of the Certification Training

The Certified Peer Specialist training is an in-person, five and a half day, forty three hour intensive course with homework or work sessions some evenings. There are three independent study pre-



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learning modules for individuals to read before attending the training. Once at the training, participants are expected to:

- Attend all five and a half days and not miss more than four hours of the training in total,
- Actively participate in discussions and role plays, and
- Complete all homework assignments.

Individuals who do not meet these criteria are not eligible to take the certification exam.

Training begins at 3:00 pm on Sunday and ends at 5:00 pm on Friday afternoon. The certification exam is administered at 9:00 am on Saturday and may take up to two hours. Breakfast, lunch, and breaks are provided each day. Via Hope also provides six nights lodging, beginning on Sunday night before the first day of training. The training is provided in a relaxed, casual setting. However, this is training for employment in the workplace. Participants are expected to dress in casual but appropriate attire. No additional supplies are needed for the training; all course materials are supplied.

Overview of the Curriculum

A list of the curriculum modules follows. The core certification training is intended to enable individuals to master the basic competencies necessary to function as an effective peer specialist. Certified Peer Specialists are required to take additional specialized trainings, referred to as Endorsements, to enhance their knowledge and skills and to maintain their certification.

Monday: Grounding in Recovery

Module 1: CPS Orientation

Module 2: The Shoulders Upon Which We Stand

Module 3: The Language of Recovery

Module 4: Five Stages Within the Recovery Process

Module 5: What is a Recovery Story

Module 6: Stories in Practice

Tuesday: Healing in Relationships

Module 7: Opening the Door to New Perspectives

Module 8: Listening and the Art of Asking Questions

Module 9: Recovery Story Snippets

Wednesday: Modeling Peer Recovery

Module 10: Group Facilitation and Recovery Dialogues

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Module 11: Environment Matters

Module 12: Self-Help

Thursday: Tools

Module 13: Using the Fuel of Dissatisfaction

Module 14: PICBBA

Module 15: Fear: Friend or Foe

Module 16: Meeting the Whole Person

Module 17: Power, Conflict and Integrity

Friday: The Big Picture

Module 18: CPS Ethics and Boundaries

Module 19: Federal and State Mental Health Systems

Module 20: Creating the Life

Module 21: Change Agent

Certification Testing

Certification Test

Individuals who have successfully completed the training are eligible to take the certification exam. The exam is administered at the training site on the Saturday morning following the training. For individuals who have taken Via Hope certification training, there is no additional fee for the exam.

Individuals who do not pass the exam the first time offered are eligible to re-take the exam the next time it is offered. Individuals wishing to retake the exam are responsible for traveling to the training site to take the exam. Individuals are notified within four weeks following the exam whether or not they passed.

Individuals who do not pass the exam in two attempts may reapply to take the certification training again on a space available basis.

Continuing Education

Basic Requirements

The Certification is valid for a period of twenty four months from the date the certification is issued. During that period the peer specialist is required to acquire a minimum of twenty Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Each CEU is equivalent to one hour of contact time in an approved training event. These approved events may be conferences or classroom style training.

Via Hope maintains a list of pre-approved training events. The current list may be requested by sending an email to info@viahope.org. Prior approval is not required to obtain credit for events on the pre-approved list.

At the end of this section are instructions for applying to get a course approved for CEU credit.

Documentation Requirements

To receive CEU credit for a training event the peer specialist must obtain a certificate of attendance from the event organizers. It is the responsibility of the Certified Peer Specialist to maintain a written record and documentation of the CEUs they have earned. As part of the application process to be re-certified, the CPS sends a list of the CEUs they have earned. It is not necessary to send copies of the documentation.

Via Hope periodically audits a random sample of peer specialist CEU records. Failure to maintain sufficient documentation is grounds for revocation of a peer specialist's certification.

Endorsements and CEUs

Each Certified Peer Specialist is required to take a minimum of one Endorsement Training during each two year certification period. The Endorsements count towards the CEU requirements. The Certification training is intended to be the start of an individual's education, not the end. Certified Peer Specialists are expected to further develop their skills by accumulating additional endorsements.

Requesting Approval for an Event Not Listed

A Certified Peer Specialist who is interested in participating in a training, conference, or other event that is not on the pre-approved list must submit a Request for Training Approval form a minimum of thirty business days prior to the start of the training. The form can be requested by calling Via Hope at 844-300-2196 or sending an email to info@viahope.org. Via Hope will review the request within ten business days, and advise the peer specialist if the class is approved for CEUs. Any class approved for an individual will be added to the pre-approved list.

