



**Texas Certified Peer Specialist Program
Policy and Procedure Manual**

Effective April 1, 2018

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INTRODUCTION

Peer Support and Peer Support Services

Via Hope uses the following definition of peer support: 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, taken training, and passed a certification exam demonstrating that they have mastered a set of competencies related to peer support. A CPS has been trained in a number of skills and areas of knowledge in order to support the recovery of other individuals, including how to effectively share their lived experiences. Certified Peer Specialists may work in any organizational setting – public or private mental health, peer-run organization, criminal justice, education, juvenile corrections, or veteran’s services, for example.

As in many other professions, once an individual becomes a Certified Peer Specialist, they are expected to take additional training in one or more areas of specialization (referred to as Endorsements) to continue developing their skills in those areas. Via Hope offers a variety of Endorsement trainings for Certified Peer Specialists each year; a list of current Via Hope Endorsement trainings can be found in the Continuing Education section of this manual.

VIA HOPE – WHO WE ARE

Our Identity Statement

Invest. Re-envision. Respond.

Via Hope invests in people and organizations who want to re-envision mental health through workforce development, community building, system transformation, and leadership development.

We exist to amplify the vision that all people, families, and communities deserve to thrive and not just survive! For us, this will look like:

- Self-determination for all people and families in decisions related to their health and spirit;
- Systems imbued with core principles of resiliency, compassion, and trust, that listen and respond to the needs of their communities;
- A socially and politically equitable world free from stigma; and

- A culture where authenticity and transparency around lived experience is seen and valued as a necessary strength in leadership.

For more information about Via Hope’s vision of our work and our future, please visit www.viahope.org/about/.

Texas Peer Specialist Certifying Entity

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, families, and youth in that system transformation. Via Hope is funded by grants from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, and by registration fees from our trainings.

Some of our trainings, such as those for peer specialists and family partners, are 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 Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

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

Fax: 512-953-8199

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 use diagnosis, or have experienced emotional distress which significantly disrupted one's life;
- Have significant experience working on their own recovery and an ability to manage their own wellness;
- Have a desire to use their experiences to help others with their recovery; and
- 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 an online application once posted on our website at www.viahope.org. Applicants must upload two letters of recommendation with their applications. Applications must be received by the deadline for the next available class and must be completed in their entirety. Only the Certified Peer Specialist interested in taking the certification course may apply; Via Hope will not accept an application from a sponsoring organization, a supervisor, or any other individual who is not the individual interested in attending the certification training. Applications are submitted through the Via Hope website at www.viahope.org.

Applicants may also be asked to participate in a telephone interview process. The purpose of the interview is to gather additional information not included in the electronic application and/or to obtain a sense of the applicant's interpersonal skills and ability to relate to others.

Registration Fees

There is a registration fee for the certification training, which covers administrative time required to coordinate the trainings, the cost of the trainers, the printed materials, and lunch provided as part of training. If an individual is accepted for the training, they are sent an invoice which must be paid (by the individual or their employer) prior to the training.

Individuals or their employers are responsible for arranging and paying for their own transportation to the training site, lodging during the training, and for their morning and evening meals. Some limited scholarship assistance may be available on a case-by-case basis. 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 thirty participants in order to maintain a comfortable learning environment. Via Hope typically receives significantly more applications than there is space for 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
- How an applicant can speak to a series of questions about the individual's recovery experience and prior training.

Self-Care

Like any job in the mental health field, employment as a Certified Peer Specialist can be stressful work, which is why strong daily practice around self-care is important for maintaining personal and professional wellness. For this reason, individuals interested in becoming a CPS are strongly encouraged to develop a self-care practice. For example, Wellness Recovery Action Plan (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 a forty-three hour in-person intensive course, spread over five and a half days. In addition to in-person classroom training, this course includes homework or work sessions in the evenings. Before attending the trainings, all participants are required to complete the Pre-Training Manual, which contains four independent study pre-learning modules and a set of reflective questions. Once at the training, participants are expected to:

- Attend all five and a half days of the training with no absences from the training room (*see note below*);
- 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.

