



BREAKING GROUND: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PEER SPECIALIST TRAINING PROGRAM

Below are frequently asked questions relative to the Via Hope Peer Specialist Training Program funded by the federal Behavioral Health Education and Training Grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The program trains and places certified peer specialists in non-traditional settings. The overall goal is to improve health outcomes for people served in primary care, criminal justice, and homelessness service settings.

- **I already have one certification but would like to get another one. Do I qualify for this program?**

Yes! Many Peer Specialists have multiple certifications based on their lived experience. This can be any combination of Mental Health Peer Specialist (MHPS), Recovery Support Peer Specialist (RSPS), and ReEntry Peer Specialist (RPS).

- **What's expected of my time?**

You'll need to attend an 8 hour Orientation, the introductory Core training, one of the supplemental trainings for your certification, and five skill-building trainings. There are no costs for you to attend trainings. Once you have your placement at one of the partner sites you'll be working approximately 20 hours a week at that site for your field hours, offering Peer Support. You will also spend some time with your supervision site, receiving supervision and getting acclimated to the role of Peer Support.



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- **What is the “supervision site” and where is it located?**

The Supervision site is where program participants will receive supervision and start learning about the roles and responsibilities of Peer Support Specialists.

Our supervision site is:

- Austin Mental Health Community, located in Austin, TX

- **What are the “partner sites” and what can you tell me about them?**

The partner sites are where participants of the program will be doing their field hours to complete their certification. In other words, it's where the Peer Support will happen!

Partner Sites:

Texas Homeless Network (H.O.M.E. Center, San Marcos; Open Door, Lubbock) is a non-profit membership-based organization that helps communities strategically plan to prevent and end homelessness. They coordinate local and national advocacy efforts, data collection and research, and trainings for service providers.

Travis County Mental Health Public Defender's Office (MHPD) & Diversion Court (Austin, TX) serves the needs of persons with significant mental health challenges in the criminal justice system. The Travis County MHPD Office uses a team-based model of support to best represent the interests of their clients and support their clients in achieving their goals for wellness and recovery.

Hutchinson County Unity Way (Borger, TX) brings people, organizations and resources together to improve community well-being. HCUW currently supports 15 local non-profit agencies that help in their community. They also provide community needs assessments and offer WRAP training.



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Building Promise USA (Austin, TX) is a peer-led, peer-run, and peer-driven non-profit that provides programs and initiatives to successfully address documented service gaps for transitional services in Texas correctional facilities focused on the individuals, their families, and communities directly impacted by mass incarceration.

Downtown Women's Center (Amarillo, TX) provides housing and services for women, children and families, to overcome homelessness and addiction. DWC uses a holistic approach to recovery, while also offering practice resources for changing lives.

Travis County Jail (Austin, TX) is the local county jail that serves Travis County in Texas. It primarily holds pre-trial defendants who have been assessed to either be a flight or violence risk prior to their court date. TCJ provides a variety of in-house programming to prepare individuals in custody for release.

Capital Area Private Defender Service (CAPDS, Austin, TX) is a joint venture non-profit corporation that is dedicated to assisting indigent clients of Travis County facing criminal charges. Their organization provides consulting and management services to deliver the highest possible quality defense for those facing criminal charges in Travis County.

Restoring Justice (Houston, TX) is a nonprofit that provides holistic and client-centered representation to marginalized members of our community facing criminal charges. This includes the provision of expert criminal defense legal representation, social services, trauma-informed counseling, spiritual support, volunteer connections, and more.

Austin Area Urban League (Austin, TX) is an Austin/Central Texas nonprofit providing tools to African Americans and under-served populations to build a foundation for social and economic equality and equity.

FREED Texas (San Antonio, TX) works to restore families, transform communities and eliminate recidivism. They offer a 9 week program (Remnant of Healing Academy) that supports reintegration.



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- **Do I need to live in the same area as the partner site?**

Yes. You will be required to be in person for your field hours.

- **I don't have a copy of my High School transcript or diploma, can I still apply?**

A copy of your GED or HS transcript or diploma is required to obtain your Peer Specialist certification. You will need to find the appropriate paperwork, or take and pass your GED before applying.

- **How much is the stipend?**

The stipend is \$5,000, to be paid in three installments over the 9 months.

- **Will I receive a salary in addition to the stipend?**

No, the 9 months is experiential learning for the 250 hours required for certification.

- **What if I have a full-time job already? Can I still be in the program?**

We strongly encourage self-care for all Peer Support Specialists. Working a full-time job and attending to the requirements of this program would be very taxing and difficult to balance. We recommend this program for those who are not working, or only working/volunteering part-time.

Have other questions? Please contact Christina Carney at christina.carney@viahope.org or 512-953-8160.