To complete the Request Form, the following information must be provided:

- ✓ The title of the training,
- ✓ The provider of the training,
- ✓ Trainer(s) bio
- ✓ A contact name and contact information (phone, email),
- ✓ The start and end dates of the training,
- ✓ The total number of contact hours,
- ✓ The training location,
- ✓ Information on the content of the training (preferably from the training provider),
- ✓ Learning objectives for the training
- ✓ Whether a completion certificate is issued following the training, and
- ✓ Whether any other organizations or professions issue CEU credit for the training.

If the supporting informational materials are available electronically, the Form and materials may be emailed to info@viahope.org. If available only in hard copy, they may be faxed to 512-953-8199 or

mailed to: Via Hope
 4604 South Lamar Blvd Unit E-102
 Austin, TX 78745-1362

In order to receive credit hours, the training must specifically relate to a skillset that enhances a CPS' ability to perform the responsibilities of a peer support position (e.g. partnering with persons served and assisting them in obtaining their personal recovery goals or forming and maintaining peer relationships). Via Hope will consider approval for courses in the following topical areas.

- Skill Development, such as facilitating support groups
- Self-care Management, including relaxation, physical exercise, healthy choices
- Peer Roles, including alternatives to seclusion and restraint, supported employment, supported housing
- System Transformation, such as peer leadership in systems change

Recertification Process

The certification period for a peer specialist is twenty four months. To remain certified, a peer specialist must submit an application for recertification. The application is sent by Via Hope approximately 60 days prior to the end of the certification period.

There is a nominal processing fee associated with the application for recertification. This fee may be paid by the individual or his/her employer. If an individual seeking recertification does not meet the continuing education requirements and his/her certification expires, he or she will have 6 months to obtain the required CEUs and submit a new application for recertification. The fee for renewal of an

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expired certification is somewhat higher than the regular recertification fee. If a certification has expired for more than 6 months, and the individual seeks recertification, s/he will be required to retake the certification exam before submitting the recertification application.

Reciprocity

Individuals who have taken certification training from a recognized source in another state, and received a certification recognized by the state Medicaid agency in the state where the certification was issued, may apply to become certified by completing the Via Hope Reciprocity Application. Applicants do not have to take and pass the Via Hope certification exam.

The certification period for reciprocal certifications ends on the original expiration date of the other State's certification or in twenty four months, whichever is less. The same continuing education requirements will be in effect for the remainder of the certification period.

The reciprocity form can be requested by calling Via Hope at 844-300-2196 or sending an email to info@viahope.org.

List of Current Endorsements

The following endorsement trainings are currently authorized:

1. WRAP Facilitation (Seminar I) taught by trained facilitators that meets the Copeland Center standards.
2. WRAP Facilitator training (Seminar II). To be eligible to become a WRAP facilitator, an individual must first take an approved 18 hour WRAP facilitation and develop a personal WRAP. The individual may then take the 40 hour WRAP facilitator training from an authorized advanced wrap facilitator.
3. Peer Support Whole Health and Resiliency Training. This is a one and ½ day, twelve hour course teaching the principles of Whole Health. It teaches peer specialists how to work with other individuals to set, get, and keep achievable physical health goals. Whole Health Action Management is a similar training recognized as an endorsement.
4. WHAM! This is a version of Peer Support Whole Health offered through the National Council on Behavioral Health.
5. Intentional Peer Support. This is a five day training taught by the Intentional Peer Support Organization.

6. Advanced Practices in Peer Support. This is a four day, 32 hour course taught by Recovery Opportunities, Inc. of Phoenix, AZ.
7. eCPR. This two day, sixteen hour training developed by the National Empowerment Center enables one person to help another through an emotional crisis in a mutual fashion using skills of Connecting, emPowering, and Revitalizing.
8. Trauma Informed Peer Support Training. This three day training provides peer specialists with an understanding of trauma, its impact, and the role of peer support as it relates to trauma-informed care.
9. Peer Support for Individuals with Co-occurring Challenges. This is a two day training which explores mental health and substance abuse recovery and peer support approaches for individuals with co-occurring disorders.
10. *Next Steps*. This is a three facilitation training for experienced Certified Peer Specialists developed by the International Association of Peer Supporters (INAPS) as part of the SAMHSA Recovery to Practice Initiative.
11. Community Re-entry. This is a two and a half day training for peer specialists to learn how to effectively assist peers who are re-entering life in the community after incarceration.
12. ASIST. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first-aid.

Guiding Principles for Peer Specialists

Via Hope's certification process for peer specialists in the State of Texas assures peers, families, employers, and the public that individuals certified by Via Hope as peer specialists have been deemed to be qualified and competent in a set of educational principles and experiences needed to perform the responsibilities of a Certified Peer Specialist. Via Hope has adopted the Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics below in order that each peer specialist, certified or seeking certification, will conform his or her behavior to the highest standards of ethical practice.