Note: Via Hope expects participants to be present for the entirety of the training. However, Via Hope recognizes that important issues may arise that require participants to miss a portion of the training, which is why a participant may have the opportunity to miss a small portion of the training without being disqualified from taking the certification exam. However, if a participant needs to be absent, they must confirm with both Via Hope and the trainers present. If a participant misses any portion of the training without prior approval from the trainers or Via Hope, they may lose their ability to take the

certification exam. Furthermore, if an individual misses more than four hours of the training, they will not be eligible to complete the certification exam at the conclusion of the training week.

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 but is not timed. Lunch and breaks are provided each day. 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.

Sunday

Module 1: CPS Orientation

Module 2: The Shoulders Upon Which We Stand

Monday

Module 3: CPS Core Values, Ethics and Boundaries

Module 4: The Power of Language

Module 5: Five Stages of the Recovery Process

Module 6 Part 1: What are My Stories

Module 6: Part 2: Stories in Practice

Tuesday

Module 7 Opening the Door to New Perspectives : Stories in Practice

Module 8: Listening, the Art of Holding Space

Module 9: Group Facilitation & Recovery Dialogues

Module 10: Environment Matters

Wednesday

Recovery Stories

Module 11: Snippets

Module 12: Promoting Self Help

Thursday

Module 13: Fueling the Power of Dissatisfaction

Module 14: PICBBA

Module 15: Fear: Friend or Foe

Module 16: Meeting the Whole Person

Friday

Module 17: Ethics and Boundaries

Module 18: Change Agent

Module 19: Power, Conflict and Integrity

Module 20: Federal and State Mental Health Systems

Expectations for Training Participants

All Via Hope trainings and events, including the certification training, are professional events that represent the field of peer support in Texas. Many of our events are held at host organizations in communities throughout the state. Although our events are often casual in nature, Via Hope expects all participants to act in a manner that positively represents the peer specialist workforce. Via Hope reserves the right to require a participant to leave a training or event early (and consider course participation incomplete) if a participant at a training or event:

- causes significant disruption (destruction of property, public intoxication, etc.);
- is disrespectful or rude to trainers, participants, event staff or other community partners; or
- acts in any manner that violates the Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics (regardless of whether that person has not yet been certified).

Inappropriate behavior at any Via Hope-sponsored event may result in removal from the training, a temporary or permanent bar from attending Via Hope-sponsored events, and/or referral to the Via Hope Certified Peer Specialist Advisory Council for a formal ethical violation.

Finally, although each individual is responsible for their own recovery, Via Hope expects every participant to be mindful that their fellow participants may have different needs for their recovery and for supporting themselves throughout trainings or events. In the spirit of the Certified Peer Specialist Core Values, please treat all other participants with respect, mutuality, and authenticity.

CERTIFICATION TESTING

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 the Via Hope certification training, there is no additional fee for the exam. Request for exam accommodations should be made at the time of application and training facilitators should be made aware at the beginning of the training to ensure appropriate accommodations can be made. Via Hope reserves the right to determine a reasonable accommodation for an exam.

Individuals who do not pass the exam on their first attempt 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 two weeks following the exam whether or not they passed.

Individuals who do not pass the exam in two attempts must reapply to take the certification training if they want to attempt the exam for a third time. If a person who has failed the exam twice applies for the certification training, their application will be reviewed with the same weight as all other applications; therefore, Via Hope does not guarantee that a person who is applying to retake the course will be accepted into training. When attempting to retake the training after two failed exam attempts, individuals may apply to retake the training an unlimited number of times; however, once accepted to retake the training, you may only take the exam one additional time (for a maximum of three (3) exam attempts). If an individual fails the exam for a third and final time, they must wait two years to apply for training; once the two years has elapsed, once the two years has elapsed, the individual must reapply for the certification training and they will be treated as a new applicant.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Basic Requirements

The Certification is valid for a period of twenty-four months from the date the exam is taken and passed. During that period the peer specialist is required to acquire a minimum of twenty (20) 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, endorsements, webinars, or classroom style training. Please note that a Certified Peer Specialist must attend at least one Via Hope-sponsored Endorsement training per certification period; for more information, see the section below on “Endorsements and CEUs.”

