



Section 9.2 Peer Support Training, Certification and Supervision Requirements

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I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) has developed training requirements and certification standards for Peer Support Specialists providing peer support services. Peers serve an important role as behavioral health providers, and AHCCCS expects consistency and quality in peer-delivered behavioral health services and support for peer-delivered behavioral health services statewide.

II. REFERENCES:

The following Pascua Yaqui (PY) Centered Spirit Program (CSP) Provider Manual sections can serve as references for this section:

Section 3.13, Covered Behavioral Health Services

Section 4.5, Partnerships with Families and Family-Run Organizations in the Children's Behavioral Health System

Section 9.1, Training Requirements

The following citations and Federal document can serve as resources for this section:

A.A.C. R6-5-5850

A.A.C. R9-20-1502

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) State Medicaid Director Letter (SMDL #07-011)

III. DEFINITIONS:

Covered Behavioral Health Services Guide: The AHCCCS Covered Behavioral Health Services Guide describes the comprehensive array of covered behavioral health services that will assist, support, and encourage each eligible person to achieve and



maintain the highest possible level of health and self-sufficiency. These services are established through contracts between AHCCCS and a Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) or through an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between AHCCCS and a Tribal RBHA (TRBHA).

Behavioral Health Clinician (BHC): As specified in R9-10-101, an individual licensed under A.R.S. Title 32, Chapter 33, whose scope of practice allows the individual to:

1. Independently engage in the practice of behavioral health as defined in A.R.S. § 32-3251;
 - a. Except for a licensed substance abuse technician, engage in the practice of behavioral health as defined in A.R.S. § 32-3251 under direct supervision as defined in A.A.C. R4-6-101;
2. A psychiatrist as defined in A.R.S. § 36-501;
3. A psychologist as defined in A.R.S. § 32-2061;
4. A physician;
5. A registered nurse practitioner licensed as an adult psychiatric and mental health nurse;
6. A behavior analyst as defined in A.R.S. §32-2091; or
7. A registered nurse.

Behavioral Health Technician (BHT): An individual who is not a behavioral health professional who provides behavioral health services at or for a health care institution according to the health care institution's policies and procedures that:

1. If the behavioral health services were provided in a setting other than a licensed health care institution, the individual would be required to be licensed as a behavioral health professional under A.R.S. Title 32, Chapter 33; and
2. Are provided with clinical oversight by a behavioral health professional.

Peer: An individual who is not a behavioral health professional who provides behavioral health services at or for a health care institution according to the health care institution's policies and procedures that:

1. If the behavioral health services were provided in a setting other than a licensed health care institution, the individual would be required to be licensed as a behavioral health professional under A.R.S. Title 32, Chapter 33; and



2. Are provided with clinical oversight by a behavioral health professional.

Peer-run Organization: Peer-operated services that are:

1. Independent - Owned, administratively controlled, and managed by peers;
2. Autonomous - All decisions are made by the program;
3. Accountable - Responsibility for decisions rests with the program; and
4. Peer-controlled - Governance board is at least 51% peers.

Peer Support Services : The provision of assistance to effectively utilize the service delivery system (e.g., assistance in developing plans of care, identifying needs, accessing supports, partnering with professionals, overcoming service barriers) or understanding and coping with the stressors of the person's disability (e.g., support groups), coaching, role modeling and mentoring. Self-help and peer services are intended for enrolled persons and/or their families who require greater structure and intensity of services than those available through community-based recovery fellowship groups and who are not yet ready for independent access to community-based recovery groups (e.g., AA, NA, Dual Recovery). These services may be provided to a person, group, or family.

Peer Support Specialist (PSS): A peer who has completed training and passed a competency test through an AHCCCS Approved Peer Support Employment training program, and meets the requirements to function as a BHT or BHC, as defined in A.A.C. R9-20- 101 and A.A.C. R9-20-204.

Recovery: Recovery is a deeply personal process and no single, universally accepted definition of recovery currently exists. In the simplest sense, recovery is a lived experience of moving through and beyond the limits of one's disorder; living a life outside of one's illness. In this process one finds hope, empowerment, responsibility, and a meaningful role in life. Key characteristics of recovery include:

1. Recovery is personal and individualized (not defined by a treatment agency);
2. Recovery moves beyond symptom reduction and relief (e.g. meaningful connections in the community, overcoming specific skill deficits, establishing a sense of quality and well-being);
3. Recovery is both a process of healing (regaining) and a process of discovery (moving beyond); and
4. Recovery encompasses the possibility for individuals to test, make mistakes, and try again.



IV. STANDARDS:

The Pascua Yaqui CSP TRBHA ensures that behavioral health providers and peers have the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully provide quality behavioral health services in the public behavioral health system.

CSP TRBHA ensures that Peer Support Employment Training Certification programs offer training and education that effectively prepares individuals for delivering behavioral health services, including peer support services, as a PSS.

CSP TRBHA ensures that PSS employees are certified to provide peer support services.

V. PROCEDURES:

A. PSS qualifications:

Individuals seeking to be certified and employed as Peer Support Specialists must:

1. Be self-disclosed as a “peer;” and
2. Meet the requirements to function as a BHT or BHC.

Individuals meeting the above criteria may be certified as a PSS by completing training and passing a competency test through an AHCCCS-approved Peer Support Employment training program. AHCCCS will oversee the approval of all certification materials including curriculum and testing tools. Individuals are certified by the agency in which he/she completed the Peer Support Employment training program; however, certification through an AHCCCS-approved Peer Support Employment training program is applicable statewide, regardless of which program a person has gone through for certification.