Via Hope is the governing body that investigates and sanctions Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs) who breach this Code of Ethics. Anyone who has knowledge that a CPS has violated the Code of Ethics should notify Via Hope and file a complaint form. Certified Peer Specialists should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the Code and guide their behavior accordingly.

Code of Ethics

The principles in the following Code of Ethics guide Texas Certified Peer Specialists in their roles, relationships and levels of responsibility in which they function professionally.

1. The primary responsibility of Certified Peer Specialists is to help individuals achieve their own needs, wants, and goals. Certified Peer Specialists will be guided by the principle of self-determination for all.
2. Certified Peer Specialists will maintain high standards of personal conduct. Certified Peer Specialists will also conduct themselves in a manner that fosters their own recovery.
3. Certified Peer Specialists will openly share their recovery stories, and will likewise be able to identify and describe the supports that promote their recovery.
4. Certified Peer Specialists will, at all times, respect the rights and dignity of those they serve.
5. Certified Peer Specialists will never intimidate, threaten, harass, use undue influence, physical force or verbal abuse, or make unwarranted promises of benefits to the individuals they serve.
6. Certified Peer Specialists will not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or state.
7. Certified Peer Specialists will advocate for those they serve that they may make their own decisions in all matters when dealing with other professionals.
8. Certified Peer Specialists will respect the privacy and confidentiality of those they serve.
9. Certified Peer Specialists will advocate for the full integration of individuals into the communities of their choice and will promote the inherent value of these individuals to those communities. Certified Peer Specialists will be directed by the knowledge that all individuals have the right to live in the least restrictive and least intrusive environment.
10. Certified Peer Specialists will not enter into dual relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests of those they support.
11. Certified Peer Specialists will not engage in sexual/intimate activities with those to whom they are currently providing support, or have worked with in a professional role in the past year.

12. Certified Peer Specialists will not provide services to another when under the influence of alcohol or when impaired by any substance, whether or not it is prescribed.
13. Certified Peers Providers will keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to recovery, and openly share this knowledge with their colleagues.
14. Certified Peer Specialists will not accept gifts of significant value from those they serve.

For more in-depth discussion of Ethics, see National Ethical Guidelines and Practice Standards: National Practice Guidelines for Peer Supporters at: <http://www.williamwhitepapers.com>.

Rules of Conduct

The following Rules of Conduct set forth the minimum standards of conduct which all Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs) are expected to honor. Failure to comply with an obligation or prohibition set forth in the Rules may result in disciplinary action.

Applicability

The Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct also apply to all individuals seeking certification through Via Hope.

Professional Standards

A CPS shall meet and comply with all terms, conditions, or limitations of the peer professional certification which they hold.

A CPS shall not perform services outside of their area of training, expertise, competence, or scope of practice.

A CPS shall not fail to obtain an appropriate consultation or make an appropriate referral when an individual's problem is beyond the area of training, expertise, competence, or scope of practice of the Certified Peer Specialist or person seeking peer certification.

A CPS shall not in any way participate in discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, national origin, socio-economic status, political belief, psychiatric or psychological impairment, physical disability, or the amount of previous therapeutic or treatment occurrences.

A CPS has a responsibility both to the client and/or participant(s) and to the organization within which the service is performed to maintain a high standard of ethical conduct.

The CPS shall not discontinue peer support services to an individual nor shall the CPS abandon the individual without facilitating an appropriate therapeutic closure of professional services for the individual.

A CPS shall not reveal confidential information obtained as the result of a professional relationship, without the prior written consent from the recipient of services, except as authorized or required by law.

Unlawful Conduct

Being convicted or found guilty of a felony, regardless of adjudication, or entering a plea of nolo contendere to any crime relating to the CPS's ability to properly provide peer support services shall be grounds for disciplinary action.

If a CPS is reprimanded by any agency or organization through any administrative proceedings, this may be grounds for disciplinary action by Via Hope.

Sexual Misconduct

A CPS shall not engage in any form of sexual contact/behavior with persons served. The prohibition shall apply with respect to any service user of the agency by which the CPS is employed, regardless of whether or not s/he is providing peer support to the person. For the purposes of determining the existence of sexual misconduct, the CPS-peer relationship, once established, is deemed to continue for a minimum of 2 years after the termination of services or the date of the last professional contact with the peer.

A CPS shall not engage in sexual misconduct with any immediate family member or guardian of a person receiving services during the period of time services are being rendered to the person, during the entire CPS-peer relationship.

A CPS shall not engage a supervisee in sexual misconduct during the period a supervisory relationship exists.