Via Hope maintains a list of training events that are pre-approved for CEUs. The current list may be viewed on the Via Hope website. Prior approval is not required to obtain continuing education 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 (i.e., for a course that is not on the pre-approved list).

Documentation Requirements

In order 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. Additionally, Certified Peer Specialists must provide copies of certificates of attendance for any trainings that are not Via Hope Endorsement trainings with their recertification application. For Via Hope Endorsement trainings, it is not necessary to send copies of the certificates of attendance.

Endorsements and CEUs

Each Certified Peer Specialist is required to take a minimum of one Via Hope Endorsement Training during each two year certification period. The Endorsements count towards a person's 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.

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 Specialist 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. *Whole Health Action Management (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. *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.
7. *Focus for Life*. This three-day training focuses on building personal strength and developing wellness to support participants in fostering resiliency.
8. *Trauma Informed Peer Support*. 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 use recovery and peer support approaches for individuals with co-occurring challenges.
10. *RTP Next Steps*. This is a four day 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. RTP Next Steps is a highly experiential training that deepens participants' knowledge and skills of peer support by harnessing the collective wisdom of the training participants.
11. *Community Reentry*. 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.

Requesting CEU Approval for an Event Not on Pre-Approved List

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 days prior to the start of the training. The form can be found on the Via Hope website www.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. Only the Certified Peer Specialist interested in taking the course may apply for CEU approval; Via Hope will not accept a CEU approval application from a sponsoring organization, a supervisor, or any other individual who is not the individual interested in attending the training at issue.

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 (i.e. number of hours of classroom instruction, subtracting any breaks or lunch periods),
- The training location,
- How the training is applicable to the work and skills of being a Certified Peer Specialist,
- 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.

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). Via Hope will consider approval for courses on the following topics:

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

As part of the Request for Training Approval, the requesting person *must* justify how the proposed course is applicable to the daily work of a Certified Peer Specialist.

Requesting Pre-Approval for a Conference, Workshop, or Presentation (Sponsoring Organization or Presenter)

Via Hope may approve CEUs requests from organizations or individuals who want to offer CEUs to peer specialists for a workshop, training, or conference. For example, if a presenter is holding a workshop

about peer specialist ethics and values at a conference and wants any Certified Peer Specialists who attend to receive CEUs, they must submit a Request for Training Approval Form for their workshop a minimum of thirty days prior to the start of the event. Please note that Via Hope does not recognize organizations as CEU providers.

If approved, a presenter must ensure that they document each person who attended their training who wants CEUs (i.e., a sign-in and sign-out sheet so presenters know who completed the training), *and* the presenter must provide each person who completed the training with a certificate of completion. Since CPSs are required to keep up-to-date documentation about their CEUs to submit at the time of recertification, they must receive a certificate of completion when they take courses or workshops outside of Via Hope Endorsement trainings. Accordingly, the Certificate of Completion that the presenter must provide (if approved) must include the following information:

- Date of the training,
- Name of training,
- Number of CEU hours pre-approved (which will be confirmed by Via Hope in advance of the training),
- Name of participant, and
- Signature by trainer/provider.

Please note that pre-approval for a workshop, presentation, or internal organizational training does not *automatically* place the respective event on the Via Hope Pre-Approved List available on our website. In order to be on the Pre-Approved List, the event must be recurring, open to the public, and contain the same subject matter. For example, a Conference workshop on peer values may be approved, but will not be placed on the Pre-Approved List since the workshop is a one-time event.

You can complete the Request form online by going to <https://www.viahope.org/resources/request-training-approval-ceus/>.

RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

Recertification Requirements

The certification period for a peer specialist is twenty-four (24) months. To remain certified, a peer specialist must submit an application for recertification. Notice accompanied by a recertification application is sent by Via Hope approximately 60 days prior to the end of an individual's certification period. In order to be approved, a person's recertification application must be complete and signed by the individual; in addition, the person must include a list of approved CEUs (including one Endorsement training) that they received during their twenty-four month certification period. They must also provide copies of certificates of completion for any pre-approved courses that are not Via Hope-sponsored trainings. There is a nominal processing fee associated with the application for recertification. This fee may be paid by the individual or their employer.