Some agencies may wish to employ individuals prior to the completion of certification through a Peer Support Employment training program. However, certain trainings must be completed prior to delivering behavioral health services (see *Subsection 9.2.7-D*). An individual must be certified as a PSS or currently enrolled in an AHCCCS-approved Peer Support training program under the supervision of a certified peer prior to billing peer support services.

B. Peer Support Employment training program approval process:

A Peer Support Employment training program must submit its program curriculum, competency exam, and exam scoring methodology (including an explanation of accommodations or alternative formats of program materials



available to individuals who have special needs) to AHCCCS, and AHCCCS will issue feedback or approval of the curriculum, competency exam and exam scoring methodology in accordance with *Subsection 9.2.7-D*.

Approval of curriculum is binding for no longer than three years. Three years after initial approval and thereafter, the program must resubmit their curriculum for review and re-approval. If a program makes substantial changes (meaning change to content, classroom time, etc.) to their curriculum or if there is an addition to the required elements (see *Subsection 9.2.7-C*) during this three-year period, the program must submit the updated curriculum to AHCCCS for review and approval.

AHCCCS will base approval of the curriculum, competency exam and exam scoring methodology only on the elements included in this policy. If a Peer Support Employment training program requires regional or culturally specific training exclusive to a geographic service area (GSA) or tribal community, the specific training cannot prevent employment or transfer of PSS certification based on the additional elements or standards.

C. Competency exam:

Participants must complete and pass a competency exam with a minimum score of 80% upon completion of required training. Each Peer Support Employment training program has the authority to develop a unique competency exam. However, all exams must include at least one question related to each of the curriculum core elements listed in *Subsection 9.2.7-D*. For peers who have been providing peer support services prior to the implementation of this policy or peers who have training or work history from another state, certification may be obtained after passing the competency exam. If a peer does not pass the competency exam, the Peer Support Employment training program may require that the peer repeat or complete additional training prior to taking the competency exam again.

D. Peer Support Employment training program curriculum standards:

A Peer Support Employment training program curriculum must include, at a minimum, the following core elements:

1. Concepts of hope and recovery;
2. Instilling the belief that recovery is real and possible;
3. The history of recovery and the varied ways that behavioral health issues have been viewed and treated over time and in the present;



4. Knowing and sharing one's story of a recovery journey; how one's story can assist others in many ways;
5. Mind-Body-Spirit connection and holistic approach to recovery; and
6. Overview of the individual service plan and its purpose.

Advocacy and systems perspective:

1. Brief overview of behavioral health system infrastructure;
2. Stigma and effective stigma reduction strategies;
3. Organizational change;
4. How to utilize person-first language and energize one's agency around recovery, hope, and the value of peer support;
5. Creating a sense of community;
6. Brief overview of advocacy and effective strategies; and
7. Familiarization of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Psychiatric rehabilitation skills:

1. Strengths based approach; identifying one's own strengths and helping others identify theirs;
2. Distinguishing between sympathy and empathy;
3. Learned helplessness; what it is and how to assist others in overcoming its effects;
4. Overview of motivational interviewing; communication skills and active listening;
5. Healing relationships and creating mutual responsibility;
6. Combating negative self-talk; noticing patterns and replacing negative statements about oneself, using one's mind to boost self-esteem and relieve stress;
7. Group facilitation; and
8. Creating a safe and supportive environment; building trust.



Professional responsibilities of the PSS and self-care in the workplace:

Qualified peers must receive training on the following elements prior to delivering any covered behavioral health services:

1. Professional boundaries and ethics; the varied roles of the helping professional;
2. Confidentiality;
3. Mandatory reporting requirements;
4. Understanding common symptoms of mental illness and substance use and orientation to commonly used medications;
5. Service documentation and billing and using recovery language throughout documentation; and
6. Self-care and the use of ongoing supports; dealing with stress in the workplace.

Some curriculum elements include concepts included in required training, as described in *Section 9.1, Training Requirements*. Peer Support Employment training programs must not duplicate training required of peers for employment with a licensed agency or Community Service Agency (CSA)¹. Training elements in this section must be specific to the peer role in the public behavioral health system and instructional for peer interactions.

For a list of references to assist in developing a curriculum that addresses the topics listed in the Curriculum Standards, see *Attachment 9.2.1, Suggested Curriculum Development References*.

E. Supervision of the Certified PSS:

Supervision is intended to provide support to PSS employees in meeting treatment needs of behavioral health recipients receiving care from them. Supervision provides an opportunity for growth within the agency and encouragement of recovery efforts.

¹ While peer support employment training programs must not duplicate training required of licensed agencies or CSAs, it is possible that licensed agencies and/or CSAs may consider training completed as part of the peer support employment training program as meeting the agencies' training requirements.



Agencies employing PSS persons must have a qualified BHC or BHT designated to provide PSS supervision. Supervision must be documented and inclusive of both clinical and administrative supervision.

The individual providing supervision must also complete training and pass a competency test through an approved Peer Support Employment training program.

F. Process for submitting evidence of certification:

Agencies employing PSS persons who are providing peer support services are responsible for keeping records of required qualifications and certification. TRBHAs must ensure that PSS persons meet qualifications and have certification, as described in this policy.