Fraud Related Conduct

A CPS shall not

- Use misrepresentation in the preparation of an application for Certified Peer Specialist certification or in the procurement of certification or recertification as a Certified Peer Specialist, or assist another in the preparation of an application for certification or in the procurement of registration, certification or re-certification through misrepresentation. The term "misrepresentation" includes but is not limited to the misrepresentation of professional qualifications, certification, accreditation,

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affiliations, employment experience, educational experience, the plagiarism of application and recertification materials, or the falsification of reference.

- Use a title designation, credential or license, firm name, letterhead, publication, term, title, or document which states or implies an ability, relationship, or qualification that does not exist.
- Practice under a false name or under a name other than the name under which his or her certification is held (unless the name has been legally changed such as through marriage or divorce).
- Sign or issue in the professional capacity a document or a statement that the CPS knows or should have known to contain a false or misleading statement.
- Produce, publish, create, or partake in the creation of any false, fraudulent, deceptive or misleading advertisement.
- Develop, implement, or maintain exploitative relationships with current or past service recipients.
- Misappropriate property from a service recipient.
- Enter into a relationship with a person receiving services which involves financial gain to the Certified Peer Specialist or person seeking peer certification or a third party resulting from the promotion or the sale of services unrelated to treatment or the therapeutic relationship.
- Promote to a person receiving services for personal gain, any unnecessary, ineffective or unsafe psychoactive substance, or any unnecessary, ineffective or unsafe device, treatment, procedure, product or service.
- Solicit gifts or favors from persons receiving services.
- Offer, give, or receive commissions, rebates, or any other forms of remuneration for a referral.

Safety and Welfare

CPSs have what is referred to as a “Duty to Warn”. In circumstances where the CPS becomes aware, during the course of providing or supervising professional services, that a condition of clear and imminent danger exists that a person receiving services may inflict serious bodily harm on *another person or persons*, the CPS shall, consistent with federal and state regulations concerning the confidentiality of medical records, take reasonable steps to warn any likely victims of the person's behavior.

In circumstances where the Certified Peer Specialist becomes aware, during the course of providing or supervising professional services, that a condition of clear and imminent danger exists that a person receiving services may inflict serious bodily harm to *himself or herself*, the Certified Peer Specialist shall, consistent with federal and state regulations concerning the confidentiality of medical records, take reasonable steps to protect that person.

Records Management

A CPS shall not falsify, amend, knowingly make incorrect entries, or fail to make timely essential entries into the service user's record.

A CPS shall follow all federal and state regulations regarding service user records.

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Assisting Unlicensed Practice

A CPS shall not refer an individual to a person that the CPS knows or should know is not qualified by training, experience, certification, or license to perform the delegated professional responsibility.

Cooperation With Via Hope

A CPS who has firsthand knowledge of the actions of a respondent or a complainant shall cooperate with a Via Hope complaint investigation or disciplinary proceeding.

A CPS shall not file a complaint or provide information to Via Hope which the CPS knows or should have known is false or misleading

A CPS shall cooperate in any investigation conducted pursuant to the Code of Ethics and a CPS shall not interfere with an investigation or a disciplinary proceeding or attempt to prevent a disciplinary proceeding or other legal action from being filed, prosecuted, or completed. Interference attempts may include but are not limited to:

- The willful misrepresentation of facts before the disciplining authority or its authorized representative;
- The use of threats or harassment against, or an inducement to, any service user or witness in an effort to prevent them from providing evidence in a disciplinary proceeding or any other legal action;
- The use of threats or harassment against, or an inducement to, any person in an effort to prevent or attempt to prevent a disciplinary proceeding or other legal action from being filed, prosecuted or completed.

A CPS shall report any violation of the Code of Ethics. Failure to report a violation may be grounds for disciplinary action.

In submitting any information, a CPS shall comply with any requirements pertaining to the disclosure of service user information established by the federal or state government.

Complaints and Sanctions

If an individual believes that a CPS has violated the Code of Ethics or the Rules of Conduct, he or she should notify the CPS's employer and file a complaint with Via Hope. A complaint form may be requested by contacting Via Hope at info@viahope.org or 1-844-300-2196.

Medicaid Guidelines

It is the responsibility of the employer to determine the activities a peer specialist may perform as part of his or her work. However, if the employer is a Medicaid provider and wants to bill Medicaid for the peer support services provided by a peer specialist, the Texas Medicaid rules must be followed.

The Texas Medicaid Program currently has a Rehabilitation Option in effect. Rules were published in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 419, Subchapter L. establishing the qualifications and allowable activities of Peer Providers under the Medicaid Program.

Under the rules in Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 419, Subchapter L, Peer Providers may provide:

- Medication training and support services to an adult;
- Psychosocial rehabilitation including
 - independent living services,
 - coordination services,
 - employment related services, and
 - housing related services,
- Skills training and development services;
- Day programs for acute needs