To apply for peer specialist recertification, complete and submit the following form on our website: <https://www.viahope.org/resources/cps-recertification-application/>

Failure to Recertify within Certification Period

If an individual does not submit their required paperwork by the expiration date listed on their certificate, their certification will become inactive. However, the individual will then have three months to obtain the required CEUs and submit their application for recertification. The fee for renewal of an inactive certification is incrementally higher than the regular recertification fee. If approved, the person's recertification period will begin on the day after their previous certification lapsed, *not* on the day that their recertification application is approved. For example, if a person's certification expires on January 31 but they do not submit their recertification approval until April 15, their renewed certification will show a start date of February 1 (and last for two years from February 1).

To apply for recertification if your certification has been inactive for less than three months, complete and submit the following form on our website: <https://www.viahope.org/resources/cps-recertification-application/>

Expired Certification

If a certification has expired by more than three months and the individual seeks recertification, they will be required to retake the certification exam. In order to retake the certification exam after an individual's certification has expired, they must submit an application for reinstatement of their certification and pay the applicable fee. The fee for reinstatement of an expired certification is incrementally higher than the regular recertification fee.

To apply for reinstatement of your peer specialist certification if your certification has been inactive for more than three months, complete and submit the following form on our website: <https://www.viahope.org/resources/cps-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.

In order to be considered for reciprocity, a person must still have an active certification in the state in which they were originally certified. Additionally, they must provide the following:

- Documentation of their active certification from the original certifying body (e.g., a copy of their certificate);
- Contact information for their certifying body and past employer so that Via Hope can follow up to ensure that the applicant is still active and in good standing with their certifying body; and
- Two letters of recommendation that highlight the person's character and fit as a peer specialist.

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. After the initial certification

ends for an approved reciprocal certification, the person must apply for recertification as required for all Via Hope Certified Peer Specialists. For more information, see our section on Recertification.

The reciprocity form can be requested completed here: [Reciprocity Application](#)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CERTIFIED 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 Core Values and Key Concepts, the Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics, and the Rules of Conduct (all listed below) so that every peer specialist, certified or seeking certification, will conform their 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. Ethics complaints are reviewed by the Certified Peer Specialist Advisory Council. 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. For more information on our Ethics Complaint Process, please see the section below entitled "Complaints and Sanctions."

Core Values & Key Concepts

In April 2017, the Certified Peer Specialist Advisory Council adopted the following core values that serve as the foundation for all Via Hope Certified Peer Specialists in Texas:

1. *Authenticity*. The work of a Certified Peer Specialist is based on the relationships we build with others. To be effective, our interactions with others must always reflect our true selves.
2. *Honesty*. A Certified Peer Specialist's willingness to be honest and straightforward about their experiences is fundamental to the authenticity which builds trusting relationships with peers.
3. *Mutuality*. In a mutual relationship between two people, no *one* person holds power over the other. In the mental health system, where every other relationship has an imbalance of power between the professional and the person receiving services, peer specialists actively work to minimize the power imbalance between themselves and the people they serve.
4. *Open-Mindedness*. Over time, systems have a tendency to become rigid and prescriptive. A Certified Peer Specialist's willingness to look at other ideas, points of view, and ways of doing things are critical components of who we are.
5. *Respect*. A Certified Peer Specialist must always have the highest regard for the individuals they serve, which should always be reflected in the language and actions in our work.

In addition, the Certified Peer Specialist Advisory Council also adopted the following key concepts that guide the individual and collective work of Certified Peer Specialists in Texas:

1. *Hope*. Certified Peer Specialists instill hope in others and are living examples that change happens and recovery is real.
2. *Resiliency*. Resiliency and strength are valued and modeled by Certified Peer Specialists as they share their lived experience and support others on their recovery journeys.
3. *Self-Determination*. Certified Peer Specialists support individuals in their right to decide their own best path to recovery.
4. *Trauma-Informed Approach*. Certified Peer Specialists should always work to speak, act, and create environments that support people's healing instead of re-traumatizing people or ignoring their trauma histories.

These core values and key principles serve as guiding principles for Texas CPSs when engaging in peer relationships; they are foundational components to the Via Hope Peer Specialist Certification Training and are woven throughout the Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics.

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, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, military status, 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 two years.
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 Specialists 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.

Last Updated: April 2017

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 person receiving services 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 the CPS 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, 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 their 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 *themselves*, 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.

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, they should notify the CPS's employer and file a complaint with Via Hope. The Via Hope Certified Peer Specialist Ethics Complaint Form may be accessed on our website at the following link:

<https://www.viahope.org/resources/ethics-complaint-violation-form/>.

Purpose

Most employee disciplinary procedures involving Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs) are handled within the immediate workplace. The Via Hope Ethics Complaint Process is intended as a mechanism for individuals (typically but not necessarily other Certified Peer Specialists) to report behavior by a Certified Peer Specialist that is a violation of the Code of Ethics for Via Hope Certified Peer Specialists. This behavior may occur within or outside of the workplace.

If a complaint is filed, Via Hope will investigate the claim and the individual who is the subject of the complaint will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegation. If Via Hope determines that the complaint is valid, disciplinary action can range from a written reprimand to termination of the individual's certification.

Throughout the Ethics Complaint Process, Via Hope will strive to maintain the anonymity of the subject of the complaint, the person who submitted the complaint, any people receiving services involved, and any other sensitive identifying information. Unless unavoidable, Via Hope redacts all identifying information in official written correspondence and any verbal communication.

Initial Complaint

To file a complaint, an individual must complete the Certified Peer Specialist Ethics Complaint Form online. After receiving a complaint, Via Hope reviews the allegation and contacts the individual who is the subject of the complaint with a written summary of the substance of the complaint (minus the identity of the person filing the complaint) and a blank Ethics Complaint Response Form. After Via Hope contacts the individual who is subject of the complaint, the individual has ten (10) business days to respond using the Certified Peer Specialist Ethics Complaint Response form.

Via Hope will forward the original complaint, response, and any other documentation to the CPS Advisory Council Ethics Subcommittee, who will review the documentation and make a determination about the appropriate sanction if a violation occurred. Before sending to the Ethics Subcommittee, Via Hope will redact identifying information.

If Via Hope is notified of a situation where a Certified Peer Specialist has engaged in or is currently engaging in behaviors or activities that it deems as a significant breach of the Via Hope Code of Ethics, Via Hope retains the discretion to provisionally revoke a Certified Peer Specialist's certification until the Certified Peer Specialist Ethics Subcommittee makes a final recommendation.

Determination and Sanction

The Subcommittee may make a final determination that the Complaint falls into one of four categories: (1) Unfounded, (2) Credible with No Sanction Recommended, (3) Credible with Sanction Recommended, or (4) Insufficient Evidence for Ethics Determination. Sanctions range from a written warning from the Advisory Council to suspension or revocation of a person's peer specialist certification.

The sanction imposed by Via Hope does not directly affect the individual's employment. However, if the Certified Peer Specialist is employed, Via Hope will notify their supervisor in writing of the sanction imposed if the sanction includes suspension or revocation of the person's certification. Furthermore, the Council may choose to notify the person's employer as part of the sanctions for a violation, even if the violation does not result in suspension or revocation of the person's certification.

If the Council elects to suspend a person's Certification as part of the sanctions for an ethical violation, the individual's two-year certification period will continue to count down; in other words, a person's two-year certification period will not freeze or pause when a person's certification is suspended within the two-year period. A person who has their Certification suspended will still be required to update their certification on the two-year anniversary of their initial certification or recertification.

Appeal

If the Council determines that an Ethics violation occurred and recommends a sanction, the person who is the subject of the complaint has the opportunity to appeal the decision.

Once the person has appealed the decision to Via Hope, Via Hope will forward all documentation to the Appeals Review Board to identify whether the Council’s decisions on the credibility of the violation and/or the appropriateness of the sanction recommended were made in error. After the Board provides their final determination to Via Hope, Via Hope will inform the person appealing of the outcome of their appeal in writing. There is no ability to appeal a final determination made on appeal.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

If you have additional questions or comments relating to any information contained in the Via Hope Certified Peer Specialist Policy and Procedure Manual, please contact Via Hope at info@viahope.org or by phone at 512-953-8160 or 844-300-2196.